

UK onlinecentres

Annual Review: August 2008 – July 2009





Foreword

Standing back and taking stock of the last twelve months, I find it incredible to see exactly how far we've come, and what we've achieved.

In 2008-2009 we've learned more about our audiences and the environment in which we operate. We've delivered three successful marketing campaigns promoting digital to the digitally excluded, forged new and fruitful partnerships, increased network satisfaction, and developed a comprehensive, open-access user journey through **myguide**.

If we've taken leaps over the last year, however, we've taken giant bounds over the last three.

UK online centres remain under the safe custody of Ufi, but since 2006 the management of the network and the development of **myguide** have been taken forward as a relatively independent operation. As the team behind UK online centres, we've maintained a very clear focus on widening participation in learning, and on using digital inclusion to drive social impacts.

This year, those priorities have become new priorities for government. The *Informal Adult Learning* consultation and subsequent *Learning Revolution* White Paper recognised informal learning to be at the heart of what UK online centres do, and do well. In the meantime, the *Digital Inclusion Action Plan* and later the *Digital Britain* interim and final reports put digital participation at the core of economic and social development, and again recognised the role UK online centres can and do play.

In short, 2008-2009 has seen the agendas which UK online centres have been working in and campaigning for make it onto a mainstream political stage. In policy terms, it's been an extremely exciting time, and I'm very much looking forward to helping shape digital participation thinking and implementation. I am delighted to represent the network as part of the Taskforce supporting Martha Lane Fox as the new Champion for Digital Inclusion. Even though we've lost both a dedicated Minister, Paul Murphy MP, and the author of the original vision for *Digital Britain*, Lord Carter, we have gained not just the Champion's support but an interested and analytical Ministerial leader in Stephen Timms. I am also delighted to be able to play a part on his *Digital Partners Contact Group*, and to be on Ofcom's *Digital Participation Consortium*.

However, the changes in the political landscape do not signal a time to sit back on our laurels, or even on the comfortable chairs provided around various meeting tables for these various groups. There is much potential, but still much to do to ensure we are responding to consumers, delivering to government and other partners' priorities, and supporting network delivery and sustainability.

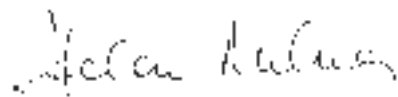
While the economic downturn is part of the backdrop which has given a new lease of life to both widening participation and digital inclusion, it has also made grassroots delivery extremely tough. I'm very aware of how much of a struggle it can be for community based UK online centres to sustain their services long term, and it will be a priority for the next twelve months to keep on finding new routes and new ways to help centres help their visitors. Funding for existing and successful projects remains an issue across the digital skills sector, and the solution is likely to be cross-sector in itself. An example from 2008-2009 of which I'm particularly proud is our partnership with Microsoft, who have so far provided more than £2.9 million worth of software donations to voluntary and community sector (VCS) UK online centres.

Technology is of course another ever-changing factor which has affected UK online centres over the last year. The Microsoft donations have done much to help VCS centres update their systems, but other challenges like the rise of community and social media have had to be met and matched. Our Community Media Beacons have led the way for the network, and their examples and expertise must be further utilised and disseminated in 2009-2010. That work has been supported this year by the growth of **myguide** courses and tutor guides in areas like social networking, online music and auctioning sites.

It is in the ability to evolve and adapt that UK online centres' strength lies. It is something which is demonstrated every day in centres' efforts to engage new and excluded people by focussing on their interests and needs, and going the extra mile to personalise support and provision. It is also something at which we must continue to improve.

Three years on from taking on the role of Managing Director, it remains an incredible privilege, and I remain extremely proud of what UK online centres do. My favourite part of the job is still going out into the network and meeting people for whom technology has literally changed lives, and the people who have helped them along the way. I hope in reading this annual review the members of the UK online centres network are also very proud of their achievements, and proud to be not only part of UK online centres but part of the wider digital inclusion community. Because it is by working together that we will improve digital skills in 2009-2010, reaching even more people, in even more places.

Enjoy reading about our year's work, and please don't hesitate to get in contact with feedback, ideas and suggestions for the year ahead.



Helen Milner
Managing Director
UK online centres
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Natasha's story

After spending her teenage years being moved around different care homes, Natasha quit school at 15 with no qualifications. Now, thanks in part to the UK online centre at Pitman Training in Peterborough, the 19-year-old single mum is studying for a diploma.

Natasha says: "I wanted to find a good office job where I could work sensible hours and earn enough to give my daughter the start in life that I didn't have. But because I had no computer skills whatsoever I could only get put forward for unskilled jobs. That's when I came to the Pitman Training Centre. I was slightly nervous at first but excited too.

The staff were really friendly and I liked **myguide**. I could dip in and out and fit things around my daughter without missing any classes. It was a fantastic feeling to see my skills improving with each new course. After years of underachieving at school, it felt great to finally prove that, given the right circumstances, I could actually learn."

