

APPENDIX A - CASE STUDY:

Long Eaton 50+ Sus-IT Drop-In

The 50+ Forum was formed in 2005 to give the older community in the town a powerful voice to achieve change and to enhance lives. One of its most significant contributions to enhancing the quality of life of some of its older citizens is empowering them to be part of the Digital World in ways that are meaningful to them. The forum achieves this through the 50+ Sus-IT Drop-In which enables older people to make use of digital technology and gives on-going support with this challenging process in their daily lives.

What is the 50+ Sus-IT Drop-In?

It is a volunteer-led, self-help group which enables the over 50s to use digital technologies for reasons and purposes of their own choosing.

It is locally run and makes use of publicly funded venues including the library and an adult education centre.



ICT learning support group.

What does the Drop-In do? The Drop-In:

- Supports new and established users in doing digital tasks such as:
 - Accessing email accounts;
 - Sending photos and attachments to family members;
 - Installing updates and backing up files;
 - Accessing 'play-back' portals, such as BBC iPlayer to watch TV programmes and listen to music;
 - How cloud storage works and how to upload items;
 - Using video calling to contact family members;
 - Completing research using websites such as Ancestry.com for family history;
 - Downloading, storing and printing images from digital cameras;

- Enables non-users to become users and helps sustain autonomy and independence.
- Encourages social interaction over tea and cakes and helps combat loneliness and feelings of isolation.
- Helps with day-to-day problem solving, such as identifying the source of unsolicited calls e.g. using Google to check phone numbers.
- Meets a prevalent need for 'troubleshooting' assistance and coping with fast-changing technologies and deals with the myriad of baffling problems which arise when using digital technologies, including:
 - Dealing with pop-ups and interactive adverts;
 - Accidental change of display settings to high contrast (resulting in black background and white icons);
 - Accidental installation of a free virus checker (despite already having a programme installed);
 - Cursor moving too fast on a new laptop;
 - Duplicated downloads of photos from digital cameras.



Socialising with tea and cakes.



APPENDIX A - CASE STUDY:

Long Eaton 50+ Sus-IT Drop-In

Why is this on-going support and ‘troubleshooting’ so important?

Sustaining digital use involves meeting the types of varied and ever-changing demands listed above. Without the ad-hoc ‘troubleshooting’ assistance the Drop-In provides, such issues risk becoming major and insurmountable stumbling blocks for the non-expert user on his/her own.

While these difficulties may appear enormous and threatening to the inexperienced user, they are often very easy for someone with digital skills to resolve. For example, many of the problems presented at the Drop-In are successfully dealt with extremely quickly and easily (maybe with just ‘two clicks’) by someone with the digital know-how. Without such assistance, digital engagement can lapse entirely.

How does the drop-in meet the needs of users?

All ICT support sessions are supported by a number of volunteers who give valuable, informal peer-to-peer support, for example as IT Buddies.

Volunteers have access to appropriate training, resources and professional expertise and typically update and refresh their skills on an on-going basis. Rewards include the enjoyable challenge of solving interesting problems raised by users.



Using tablets together.



Learning embedded in the social process.

What makes the 50+ Sus- IT Drop-In so special to its members?

The 50+ Sus-IT Drop-In is well-known in the town for its welcoming, relaxed and friendly atmosphere. In bringing their digital ‘agenda’ and activities to the familiar surroundings of the library and Community House members escape the “angst” of digital participation at home alone. They share problems and solutions to the many mysteries of the digital world – as well as enjoying rich social interaction. In this process members acquire new digital skills in a relaxed and informal manner.

Enjoyable hobby-based activities such as researching the family tree, digital photography and travel also serve to reduce social isolation and loneliness for some members.



Using different devices that best suit their IT Buddyscheme needs.

APPENDIX A - CASE STUDY:

Long Eaton 50+ Sus-IT Drop-In

What is the ethos of the Drop-In?

