

EverybodyOnline - Working at grassroots to bridge the Digital Divide

2005-2006 Annual Review

2005-2006, the fourth year of the EverybodyOnline project has been a busy and successful period for the scheme.

The three Welsh projects, in Rhyl, Bettws and Clydach Vale have been integrated into the Welsh Assembly's Community@One programme and three new English project areas identified with the first, Leigh Park on the Hampshire coast launched in March.

Our way of working and our results have been recognised and the Northern Ireland Assembly, with BT Northern Ireland, are supporting the development of a three year project covering the whole region starting in 2006.

We have been delighted to have the continued backing of BT and been pleased to welcome several new local partners to EverybodyOnline. With this support we have been able to help communities improve access and build capacity in their areas so ensuring the long term impact of the project. Furthermore, with the recruitment of more volunteers we have been able to increase the reach of EverybodyOnline so even more people have the chance to become digitally included.



Our targeted approach in the four key areas of employability, disability, older people and people affected by homelessness has delivered effective solutions for these groups who are so often caught on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Our key successes were:

- Engaging over 4,300 people, who attended our taster sessions, trying out new technology in locations where they feel comfortable
- Helping over 1,000 of these to significantly improve their skills
- Developing local networks of 150 active volunteers helping their communities understand how new technology can open doors to education, jobs, entertainment and personal contacts. .
- In one project alone, helping 16 local people into employment, an estimated saving in state benefits of £143,000.
- In Rhyl seeing a 20% increase in Internet usage among older people compared to last year
- Developing projects in Art, Music and multi-media to engage people in ICT through the things that matter to them
- Being highlighted as an excellent model using (Information Communication Technology (ICT) to deliver social improvements by the eWell-Being Awards



Catherine Maxwell receiving the certificate of commendation at the eWell-Being Awards, March 2006

About EverybodyOnline

The EverybodyOnline Project is designed to help socially excluded communities and individuals across the UK to engage with digital technology. We believe, it is the means to close the Digital Divide. This innovative scheme run by national charity Citizens Online is supported by BT. It has demonstrated that it can help people overcome any barriers they might have to computers or the Internet.

BT has been EverybodyOnline's main sponsor since the project's creation four years ago. They believe that access to ICT can improve people's lives, opening doors to; education, jobs, entertainment and personal contacts. However, many people have neither the opportunity nor the necessary skills to use the technology.

The EverybodyOnline approach is to improve the opportunities of many communities, by providing access to; technology, literacy skills, learning and employability.

What are the aims of EverybodyOnline?

It is widely accepted that people being left behind in the digital revolution are frequently facing other social problems, which leave them further marginalised from mainstream society. Whole communities can find themselves ill equipped and disadvantaged as technology becomes increasingly important in day to day living. By providing the opportunity to access technology and learning skills individuals, as well as communities, gain from the benefits of ICT such as, employment, economic regeneration and social support.



EverybodyOnline aims to:

- To promote awareness of and increase access to, digital technology highlighting its benefits among non-users and new users in disadvantaged areas.
- To address community concerns such as; communication, community involvement, literacy and employability, by using digital technology as a key tool.
- To work with local organisations and community activists to enhance community development.
- To develop strategies which allow the work of EverybodyOnline to become embedded in communities over a longer term.

Grassroots Projects

Once an area has been researched and identified as being affected by social exclusion and having low levels of Internet connectivity, a locally based project officer is employed to work full time in the area to promote digital inclusion. The project officer's role is to foster a network of community based public Internet access points, develop learning programmes with partner organisations and recruit volunteers. Working closely with the community to understand their needs, the project officer creates and co-ordinates a local action plan.

This approach helps overcome the barriers to engagement with technology and in the long term, ensures that the development, support and spirit of EverybodyOnline continues after the end of the formal project.

Measuring Success

It is vital for us to know we're targeting our work at the right people in the right way and that we are getting measurable results. To ensure this is the case we conduct a variety of different research methods:

- We undertake benchmark research with an independent agency in all our project areas, establishing how engaged the local population is with technology. We also check the levels of Internet connectivity and how receptive local people and organisations are to our work. We also conduct similar research at intervals during the project's life to check on progress.
- Project officers also circulate their own questionnaires, gathering opinion, to ensure our approach is apt and relevant for the target audience.