Now Natasha has moved on to Pitman's Executive PA diploma and has a whole career plan mapped out. She says: "The **myguide** courses have given me the IT skills and confidence to push on and make more of my life. For that reason I'd recommend them to anybody."

Section 1 – Introduction

UK online centres provide millions of people with the opportunity and support to use computers and the internet. Their work supports the key government agendas of informal learning and digital inclusion.

1.1 About digital inclusion

Within the UK, there are still an estimated 15 million people who don't, won't or can't use computers and the internet. Significantly, those already at a social or financial disadvantage are at least three times more likely to be off-line, and missing out on the benefits digital technologies can provide. Levelling the digital playing field is an important step towards social equity in the 21st Century, and the goal UK online centres and **myguide** are working towards.

Digital inclusion has become a new priority for government, seen as key to future economic success and competitiveness, social inclusion and community cohesion, and to the efficient and effective delivery of government services and information.

Over the last 12 months the digital-policy landscape has changed considerably, with the launch of *Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation*, *Digital Britain*, *The Learning Revolution* and Estelle Morris' *Review of ICT User Skills*. UK online centres have taken an active role in supporting, contributing to and consulting on all of these documents, and the UK online centres network is firmly established as part of the solution and vision for implementation.

Facts Box:

- i) 29% of adults in the UK don't use the internet¹**
- ii) 25% of adults in the UK have never used the internet**
- iii) 35% of households don't have the internet**
- iv) 75% of everyone not online is also not working**
- v) 26% of all employed people aren't online either**
- vi) 70% of people who live in social housing aren't online² – a full 28% of all those not online³**
- vii) Only 15% of people living in deprived areas have used a government online service or website in the last year, compared to 55% nationally⁴**
- viii) Internet users' confidence in their ability to find work outstrips non-users by 25%⁵**
- ix) 49% of those without access are in the lowest socio-economic groups (DE)⁶**
- x) 50% of those without access are over 65**

¹ Facts i) – v) ONS 2008

² Oxford Internet Survey 2007

³ ICM 2008

⁴ Ofcom, March 2009

⁵ UK online centres/Freshminds, April 2009

⁶ Facts ix)and x) ICM 2008

1.2 About UK online centres

Set up by government in 2000 to provide public access to computers, the UK online centres network now plays a key role in exploiting ICT to help improve individual lives, strengthen communities and achieve social inclusion.

There are thousands of UK online centres across England, and many use **myguide** to introduce people to the world of ICT. **myguide** is a simple web platform designed to make getting online easy and intuitive, and was developed by the central UK online centres team in consultation with a wide variety of partners.

There are 30 people working for the team which manages UK online centres, supporting the development and administration of the products, services and grants for the UK online centres network. This includes a regional team of ten people, who co-ordinate activity in each English region.

UK online centres is a division of Ufi, and receives core funding from the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills (BIS) via the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Funding for the development of **myguide** comes from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). In addition, we work with a range of other partners, including Ofcom, NHS Choices, 4IP's Talk About Local, and Microsoft, whose funding and support enables us to extend our reach and deliver more digital inclusion projects.

Facts Box:

- > 3,500 member centres
- > UK online centres in 84% of deprived wards
- > 2 million people use UK online centres every year
- > One third have no formal qualifications
- > 74% are socially excluded
- > Over 50% of UK online centre users receive some state benefit
- > More than half of users earn less than £10k a year
- > The average age of a UK online centres user is 48 years old
- > 50% of users do not own their own home
- > 25% are responsible for children
- > One third of users consider themselves to have a disability or mental health issues
- > 74% are not in paid employment
- > One quarter of centre users are from non-British ethnic backgrounds
- > 93% of visitors access online government services in a UK online centre
- > 64% of customers progress to take up further education, Information, Advice and Guidance opportunities, volunteering placements or employment
- > 98% of people who use the centres rate the service as good to excellent.

1.3 About myguide

Launched in October 2007, **myguide** offers a free, easy to use email service and web search facility from a clean, simple homepage, plus taster courses to help people get to grips with computers and the internet.

myguide courses are arranged across what UK online centres call a 'user journey', with three levels – starting, using and understanding. The journey helps centres and individuals track their learning progress and build their own journey based on the subjects that interest them. The course catalogue has grown considerably over the last 12 months, and now ranges from how to use a mouse to how to bank, shop and stay safe online, job hunting to bargain hunting, the basics of digital photography to the basics of politics.

The vision for **myguide** is to make the internet available and accessible to those who have never used it before – whether because of lack of motivation, skills, confidence, or even disability.

myguide allows people to personalise and save their settings, change screen colours or font sizes, and choose to have the text read to them without needing additional software.

myguide – www.myguide.gov.uk – is openly and freely available on the internet for anyone to use. The idea is that web-novices get support to use it by an individual family member or friend, or by an intermediary like a UK online centre who can make sure people's first steps online are a positive experience.