- A friendly, informal atmosphere in a local familiar venue;
- Reliable sustained support that is readily available and accessible;
- Opportunity to learn to use digital technologies embedded in enjoyable social activities;
- Problem solving and troubleshooting assistance to deal with the frequently arising issues relating to digital technologies;
- A relaxed approach to attendance and assessment/outcome evaluation;
- Non- assessed learning sessions;
- Freedom from time pressure in learning tasks;
- Collaborative opportunities to work together and co-create;
- Learning and support tailored to the interests, focus and goals of the individual;
- A positive digital experience where the focus is on meeting the goals of the individual member;
- Recognition of the need to consolidate learning (and relaxed acceptance of members sometimes repeatedly asking the same question);
- Collecting the minimum of user data (needed for Health and Safety/Insurance).

What skills and experience of ICT do members have?

The experience of digital technology varies from no experience at all to experienced users who on occasion, encounter an unfamiliar problem they cannot solve themselves. In some cases people used computers at work before retirement but their experience there was limited to a specific application, such as payroll, accounts or data input. Now in retirement, they want to expand their knowledge to utilise digital technologies in their personal lives.

The people that use the drop-in facility are varied. Some come in to resolve a specific issue and are only seen once or twice, some have been coming for years and don't often need help but are able to provide help to others. Some come more for the social aspect of getting together over tea and cake, others where they need help.

How does the Drop-In sustain itself?

- Thin air, goodwill and a sense of community!;
- Leadership and the drive of the 50+ support group;
- Commitment and energy of volunteers (both leaders and tutors) in the community;
- Support from the local Borough Council and County Council;
- Help from local industry- a volunteer from 'St Gobain'(offering a community outreach programme).



Taught sessions.



APPENDIX A - CASE STUDY:

Long Eaton 50+ Sus-IT Drop-In

What members say:

"I enjoy coming here, it has helped me make more friends"

"I didn't think I would learn how to use computers"

"Together we have learnt how to use Skype, so now we contact each other when we are at home"

"I can now do my shopping on-line with Asda and have my groceries delivered to my home now that you have taught me"

"It isn't a matter of knowing everything, but being here gives us confidence to try something we wouldn't do at home"

"It's good fun they (tutors and other members) are very helpful. I get a lot of help and I need it! I wouldn't be in touch so much with my relatives in Canada without them, which is very nice for me - I can see pictures of them"

"Initially I started coming to the IT group because I've now got an iPad and I wasn't making much use of it and when I arrived there was a well-prepared IT man and some very helpful people to answer my queries"

"Help is available to respond to one-off requests or queries – without a contract to sign or an expectation to attend every week"

"There is absolutely no feeling at all that any question is considered a 'silly one' even if we asked the same question last week!!"

"There is no formal 'classroom feel', 'waiting with hand-up' for teacher to hopefully notice you, (the tutors mingle and we just ask a tutor to help us out next). It is very reassuring that there is someone - who with knowledge will encourage us to 'try it' this puts our mind at rest, especially if the message 'demands' us to press accept and can seem very daunting to us"

"I came for help to use my iPad and gradually realised that I had acquired knowledge which helped my confidence. Then, through chatting with the person next to me, I discovered they had a query that I was able to help with. Now, when issues arise, we have a go together to solve it. This boosted my self-esteem greatly"

"There is a very friendly atmosphere and relationships develop especially over coffee break, and we encourage one another which encourages a community spirit"

"Thanks and warm appreciation are due to tutors and members appearing in the photos and contributing their comments and feedback in the compilation of the case study (these include Roy Smith, Pete Wearn, Steven Elliott, Heather Bailey, Peter Bull, Dorothy West, John Handley, Nigel and Betty Thompson, Val Jelley, Christine Statham, Geoff Rann, Vince Baker, Richard Pyle, Jean Kent, Michael Reynolds). Generous commitment of their time to participate and review the case study has enriched its content and ensured its authenticity. Their invaluable contribution can be expected to encourage and inspire others to emulate such user-led and user-defined approaches in many communities."