The Online Service Users Forum

In Glasgow the Project Coordinator has worked with Glasgow Homelessness Network, to establish a service-users forum. This provides the opportunity for people affected by homelessness, to have their say about local service provision and digital inclusion.

It also presents a crucial opportunity, for this frequently excluded group, to hear about the various ICT access opportunities and to raise awareness of the work of EverybodyOnline in Glasgow.

One participant commented, "People don't normally ask us what we think. It's nice to have a chance to help change things for the better and learn about what's out there."

Working in Partnership

EverybodyOnline can only function effectively by working with partners. They can provide resources and support the delivery of the project; others are conversely supported by EverybodyOnline to deliver digital inclusion (DI) projects.

The EverybodyOnline project has been principally funded by BT's community investment since 2000. BT's involvement provides more than just funding, they give access other resources as well, such as management support, Internet connectivity, PR and marketing support, training and research.



Microsoft also support the EverybodyOnline project and this year saw the development of the EverybodyOnline Hub. The Hub Manager's role is to establish partnerships, resources, toolkit/guidance notes and training to support the work of the EverybodyOnline programme.

How we work with other partners

- We create networks and forums to exchange information, raising the profile of digital inclusion. For example, in one project location last year 11 local organisations were brought together by EverybodyOnline, to create the ICT consortium, ensuring local ICT provision was accessible.
- We obtain backing from local authorities and support agencies to get local buy in and ownership. For example, several of our EverybodyOnline project officers work in the offices of local organisations and one project is part funded by a local authority partnership.
- We share knowledge. We recognise that while working with the community, our project officers develop high level of expertise in the area of digital inclusion. Rather than keeping it to ourselves we act in a consultancy role to help partners develop digital inclusion schemes which best serve the community. For example, the EverybodyOnline model of working was shared with the Welsh Assembly and assisted in the development of their own national Communities@One programme.

Access and Capacity Building

These two elements are key to ensuring EverybodyOnline has a positive and lasting impact in an area. One of our main objectives is to increase and improve public access points so people are not excluded from technology by lack of funds. EverybodyOnline doesn't open ICT centres but works with local partners to make their resources more effective.

There is however, more to getting a project area connected than making sure the technology is available. Capacity building means enhancing all the resources in an area, be they hardware, partnerships, facilities and even 'upskilling' the community themselves. By adopting this strategy the long term impact of the EverybodyOnline project is greatly improved.

How we improve access and build capacity:

- We help community partners develop their facilities to suit the needs of the local people. For example by, altering opening hours to suit the community, helping groups access IT support so equipment is kept fully functioning. We also create partnerships so organisations can compliment each other's input, for example by coordinating the time when various access centres are available.
- EverybodyOnline works with BT to provide wireless broadband in community venues. This ensures outreach work using laptops can take place without the need for fixed hardware, which otherwise can present security issues for venues.
- We run computer taster sessions in local venues such as libraries, hostels and community centres to highlight the presence of public access equipment. This encourages people to engage with ICT, for perhaps the first time.
- We help train frontline staff at community venues so they can cascade their learning to venue users without the presence of the EverybodyOnline project officer.
- We also help train local charitable organisations in other skills which will help their groups develop and thus better serve the community. For example in one project area we ran a media workshop to help local groups attain more local media coverage and raise their profile.

Volunteer Partners

Recruiting local volunteers can be crucial to the success of any EverybodyOnline project, it can build capacity in a similar way to some of the methods listed earlier but it can also make a real difference to the lives of the people involved.

We recognised that for a volunteer to be successful there needs to be something to benefit the volunteer themselves. In each project area we develop strategies that ensure the volunteers are committed and well trained to help their local community overcome the barriers they face with regard to digital technology.