Facts Box:

- > 32 short courses
- > Around 190,000 **myguide** registrations since its launch
- > 91,000 registrations in 2008-9
- > An average of 250 new users each day
- > Over 1,300,000 course uses in 2008-09



Tom's story

Tom, 46, from Blyth, was a plasterer for 30 years until an injury left him unable to do his job. Now, thanks to the Isabella UK online centre in Blyth, he's adapted his career and is working as a lecturer in building skills.

He explains: "I'd worked as a plasterer all my life and was gutted to have to stop because I enjoyed it. But I simply couldn't lift my arm up anymore. With lecturing I realised I could pass my skills on to kids learning the trade. To get into teaching though, I knew I'd really need an understanding of computers. I didn't learn about them at school, and in my career

they just haven't been relevant. Going into the Isabella Centre I was suspicious at first, but the tutor Doug was fantastic! And I liked the **myguide** system because it allowed me to learn what I wanted, when I wanted, how fast I wanted."

Tom is now working on short term teaching contracts, studying for his NVQ Level III in education, emailing colleagues, preparing materials on the computer and looking for new contracts and jobs online. He says: "UK online centres have given me the confidence and skills to make the career change that I needed."

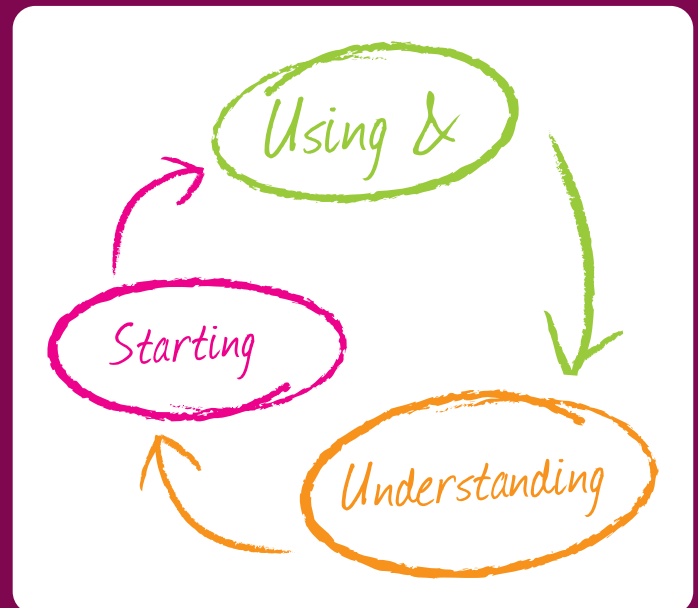
Section 2 – Supporting the network

The main role of the team which manages UK online centres is to support the network by providing products, services and resources to help centres help people get online.

2.1 The User journey

The 'User journey' was introduced in 2007, but has developed considerably in 2008-2009 with the introduction of more **myguide** courses, skills checkpoints and tasters. It's a framework which has been designed to help UK online centres plan and personalise an online learning journey for every visitor. Split across three levels for starting, using and understanding, visitors can follow their areas of interest across **myguide**, and beyond, with the help and guidance of their UK online centre.

There are now 32 short courses on **myguide**, openly available for all UK online centres, other providers and even individuals to use. The latest additions include understanding banking online, understanding British politics, and understanding family history.



User journey principles

From Digital and Social Exclusion (Welcome)	➤ Through learning and skills (First & Next steps)	➤ To confident citizen (Moving on)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach Marketing Information, advice & guidance Inspiration Mentoring Personal support Partnership working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer & internet skills Access to online information Simple online government transactions Tasters & Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced internet skills Advice & Guidance Complex online government transactions Further learning Steps towards employment Referrals to other services and providers

The User journey on myguide

From Digital and Social Exclusion (Welcome)



Through learning and skills (First & Next steps)



To confident citizen (Moving on)

Starting with **myguide**
 Starting with computers
 Challenge the Walkers
 Taste of English
 Feeling fine online
 It's never too late to get online

Using public services online
 Using the web
 Using online searches
 Using email
 Using a computer
 Using digital TV
 Using a mobile phone
 Using digital photography
 First steps checkpoint
 Next steps checkpoint
 Using the internet safely

Understanding public services online
 Understanding shopping
 Understanding job hunting
 Understanding music
 Understanding your home computer
 Understanding banking
 Understanding socialising
 Understanding eBay
 Moving on checkpoint
 Understanding family internet safety
 Understanding your child's learning
 Understanding money management
 Understanding UK politics
 Understanding your family history
 Understanding family education

2.2 Marketing

At UK online centres we believe it's possible to market digital to the digitally excluded, and we conduct extensive market research to understand our different audiences, their motivations and barriers to using technology. We can then build targeted campaigns and choose our media and messages accordingly.

