



WILTSHIRE & SWINDON SMARTPLACE PROGRAMME LESSONS LEARNED REPORT

Project name Business Theme

Version 1.0

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Author:	Andrew Poulton
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Document History

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Introduction

1. The Wiltshire & Swindon SmartPlace Programme developed from the decision in June 2002 by a range of public and voluntary sector partners in Wiltshire and Swindon to work together with BT to secure the benefits of broadband and related technology for the people and organisations of Wiltshire and Swindon. The programme aimed to maximise the benefits from ICT and broadband technology for businesses, learners and communities across Wiltshire and Swindon bringing benefits for all sectors, both public and private, and voluntary and community, in a holistic way, with particular focus on delivering long term employability.

The programme comprised of five themes: Business Development, Learning & Skills, Community Capacity Building, Broadband Infrastructure, and Marketing. Each of these themes was implemented by means of a series of individual projects which, when taken as a whole realised the aims and objectives of the programme. This project formed the Business Development theme.

Project Delivery

Went well

2. The delivery of information through events, telephone / email communications, 45 minute clinic sessions and more intensive meetings was well received by the Wiltshire business community and has enabled all targets to be achieved.

The grants to assist businesses with the uptake of broadband / e-technologies has been similarly well received, leading to the grants being oversubscribed.

The broadband enablement of all BT exchanges across Wiltshire has provided businesses with easy access to high speed broadband services and the subscription rate to broadband has outstripped both regional and national figures demonstrating the impact that the business theme has had on Wiltshire based businesses.

The experience centre implementation, delivery and installation was achieved on schedule and high quality facilities were made available to the Wiltshire business community

Went badly

3. It was anticipated that the Experience Centres would form a valuable nexus for businesses looking to have broadband technologies demonstrated in an independent and impartial environment by experienced ICT advisers. However, experience has proven that this type of service is not suitable for businesses, that they are more open to receiving advice in their own premises, as a result of a scheduled appointment.

Abnormal events

4. No abnormal events were encountered through the life of the project that had an impact.

Conclusions/Lessons Learned

5. Businesses need access to independent and impartial advice to assist them with their ICT /e-technology developments. They are open to receiving funding support to assist them with the leveraging of greater investment on their behalf in the development of ICT / e-technology solutions that will be of benefit to their businesses.

Recommendations

6. The overall success of the business theme and the ongoing demand for information, advice and funding demonstrates that there is an ongoing demand for ICT and e-technology / e-business

advice and support across the businesses of Wiltshire. Also, information gathered through meetings with non SmartPlace related clients and at ICT related events highlights the fact that there are still a great many businesses that are lacking in both awareness and implementation of ICT and e-business best practice and consequently are at risk from more ICT literate competitors both inside and outside of the county. Consequently all efforts should be made to secure follow on funding so that initiatives developed as a result of SmartPlace can continue to benefit Wiltshire businesses and enhance the Wiltshire economy.

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