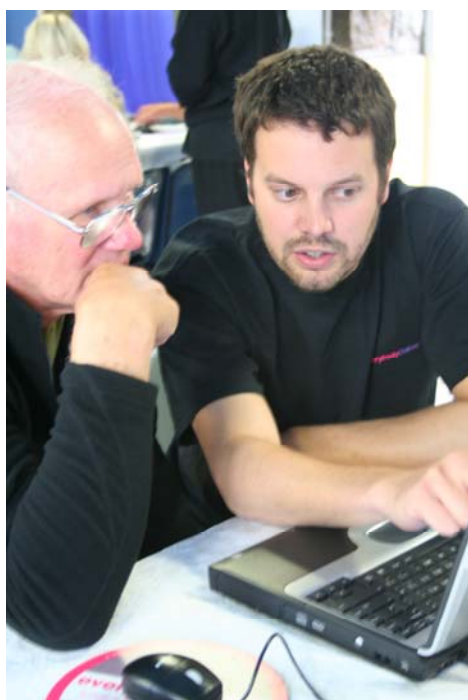
As a result of this strategy EverybodyOnline has been able to extend its community reach considerably. This year there have been **over 150 active volunteers working with EverybodyOnline** and in many cases they have been able to run computer training sessions in the absence of the project officer.

For many people the experience of being a volunteer can be life changing. Several volunteers have gone on to gain employment as a result of developing their skills and confidence. Whereas others have found working with the community has given them a sense of which career direction to train for.

“The best year of my life”

Jas from Croydon was long-term unemployed and had previously been homeless. She became a volunteer for EverybodyOnline and as result, developed her employability skills and confidence.

Jas has now been successful in getting a job, however she continues to volunteer with EverybodyOnline and is undertaking a two year Certificate in Education at Croydon College.



For example, Dwayne from South London was a school leaver who had little idea of what career to try and felt demoralized about his future. He became an EverybodyOnline volunteer and now works with the project four days a week. He has recently enrolled on a teaching course and said to our project officer “I had no idea what I should do but EverybodyOnline has put me on the straight and narrow and now I’ve got plans”

An Engaging Story

EverybodyOnline understands that many people might not feel that digital technology has anything to offer them. To overcome this, EverybodyOnline works to demonstrate how technology can be relevant and fun. We use a variety of hooks to get people interested.

One of the most successful ways to achieve this is to find something people are already interested in and combine it with digital technology. This year we have combined learning computer skills with:



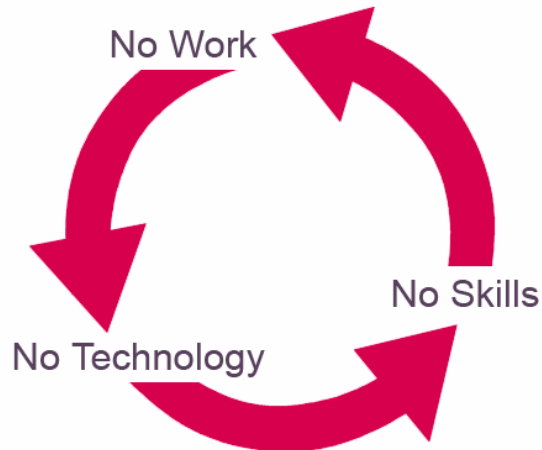
- **Healthy living**, by conducting Internet taster sessions at 'health week' events so people can research health and good diet on the web.
- **Music**, we ran 'Bust a Move' workshops for refugees and asylum seekers, which used the international language of music as tool to engagement with both the local community and technology.
- **Art**, we created 'Arty Craft Computers' workshops for parents and children which combined, story telling, creative play and computers so they could learn together in a relaxed environment. Art has also been used as a hook in Glasgow where people affected by homelessness have used it as a form of self expression. They have also been helped by EverybodyOnline to develop their own website to display their work which has in turn developed key employability skills.
- **Film making**, has been used by one EverybodyOnline project, working in partnership with an organisation who works with young people with particular needs. An educational film was made and as well as providing a fun past time, more young people learned vital computer skills. In some cases they had their first opportunity to engage with technology.