Our marketing model has developed considerably over the last year, over three discrete marketing campaigns – *Get online day 2008* in October, *Feeling Fine Online* in February, and *It's never too late* in May. The formula which has proved most successful and most cost effective is a national PR campaign to raise general awareness, backed up by locally delivered marketing to drive footfall into individual centres.

For each of our campaigns we focus our PR on national broadcast contacts and consumer publications, driving calls to our 0800 77 1234 number and website, www.ukonlinecentres.com, where callers can find details of their nearest participating UK online centre. We also provide centres with marketing packs and toolkits which piggy-back on the national theme and allow them to run their own mini-campaigns in their local areas.

Our PR campaigns in 2008-2009 have been nominated for a PR Week award (see next page).



Campaign	Celebrity support	Media highlights	Results
<p>Get online day 2008 October 2008 <i>Targeting off-line families</i></p>	<p>Maggie Philbin, Tomorrow's World</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC TV lunchtime news • BBC2 radio phone-ins • 25 BBC regional radio interviews • 50 regional advertorials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,000 calls to 0800 77 1234 • 31,000 people visited www.ukonlinecentres.com to find their nearest centre • 7,000 people played the 'Challenge the Walkers' taster game • 8,623 myguide registrations in October
<p>Feeling Fine Online Feb/March 2009 <i>Targeting women 45+</i></p>	<p>Ex-Eastender Gillian Taylforth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC Breakfast interview • The Alan Titchmarsh Show • Women's Weekly case study features • Daily Express piece • 15 regional radio interviews • 120 local advertorials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,315 calls to 0800 77 1234 • 86,000 people visited www.ukonlinecentres.com to find their nearest centre • 14,297 people played the Feeling Fine Online myguide taster • February 2009 – 9,165 myguide registrations in February, 10,598 myguide registrations in March

Campaign	Celebrity support	Media highlights	Results
<p>It's never too late May 2009 <i>Targeting males and females 60+ and partnering with Digital Unite to incorporate Silver Surfers' Day</i></p>	<p>Ex-Coronation Street publican Julie Goodyear and Sir Geoff Hurst</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The One Show • Sky News • Working Lunch • BBC News Channel • BBC Radio 2 • Talksport • Daily Mirror • Mature Times • 15 regional radio interviews • 120 regional advertorials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8,500 calls to 0800 77 1234 • 72,000 people visited www.ukonlinecentres.com to find their nearest UK online centre • 13,740 people played the It's never too late myguide taster • 9,456 myguide registrations in May

For many UK online centres visitors it's the helping hand they receive at a local and trusted centre which makes the key difference in motivating them to get started online. As community intermediaries and experts, centres are key in targeting and engaging vulnerable, digitally dismissive or otherwise deeply excluded people. To help them do so, we've also

started to provide centres with marketing materials to help them support **myguide** and understand how being part of the network can help them do what they do. We also have branding packs to dress centres, and offer marketing tips and advice via an online toolkit.

2.3 Online resources

UK online centres provide numerous resources via the network extranet, *Help is at Hand (HIAH)*. A weekly Members' News email goes out to network contacts with the latest on national developments, funding, marketing, and project opportunities, linking readers through to HIAH itself.

The website has received a facelift this year to help centres find the information they need, keep their details up to date, input management information and keep in touch. Resources include an online marketing toolkit with downloadable materials and templates, lesson plans and tutor guides for **myguide** courses, funding alerts and links to external resources.

Help is at Hand is also the place centres can access *Experts online*, a free service which allows them access to advice on anything from HR issues to legal action, funding to full cost recovery, disability discrimination to business planning. Towards the end of the year the service – previously provided by Ruralnet – was due to be closed down. In order to continue to provide this information and expertise, UK online centres have taken over *Experts online*, and will now manage it from our external web pages for both UK online centres and other community learning providers.



2.4 Training

The central UK online centres team offers training to all member centres, for both staff and volunteers. A key part of our training strategy is to deliver webinars – web-delivered seminars – which can be provided without the centre staff and volunteers having to leave their desk. In 2008 – 2009 our training programme included nearly 300 online webinar sessions in marketing, funding and bid writing, and using **myguide** as part of the User journey.

In addition, nearly 200 training grants were awarded, helping UK online centres people gain tutor qualifications, learn First Aid, and take courses as diverse as leadership and management, IT and delivering conflict management. In total, just under £55,000 worth of grants were awarded, with more than 170 people taking advantage of the programme.

2.5 Funding and direct support

In 2008-2009 grant funding for centres was linked to the User journey. £2.4m was available for small grants between £7,500 and £10,000, which could be used for both capital and revenue. Centres in the network were asked to demonstrate how the grant would support the User journey in their centre, engaging, progressing, and tracking visitors along the way. 370 UK online centres benefited from the funding, and engaged 618,795 centre visitors.

