

TRANSFORM IT WESTBOROUGH

Following on from the Transform IT project, further funding was secured for a three month project extension in the Westborough and Park Barn Estate in Guildford. The funding for this project came from the Surrey Improvement Partnership and the bid was supported by Guildford Local Strategic Partnership. The project was led by Siân Sangarde-Brown and John Thurlow.

The aim of Westborough Transform IT was to provide an intensive three month period of upskilling opportunities in Westborough and Park Barn to attract those who were not currently engaged in training or employment, or were working part-time and wanted to upskill.

Retaining the 'Champion for Transformation' who had developed understanding and experience enabled this project to apply the lessons learned during 'Transform IT' and to take a bank of internet enabled laptops into community venues with groups and individuals. We worked with intermediaries who were trusted in the community, and provided us with a gateway to people who could benefit from the project. We provided them with a comfortable solution to encourage them to engage and offered opportunities that led people to confidence building and improved self esteem. We worked with the learners, and helped them plan their own progression routes.

PROJECT AIMS

- To encourage a culture of engagement and learning in Westborough ward.
- To help people overcome their barriers to learning and progression by helping them recognise that there is no threat to their current lifestyle by engaging, only emotional and/or economic benefit.



ACTUAL OUTCOMES

- We achieved our target of having a positive impact on at least 30 individuals/families and helping them progress. Within a month we were working with in excess of 60 individuals; at least 60% of these had children living at home.
- For 10 families, we facilitated direct intervention or signposting to further support.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

The project achieved success in the following areas:

- Hosted a course for adults with mental health problems
- Sponsored a health and wellbeing course for a vulnerable women's group
- Worked directly with a number of families on the estate on submitting applications for Home Access computers
- Made home visits with Community Safety Wardens, trying to encourage disengaged adults to get involved in learning
- Ran 'Organising Your Life' sessions at the Community Centre at which we provided filing boxes free to participants and gave guidance on what paperwork should be retained in order to make applying for grants, for example, easier
- Ran courses at the Park Barn Centre on Monday afternoons offering progression to learners who had already completed an Adult & Community Learning course
- Ran twilight sessions for parents of students at Kings College
- Helped community members set up their own Informal Learning Group



CASE STUDIES

The following case studies outline aspects of the work that has taken place in Westborough

- **HOME ACCESS COMPUTER SCHEME.** This scheme provides funding for a home computer and internet access for low income families with children between 7 and 14 on free school meals. There was a concern that families in Park Barn who were clearly eligible for the scheme were not exploiting it because they:
 - Hadn't heard about it;
 - Had expressed an interest but hadn't received an application form;
 - Were unable to complete the application form because of its complexity or were unable to find the required supporting evidence (ie Child Benefit statement);
 - Were unable to set up the computer once acquired.

Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership registered with Becta who manage the scheme and became authorised to help people complete and submit application forms. We made a number of home visits to work with families on their applications and have helped them find the necessary supporting documentation. We have also helped two families set up their computers.

- **INTRODUCING THE ELDERLY TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET FOR THE FIRST TIME.** Three of the series of informal IT sessions that the project hosted catered largely for older learners who had never used a computer or the internet before (at St Francis Church, St Clare's Church and the Park Barn Centre). Using appropriate technology (a mobile suite of internet-enabled laptops) and content (mouse and keyboard skills, basic e-mail and web browsing) it has been possible to get in excess of twenty absolute 'first-timers' to a point where they feel confident enough to progress on their own and acquire their own laptops and broadband connections at home. Their lives have been changed as, from now on, they will be able to communicate with friends and relatives in far-flung places instantly by e-mail. This has been a very rewarding element of the project.
- **PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS TO RE-ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY.** The Community Safety Wardens introduced the project to a number of adults on the estate who had, for a range of reasons, become disengaged from the community and were largely stuck at home. The project provided safe and empathetic opportunities for these adults to take part in small-group learning in community venues, boosting their confidence and, in one case, revitalising old friendships with former neighbours and offering a chance for inter-generational learning.