Our Targeted Approach to Inclusion

Digital inclusion of everyone is our goal, however to effectively help communities overcome the barriers they have to technology a targeted approach is most successful. We must ensure we understand the needs of each group to find relevant and appropriate methods for them to bridge the digital divide.

Skills for the Future

90% of new jobs rely on some form of ICT skills, therefore being without such skills can put people at a considerable disadvantage in the employment market. Furthermore being unemployed can prevent you from accessing the very technology you need to maintain and build on your skills; 46% of people online access the Internet from work.



To break this cycle of exclusion this year EverybodyOnline has:

- Set up free computer training sessions
- Run CV and job search workshops
- Partnered with local organisations who can support training and offer work placements
- Introduced ESOL (English as a second or other language) courses in areas where language was a barrier to employment and inclusion
- Worked with organisations to help people improve their literacy through the use of technology
- Encouraged peer to peer training which has developed confidence and skills
- Run free courses in more advanced ICT such as PC build and networking courses so people have the skills employers really want

The results are:

A single EverybodyOnline project alone has helped 16 local people into employment, an estimated saving in state benefits of £143,000 (NEF). Since the project cost £43,000 to run for one year, this represents a social return on investment of £100,000 or to put it another way: For every £1 invested £3.30 has been generated for society.

Including Everybody

Disabled people

People affected by disability are frequently socially excluded and can get left behind in the digital revolution. EverybodyOnline recognises that technology can be of great benefit to disabled people and their families as it can: provide access to knowledge and support but more importantly can develop independence by promoting new channels of communication and opportunity.

For example, a hearing impairment is no barrier to using computers, the Internet or email. However finding somewhere that will teach you technology skills when you are deaf can be more difficult.

People with disabilities have been an area of focus for us this year so we have been:

- Working with specialist organisations to help them develop suitable ICT training for people with particular needs
- Running computer training sessions designed specifically for people affected by disability
- Using technology as a means to empower people with learning difficulties so they could create films and literature to help their peers
- Set up chat forums for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) support groups
- Helped organisations working with people affected by disability to access funding for their own ICT equipment
- Used the knowledge and experience gained 'on the ground' to advise on national campaigns, which have an impact on accessible ICT provision, e.g. the e-inclusion charter

Adaptive Technology for Disabled volunteers in Rhyl

A group in Rhyl which campaigns for access for disabled people has been helped by EverybodyOnline to access funding from Microsoft's Unlimited Potential Programme.

The funding was used to purchase adaptive technology and ICT equipment. The new kit has allowed more disabled volunteers to get involved in the running of the organisation.

"The funding secured via the EverybodyOnline project has meant that we are now able to offer our service to even more people with varying disabilities... I have also been able to train our volunteers with the new equipment which has led to them having more confidence in using computers"

As a result:

People affected by disabilities in EverybodyOnline project areas have a better infrastructure of support. They can learn ICT skills in environments where there is suitable support and equipment so they can develop their skills and confidence and feel a valuable part of the community.

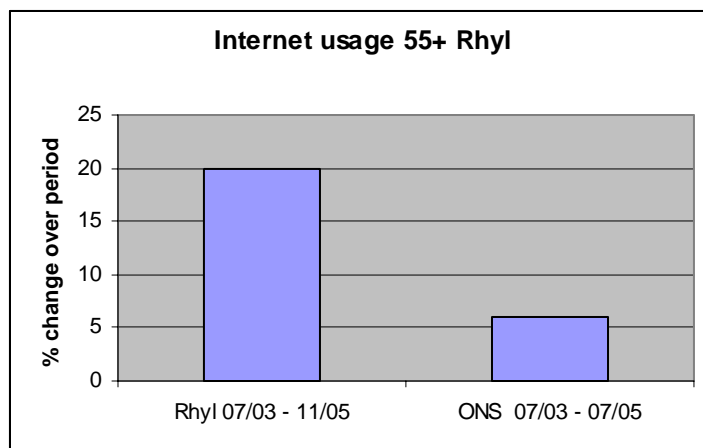
Older people

Older people are far less likely to be users of digital technology. The Office of National Statistics found that only 18% of people 65 and over had used the Internet compared to 79% of people aged 25-44 (February 06). EverybodyOnline believes there are four main reasons for this: lack of skills, poor confidence, it's not thought relevant and limited or difficult access. Ironically, since this group are often isolated and have limited mobility they can benefit most from online services and email.