In addition, £1.5 million was awarded via LSC Capital Funding Grants, meaning 135 centres were able to increase their capacity and capability.

Grant and capital funding is monitored and supported by the ten Regional Managers who work across England to help member centres make the most of UK online centre services, deliver the User journey and build local partnerships with stakeholders and other providers. This year, as well as providing training and advice to existing centres, Regional Managers have focussed on growing the UK online centres membership network – specifically in deprived medium-level super output areas (MSOAs). A total of 547 new member centres were engaged in 2008-2009, and there is now a UK online centre in 84 % of MSOAs.

2.6 Network satisfaction

This year, we've been working to improve the service we provide to the network, and as a result centre satisfaction has gone up 15% from 64% at the start of the year to 79% at the end. While we're proud of that achievement, we're also conscious of the need to improve upon it in 2009-2010. Here's what some of our centre staff said about our services:

“myguide helps learners progress at a pace suitable to their needs – it supports the courses available at our training centre and can also be accessed at home”

Val Head, IT Tutor, Network Training centre

“Help is at Hand gives you access to a wide range of information 24/7. It does what it says, giving you a helping hand – providing marketing templates, funding information, full details on the User journey and a whole lot more.”

Jo Crumplin, Project Co-ordinator,
Castle Morpeth Online

“I was so pleased to take part in the Funding and Bid writing webinar and I am now in a more informed position to tackle funding bids, there is a lot more to it than meets the eye!”

Lin Sirah, Centre Manager from Global Information Centre

“The support is so good it feels as if UK online centres are in the office next door! We always get immediate responses to queries and it's great to be connected to a wider network that keeps you abreast of all the training and funding opportunities that are out there.”

Cynthia Jewell, Head of Skills Development,
Enterprise Tamar

“Being a UK online centre is great. The User journey funding makes a big difference to the way we help our learners. It means we have more staff and space, and we're able to give a lot of people one-to-one training when they first start out on **myguide**.”

Nazia Saeed, Centre co-ordinator,
Nhanced Learning

Pauline's story

After retiring, 70-year-old Pauline wanted to find something to do that would keep her brain active. Having never switched a computer on in her life, regular trips to her local UK online centre Nhanced Learning have turned out to be just the stimulus she was looking for.

“All my friends have computers and I realised I felt a bit left out. I was apprehensive on my first visit because I thought I might do something wrong and break the computers! But I soon started to take things in. It's amazing to see what information the internet holds and it's really useful to be able to use it to look up information on recipes and fill out forms like insurance and road tax. It's also great as a communications tool. My husband has Parkinson's disease and we don't get out an awful lot, so it's nice to be able to keep in touch with friends and family online. Eventually I hope to be able to use the computer to do even more, because things like internet banking and shopping could also be a real help to us.

“Getting online has been like switching from black and white to colour TV for me. It's made everything clearer, easier and more enjoyable!”



Section 3 – Working with partners

UK online centres work with partners across the public, private and third sectors to help get more people using new technologies, and raise awareness of digital inclusion amongst consumers, media, political decision-makers and other stakeholders.

Through partnerships, we take part in various projects, pilots and national funding bids, aiming to secure additional resources to support centres' activities.

This year we've worked with a whole host of partner organisations and individuals, including Digital Unite, NHS Choices, Citizens Online, RNIB, DC10 Plus, Directgov, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Ofcom, Microsoft, BBC, Talk About Local, Horseshmouth, RSA, We Share Stuff and even European partners like Telecentre Europe and Esplai. Through social media, we're also engaging with many individuals who have important contributions to make to the digital inclusion debate. The examples in this section showcase just some of that partnership activity.

3.1 Digital Unite and Silver Surfer's Day

In May we teamed up with Digital Unite to make our *It's never too late* campaign support their annual Silver Surfer's Day. By working together, it became the biggest and best Silver Surfer's Day to date, with more than 1,000 events taking place across the country, and thousands of older people taking the chance to learn more about computers and the internet, and celebrate the impact of technology on their lives. Non UK online centre event holders got to take advantage of the **myguide** taster course designed for older users, and UK online centres got to take advantage of Digital Unite's established campaign.

3.2 NHS Choices Community Champions

Last year, UK online centres and NHS Choices formed a partnership to try and get more socially and digitally excluded people using the NHS Choices website for anything from finding a GP to planning a healthy eating menu. A group of Champion centres

were selected and funded by NHS Choices to recruit their own mini-networks, train tutors to use the website, promote NHS Choices and make it part of everyday work with new internet users.

Since April 2008, 75,000 people have been supported to use the website, aided by the nine flagship Champions and their recruited network of nearly 500 centres. It's the first time a public service website has sought to target an off-line audience, and it's proved such a popular formula with users and centres – and so successful for NHS Choices – they're continuing to support the project in 2009-2010.

