

Broadband helps Cath communicate better with member and partner organisations



Business and People

Cath is the Finance and IT manager for Bury CVS, which is involved in supporting community and voluntary groups in the Bury Metro area. It is a key member of the Local Strategic Partnership with a 30 year history of support for organisations including carers, disability groups and residents associations. Bury CVS is constantly developing new projects and is now using broadband to disseminate information as well as distributing documents. Overall, broadband is helping them to both maintain and improve efficiency. Cath says that "the membership is actively encouraged to embrace new technology and to access the existing information, rather than trying to re-invent the wheel. If you look on the Internet for a sample document, e.g. a health and safety policy, you can generally find a selection to choose from." Bury CVS is currently piloting Community Cohesion and Connecting Communities projects, funded by the Home Office. They also have community venues that are used by many local people and groups and have recently opened a food co-op, funded through the New Opportunities Fund.

Getting on to Broadband

Generally, broadband helps Bury CVS to communicate better, reach more user groups and share information and good practice with similar organisations. The speed helps to download sample documents for research; some files on legislation sites can be enormous and could not be dealt with using a dial-up connection. Broadband is also used for bidding for project funding for which there are often urgent calls, with applications using complicated interactive forms.

They are making much more use of the Web for service provision and development of interactive web sites such as the Burylife.net portal. All the sites are now much better with more use of photographs.

Opening up broadband access to the public has allowed previously excluded groups to swap e-mails and pictures with relatives overseas and a Kurdish man living in Bury is using the Resource Centre's facilities to write a book.

Learning Online

Cath joined the project in order to communicate better with member and partner organisations, including the Local Authority, Primary Care Trust and the Local Strategic Partnership. Feedback from the various projects showed the need for marketing training; it is just as important in public sector and voluntary organisations as the private sector. According to Cath, "we're not good at telling people how good we are. We need to get out there and tell people." As well as being a convenient way to learn, the course encouraged a creative approach to thinking about marketing...

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Marketing

Cath says, " I have been able to put together an ordered, structured marketing plan to go alongside our 5 year business plan. It has shown us how we can better market our services both to our member groups and to others."

Bury CVS has recently been involved in a Broadband Pilot funded through the NWDA to target some 'need to reach' groups – including asylum seekers, refugees and men over 50. Other examples are an Internet café in Radcliffe and the Resource Centre in East Bury, which offers IT training and drop-in facilities. This is an area with a large Asian settlement, supported housing, asylum seekers and multi-occupier properties and the computers in these centres have generated an overwhelming response.

The Future

Bury CVS wants to build on the principles of targeting, planning and using technology. There is a large cross section of people coming to use the Resource Centre and the other venues and they have been planned to be accessible to the majority of people they have been trying to reach. "The quality of CVS services has now been recognised by a successful bid to the NWDA! Following a highly competitive application process they have secured £128,645 to run a one-year project that will use IT and specialist media in order to increase good health in excluded groups."

Cath notes that there are still areas that cannot get broadband and thinks that wireless technology could be used to link up people in 'hot spots'. She would like more help on the technical side of using broadband, such as server problems and how to fix them, how to do 'rolling profiles' and set up a payroll system with e-filing to the Inland Revenue.

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