This year EverybodyOnline has attempted to overcome these barriers by:

- Running 'Grandparents back to school days
- Bringing the Internet into sheltered accommodation
- Running taster sessions especially designed for over 50s
- Demonstrating how the Internet can be relevant to older people and giving people the confidence to try
- Taking part in National Silver Surfer campaigns
- Working with other organisations like Age Concern, ensuring there are public access points available in suitable environments

The result is:



A single EverybodyOnline project area alone, recorded a 20% increase in Internet usage among older people. Compared to the national average increase of just 6% recorded by ONS

People Affected by Homelessness

People affected by homelessness frequently face a myriad of issues which prevent them from being socially included. However, access to digital technology and the Internet can be a vital first step towards inclusion. EverybodyOnline in Glasgow specifically targets people affected by homelessness. By teaching basic ICT skills and providing access to the Internet in hostels many key opportunities are made available to this group, They can stay in touch with friends and family even if on the move via web based email; they can learn important employability skills and gain access to a huge library of information on jobs and support services. This year EverybodyOnline has helped by:

- Working with partners to develop plans to assist hard to reach groups, giving them access to, and showing the benefits of, ICT. A consortium is working to identify the best ways to engage people affected by homelessness and to create partnerships which promote this
- Raising the profile of the need for ICT provision for people affected by homelessness, and by lobbying decision-makers for more free Internet access points in hostels
- Enabling homelessness organisations to access funding for ICT projects
- Working with hostels and support centres, to create strategies to ensure that all training is to a high standard, relevant and suitable to the service users needs
- Encouraging 'train the trainer' programmes for frontline hostel staff so learning can be cascaded through partner organisations

Jumpstart! for Young People Affected by Homelessness

A group of young people in supported accommodation in Glasgow took part in a six week informal learning programme.

The programme, developed by EverybodyOnline and other key partners, allowed the young people to take part in a variety of different activities such as cookery, alternative therapies, DJ skills and computing. At the end of the course each participant received a certificate to acknowledge their achievements.

For some this was their first recognised success for many years and will hopefully be an inspiration for the future.

As a direct result of EverybodyOnline:

People affected by homelessness in Glasgow have more hostels online with more support centres able to teach them ICT skills and provide them with access to digital technology. This group now have better access to education and services, are becoming more independent and are better able to acquire the skills they need to re enter employment whilst being supported by specialist services. Furthermore the work of the EverybodyOnline Project Coordinator in Glasgow ensures that digital inclusion for people affected by homelessness is always high on the agenda in Scotland.

The future of EverybodyOnline

EverybodyOnline is expanding, as well as the two new projects in England (Liverpool 8 and Newlyn) a further six are due to be launched in Northern Ireland this autumn. By the close of this year we hope to have a total of 11 EverybodyOnline projects running concurrently but EverybodyOnline doesn't intend to stop there, in time we hope to fully replicate the project in up to 36 locations across the UK.

We believe EverybodyOnline is the means by which to close the digital divide. Each year it is demonstrated how vital our work and how successful our approach to inclusion is. Therefore we will build on our experience to deliver a scheme that is a beacon of excellence in the field of digital inclusion.

Statement of 2005-2006, Catherine Maxwell, Director of Projects

"This last year has been an exciting time for the project with many new people engaging with EverybodyOnline for the first time.

We have been delighted that the three Welsh projects, Bettws, Clydach Vale and Rhyl have become sustainable via the Welsh Assembly's project Communities@One. We have also been pleased to launch a new English project on the South Coast, in Leigh Park, Havant and have had new projects agreed in Liverpool and Newlyn, Cornwall. EverybodyOnline has had a busy year but once again is demonstrating that Information Communication Technology (ICT) can be used as a tool for social inclusion."

Catherine Maxwell, April 2005

EverybodyOnline