3.3 Directgov

UK online centres have also been working with Directgov on a three month project to see how the network can help people use the one-stop-shop government website, and to collect data about how easy new internet users find its services. 900 people were supported to use the website by eight centres, and nearly 200 of them completed a survey about it. The majority of users found Directgov very helpful, but needed a helping hand to really get to grips with it. Afterwards, more than 90% said they'd use it again, and 90% said they'd recommend it to a friend.

3.4 Microsoft software donations

UK online centres in the community, voluntary and charity sector have now received more than £2.9 million worth of software, donated by Microsoft as part of an ongoing partnership with UK online centres.

The pilot application process began in test areas last June, and now more than 150 centres have received their free software and are using it to help visitors learn about and on the very latest technology. Charity-based centres can apply for the latest products – including sever software, Windows Vista, Word and Excel – plus licenses to use each product on up to 50 computers. With applications still coming in thick and fast and an estimated 1,000 centres in the network eligible to apply, we expect the figure to rise even higher over the coming months.

3.5 Ofcom partnership

UK online centres have had a close relationship with Ofcom in 2008-2009, working on several projects which support Ofcom's Media Literacy agenda. One of those projects has seen another cascade model following in the footsteps of NHS Choices Community Champions, this time recruiting centres who are experts in engaging and supporting older people. This mini network has reached 170 centres, and helped an estimated 20,000 older people as a result.

In addition, Ofcom has also supported another group of expert centres, this time the Community Media Beacons. These ten centres are experts in social and community media, from radio broadcasting to community web development, animation and video blogging. The Media Beacons are delivering training about their projects to other UK online centres, developing a network-wide community media strategy for UK online centres, and producing other materials and content to disseminate best practice.

3.6 Becta and Home Access

The Home Access pilots took place between February and June 2009 in Oldham and Suffolk. UK online centres in both areas were part of the delivery partnership, helping to provide skills for parents in

order to maximise the effect of the free laptops for children. UK online centres' Training Manager was seconded to Becta to support them in driving digital skills for parents, using local UK online centres and **myguide**, with particular reference to the courses on internet safety and family education. UK online centres will continue to support the Home Access scheme as it is rolled out nationally.

3.7 Esplai and Telecentre-Europe

UK online centres are working with the Esplai Foundation, a Spanish education charity, on a project to provide an online Employment Toolkit for Europe-wide telecentre network managers, centre managers, and visitors. Having successfully bid for EU funding with partners from Belgium, Latvia, Romania and Germany, the project will draw on existing resources and expertise, bringing together templates and localised information in a single online Toolkit.

The work is part of UK online centres ongoing support for Telecentre-Europe, a network of more than 50 European organisations working to support digital inclusion through their combined 25,000 telecentres.



Jane's story

Thirty-eight year old Jane has Down's syndrome and uses her local UK online centre, Kensington Community Learning Centre, to learn about the internet and socialise. Tutor Debbie introduced her to NHS Choices, which is set as the centre's homepage. Debbie says: "Jane got to know the website really quickly, and since then there's been no stopping her!"

Jane adds: "I like using the NHS Choices website because it's got lots of information about Down's syndrome on it. I can read about other people who have it, and their experiences, and how their parents cope. It's very easy to use, it has simple labels on it and an A to Z so I can find things quickly."

When Jane's Mum Rose became ill with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and osteoporosis, Jane went straight to the NHS Choices website. Jane continues: "The website was great for me. I wanted to find out what my mum was going through, and it helped me to understand what was happening, and gave me some good advice so I could help. Now I know what's going on nothing is quite so scary. I think computers and the internet are brilliant. I love coming to the centre and I love being able to find things out by myself!"

Section 4 – Driving digital inclusion

An important part of our work is in supporting the development of digital inclusion as a policy area and emerging ‘community’, driving awareness, helping to co-ordinate action and contributing to the understanding of the issues involved.

4.1 Research

At UK online centres we conduct extensive research in order to monitor the network, find out more about our current users and target audiences, and to gain insights into wider digital inclusion issues and impacts. Our research programme informs our marketing strategy and wider business planning, and is intended to contribute and build into the considerable body of knowledge being accumulated by the digital inclusion community.

