



WILTSHIRE & SWINDON SMARTPLACE PROGRAMME END PROJECT REPORT

Project name Virtual Classroom

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Author:	Marc Jenkins
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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 aims to maximise the benefits from ICT and broadband technology for businesses, learners and communities across Wiltshire and Swindon. It will bring benefits for all sectors, both public and private, voluntary and community, in a holistic way, with particular focus on delivering long-term employability.
2. The programme comprises five themes: Business Development, Learning & Skills, Community Capacity Building, Broadband Infrastructure, and Marketing. Each of these themes will be implemented by means of a series of individual projects which, when taken as a whole, will realise the aims and objectives of the programme. This project forms part of the Community Capacity Building theme.
3. Salisbury Plain has been chosen for this project because the virtual learning partnership has a pro-active management team building on an established relationship that is now expanding to embrace the community. Specifically, the strategic plan aims to continue the development of:
 - 3.1.1.Video Conferencing
 - 3.1.2.Computer literacy of senior citizens.
 - 3.1.3.ICT skills of disabled groups.
 - 3.1.4.Educational and pastoral opportunities for teenage mothers to access education
 - 3.1.5.Facilities and structured sporting opportunities for disaffected local youth.
4. The two schools already have ICT support and skills in the development of sporting excellence available: both strongly complementing the aims of the Smartplace programme.
5. The project has the opportunity to build upon funding from the LSC and specialist schools trust to develop the community dimension identified within the area.

Project Objectives

6. The objectives of this project are:
 - 6.1. Extend range of Teaching & Learning experiences for identified groups.
 - 6.2. Provide opportunities for senior citizen groups to access education and support
 - 6.3. Provide opportunities for visually and aurally impaired groups to access education
 - 6.4. Provide opportunities for single, young parents to access education and support groups
 - 6.5. Provide disaffected youth the facilities and opportunities to compete in local leagues,

Project Deliverables

7. The project's deliverables are:
 - 7.1. Community access to video conferencing facilities in both schools.
 - 7.2. Certificated and non-certificated opportunities in computer literacy for the senior citizens of Amesbury, regardless of experience.
 - 7.3. Make positive and rewarding provision in ICT for the disabled community in Amesbury.
 - 7.4. Offer single mothers in the Durrington area support for independent learning.

- 7.5. Direction and focus to disaffected youth in the Durrington area, through structured sporting activities.

Achievement Against Objectives & Deliverables

8. The Smartplace funding continued the provision of The Virtual Classroom service for the community in Durrington and Stonehenge.
9. The project has extended its range of Teaching to Senior Citizens, Single Young Parents, and the Youth, within the Community.
10. **The Stonehenge School's** extra curricula clubs and outreach activities involved **154** young volunteers, Silver Surfers and special needs users.
11. Community use of the evening facility at the college averages **52** per month. Numbers are continually growing.
12. A Video Conferencing Technician has been funded by Smartplace, and the video conference facility is in great demand, both schools use the facility to extend learning out into the community, and helps to deliver learning to hard to reach members of the community.

Conclusions

13. The Virtual Classroom Project has proved to be a successful project and has exceeded its project objectives and deliverables.
14. The Project has been successfully providing training in basic skills and IT to a wide audience within the Amesbury community.
15. The video conferencing facilities can provide further income i.e. more sustainability, for the project.
16. The project serves the citizens most likely to be on the wrong side of the digital divide, thus enhancing social inclusion and promotes social cohesion in the Durrington and Stonehenge areas.

Recommendations

17. The overall success of the Virtual Classroom Project and the ongoing demand for ICT and other complimentary courses, demonstrates that there is an overwhelming demand for ICT and e learning in the Durrington and Stonehenge communities.
18. Access to Free Broadband and ICT facilities, is essential to helping bridge the digital divide and enhance social inclusion in this rural area of Wiltshire.
19. Consequently all efforts should be made to secure follow on funding so that initiatives developed as a result of Smartplace can continue to benefit the Amesbury Community.
20. The Project leads should be given full ownership once the Smartplace funding has ceased.