4.1.1 Does the internet improve lives?

This year, we worked with research agency Freshminds on a substantial piece of primary research which looked at the attitudes, characteristics and behaviours of C2DE internet users and non-users to see if the internet really does make a difference to people’s lives, and what leads to its adoption. Key findings from the *Does the internet improve lives?* research report included:

- › Internet users had a specific reason or motivation to get online. We categorised them as Knowledge-seekers (22%), Communicators (18%), Functionalists, Hobbyists, Transactors/bargain hunters, Technophiles and those Family orientated.
- › Non-internet users consisted of the Excluded (55%) who feel they lack the access or skills to use the internet, and Rejectors (45%) who simply don’t want to use the internet and feel it has no relevance to their lives.
- › Internet users are likely to be generally more confident, find it easier to plan travel and organise social gatherings, and feel much better informed about current affairs. They also rate their overall happiness and quality of life higher than non-users.
- › Half of internet users said they’d saved £240 or more as a direct result of their internet use.
- › Internet users’ confidence in their ability to find work outstripped non-users by 25%.

4.1.2 Digital inclusion attitudes

This year we have also worked with ICM and ComRes to explore the attitudes to digital inclusion adopted by key stakeholders – MPs, Councillors, and business leaders from both small and large companies.

Digital Britain’s first sentence places digital participation as central to plans for economic recovery. Yet our research found fewer than half of MPs (46 %) and only one in three councillors (38 %) thought digital investment would help the UK recover from the economic downturn. Similarly, at least a quarter of business leaders (27 %) actively disagreed ‘digital’ has any role to play in economic recovery.

Most respondents were aware of digital inclusion, and while most had a fairly accurate understanding that disadvantaged groups were more likely to be excluded, the link between social exclusion and digital exclusion was not universally accepted. Only 60% of MPs, 55% of Councillors and 55% of business leaders believed the internet could help to level the digital playing field and bridge class divides. There was also considerable confusion over what digital exclusion actually meant, with most believing not having access to the internet in the home was the definitive definition.

The results helped us plan and shape our responses to *Digital Britain* and the Estelle Morris *Digital Skills Review*.

4.1.3 Research stakeholders seminar

In July, UK online centres led a workshop for digital inclusion researchers to get together, discuss future projects and examine the current gaps in information and understanding. Contributors included Ofcom, Newcastle University, the RSA, Freshminds and members of the government’s Digital Inclusion Team. By continuing to share information online and off-line the group hopes to avoid duplication, gain peer review input, and extend the knowledge base at the core of digital inclusion projects and policies.

4.1.4 Myopinion

Myopinion is UK online centres’ own online research panel, which was set up this year. The panel includes **myguide** users, UK online centres visitors and staff, as well as members of the general population. People registered on myopinion can take part in a number of surveys to feed back on various issues – from the rising cost of living to new technology.

4.2 Working with government

UK online centres work very closely with various government departments to support policy thinking and development. As well as responding to official consultations like the *Informal Learning* consultation, *Digital Britain* and *Digital Inclusion Action Plan* consultations, this year has seen UK online centres' Communications Manager undertake a secondment with the Digital Inclusion Team at Communities and Local Government.

We have also worked with Estelle Morris on her research for the *Review of ICT User Skills*, and continue to raise the profile of digital inclusion and UK online centres with a series of MP visits to UK online centres across England. Notably, these have included the then Older People's Minister Rosie Winterton MP, pictured, who met and chatted with Helen Milner and older learners at Greenwich Online's Greenlawns Sheltered Housing centre in May.

Managing Director Helen Milner also raises awareness about digital inclusion issues by writing and speaking on the subject extensively. She was a member of the Ofcom *Media Literacy Working Group* feeding into the final Digital Britain report, and is now a member of the subsequent Ofcom-led *Digital Britain Digital Participation Group*, one of ten members of an expert Taskforce supporting new Champion for Digital Inclusion Martha Lane Fox, and part of the *Digital Partners Contact Group* set up by new Digital Britain Minister Stephen Timms.

Rosie Winterton MP on a visit
to Greenwich Online's
Greenlawns Centre



4.3 The National Digital Inclusion Conference

The fourth national Digital Inclusion Conference took place at the end of April in Westminster, hosted by Civic Conferences with key supporters UK online centres and DC10 Plus. It saw more than 400 delegates come through the doors, more than 600 follow on the live webstream, six Ministers report on progress and policy, four workshops whittle down 20 ideas for digi-inc action, a team of 12 social reporters post more than 50 video interviews, and it was even the third most talked about thing on Twitter. All in all, it added up to one big online and off-line debate, ably steered by Chair Matthew Taylor of the RSA, and covering economic and social e-implications and opportunities from learning to health, community to democracy, business practice to individual empowerment.

A new digital engagement Ning was set up before the event as a space for delegates to chat and share their thoughts. Ideas for a 'digital manifesto' were collated during the Conference itself, and have since been discussed and voted on. The Ning website has become something of a discussion space and blog for digital engagement partners, and can be found at <http://net.digitalengagement.org>

4.4 Social Landlords' Digital Inclusion Strategy Group

Speaking at the Digital Inclusion Conference, Baroness Andrews announced a new Registered Social Landlords' Digital Inclusion Strategy Group. The group, which held its first meeting in July, is chaired by Helen Milner, and brings together leaders from social housing agencies, tenant associations, digital inclusion organisations and the private sector. With 28% of the estimated 15 million digitally excluded people in Britain living in social housing, the group will discuss how digital inclusion can improve lives and communities, and come up with key recommendations for how they should be working together to support digital connection and engagement. The recommendations will then be presented back to the new Minister for Housing and Planning, John Healey MP, and the Champion for Digital Inclusion, Martha Lane Fox.



Glen's story

Glen's life has been dominated by a severe form of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, but learning about technology has helped him plan and manage his symptoms. Now he's passing IT on as a popular tutor at Windmill Hill City Farm UK online centre, and raising the profile of the centre and awareness of mental health issues in Bristol and beyond.

Glen, 45, says: "If you spend your life trapped in your own head, your world can get very small and very dark. Computers and the internet just opened it back up again. It was like turning a light on. I started off slowly using **myguide**, and my confidence grew with my skills. I've not just found tools to help make my

old life better, easier and more enjoyable - I've found a whole new life and a whole new me. Everything used to be about my illness, now it's about me as a person, and I've done things I never dreamed of. It's still not always easy – some days are better than others – but no matter how stuck I get, or how exhausted or frustrated, I know I can achieve things.

"I'd like to see more people using computers and the internet as a way to lift themselves over whatever obstacles are standing in their way. There is so much out there, so much information and potential support to guide you through. And trust me, if I can do it, anyone can!"

What's next?

The mission of UK online centres in 2009-2010 is to connect people to digital skills and opportunities, using technology to improve lives and life chances. This final section outlines the long-term planning and activity already underway for the next twelve month period.

A key priority for 2009-2010 will still be to support centres to sustain a high quality service for their local communities. We also want to encourage UK online centres to make the most of new and emerging technologies to help people find new ways of learning, communicating, and progressing. We will continue to recruit UK online centres to provide network coverage in the most deprived super output areas, and continue to work openly and collaboratively with partners on projects, pilots and bids.

Two projects just beginning are with Talk About Local and Barnsley MBC. Talk About Local is a project which aims to give people a voice in their communities to help shape local events and issues. A pilot is being run in the West Midlands involving 15 centres who will each recruit 20 learners and help them create at least two new and lasting community-interest websites. That pilot will then be extended across the country to 150 centres, each with the same objectives for engaging learners in web design and community issues.



Michael and Oliver's story

For best friends Michael and Oliver, 17 and 18, UK online centres and **myguide** have been a vital link between school and college. Both missed out on the GCSE grades to get into the body working course they wanted to do at Plymouth College, and ended up at the Enterprise Tamar centre in Launceston looking to improve their computer skills, literacy and numeracy.

Oliver says: "I much prefer the style of learning with UK online centres. I did learn a bit about computers at school but my teacher and I just did not get on and I gave up. Here I've picked up internet search and research skills, email and stuff like that. I've even enjoyed it!"

Michael says: "I'm dyslexic so **myguide** was good for me. I like the way you can change the layout, size and colour of the work, which makes it easier for me to understand. Now I'm using what I've learned through **myguide** to study maths and English online. Hopefully with all of that on my CV I'll be able to get into college. It just goes to show school doesn't suit everyone, and that everyone can learn and improve themselves if they get the chance."



Meanwhile, Totally Online Barnsley is a new project which aims to get everyone in Barnsley understanding the benefits of the information society and able to use technology. The three year programme involves 40+ partners across Barnsley from the Council leading the initiative to local schools and businesses, charity and community organisations. UK online centres are a key partner, and Get online day 2009 will be the project's first major milestone. Our flagship Get online day event will take place in the town, and we hope to make Barnsley case studies a focus for our marketing and communications activities.

We're also looking forward to working with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to help implement the *Learning Revolution White Paper*. Centres all over the country are holding exciting events to attract people into both IT and local volunteering opportunities as part of the October Festival of Learning.

The UK online centres team is also delighted to have been successful in its bid to the Transformation Fund, also funded by BIS. Between now and March 2010, we'll be delivering a project to help revitalise seaside towns by encouraging residents to get involved in digital media through a series of roadshows.

Alongside new projects and partnerships, we are also planning to reach out to new audiences. Our marketing strategy is evolving, and we'll be trying to target more deeply excluded people through intermediaries – from local businesses to friends and family. This will include the launch of a new set of web pages and an online marketing campaign called *Pass IT On*. This will work alongside consumer marketing, trying to reach more people in more ways, and targeting specific groups.

Finally, we shall continue to support the Champion for Digital Inclusion and Digital Britain Minister in their work to co-ordinate resource and close the digital divide, and work with the team taking forward the *Morris Review of ICT User Skills* into implementation.

You can find out more about UK online centres activities by visiting our website, www.ukonlinecentres.com, or by emailing us at ukonlinecentres@ufi.com

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