



Easy-PC

Free weekly computer classes and one-to-one lessons for people from East Bristol.

Evaluation of the project July 2013 – July 2016

The Easy PC project has been running at St Werburghs Community Centre since July 2013. The main aim of the project is to reduce isolation, disadvantage and inequality resulting from lack of computing skills.

The project set out specifically to:

1. Give participants the opportunity to learn skills in computing for work and life; to be used for job search, online communication, internet browsing, accessing news, social networking, money saving;
2. Give people the opportunity to attend a group session, meet others who suffer from digital exclusion, make new friends;
3. Reduce participants' feelings of isolation, increase confidence and self-esteem and create an improvement in mental health.

Before and After

1. **Learning New Skills:** Give participants the opportunity to learn skills in computing; to be applied in job search, online communication (e-mail), internet browsing, accessing news, social networking, money saving.

We have asked all participants to rate their IT skills on a scale from 1 to 10 with '1' being 'no knowledge' and '10' 'being an expert'. Below is the comparison of their ratings before and after undertaking the project:



85% of participants reported that they have learnt new skills.

Apart from learning the basic course content, such as:

- Computer parts and components
- Writing letters on Microsoft Word
- Setting up an e-mail account
- Using Social Media
- Navigating the Internet
- Organising files and folders (basic networks)
- Internet and computer security

Participants also reported learning Excel, how to do online shopping, editing photos in Paint, CV writing and storing, applying for jobs via e-mail, using internet on mobile phones and tablets.

84% participants said that the sessions attended inspired them to learn more.

“I work with Excel spreadsheets for work. I am completely new to this program. It has made me feel more confident to use.”

“Online shopping, set up PayPal account, eBay account”

63% of participants said that as a result of the project they feel more knowledgeable.

“Filling out online forms increased confidence using folders, increased confidence using e-mails.”

“Able to update and send CV, documents and respond to and send emails. Amazing service. Thank you St Werburghs Centre.”

38% of participants said that they didn't know how to use a computer before joining our project.

"I am less frustrated now, I can find fulfilment using the computer for pleasure, I feel I can participate in life better now."

2. Connecting with others: Give people the opportunity to attend a group session, meet others, make new friends

48% of participants made new friendships through taking part in Easy-PC and 17% said that as a result of the project they feel less isolated

"I am happy, I was happy to meet new friends and the leader was very nice."

"Given me confidence with computer technology. Helping me to find information and keep in touch with family abroad."

"Look forward to meetings and learning something for me. I look after my husband with Alzheimer so I enjoy friendship as well as learning. When I no longer get out I will hopefully be able to shop online, banking and lots more."

"I loved it there. A nice atmosphere and very nice staff."

"Applying for work, research. Facebook and email to keep in contact."

3. Improving well-being: Reduce participants' feelings of isolation, increase confidence and self-esteem and create an improvement in mental health

69% of participants said that as a result of the project they feel more confident

"In this age IT is essential. Although my IT skills are still limited, I am more confident using a mobile phone which makes my life more convenient and safe."

"It has improved my confidence at home and at work. Also it has helped me know my home computer more and how to protect using antivirus."

"More confident. Teacher very patient and easy to follow."

"As time as gone on, I am less nervous around computers. Do find them difficult. Would like to overcome this. As I realise what a wonderful tool they are!"

43% of participants said that as a result of the project they feel happier

"I'm so much happier now my fears to computers have been reduced!"

Longer term impact

The project undoubtedly has a longer term impact on its participants as they start using computers more frequently in various aspects of their lives. We have gathered valuable feedback from some participants who joined the classes three years ago and haven't been for a while. As they reflect on it they agree that the project has enabled them to cope better in everyday life. Participants armed in new skills also benefit from an increased ability to self-manage whether in life or work environment.

Participants commented:

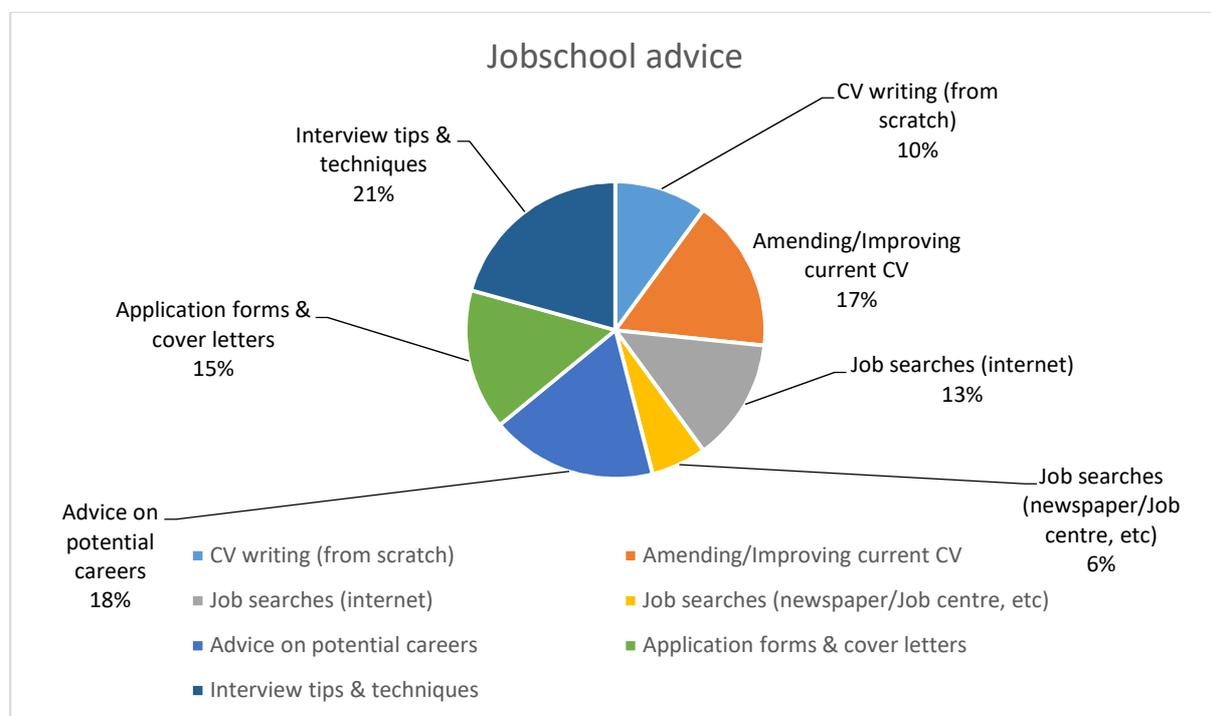
“So much more understand the modern world and what is going on in it!”

“Changed energy supplier and broadband.”

“Watch short films, communicate with family, friends via emails, look for information, check out different web sites, look at fashion, check my online accounts, get messages for blank greetings cards.”

Background

During the first 18 months we ran the project in conjunction with a weekly job advice service and as a result of that 24% of all participants were working adults. In the second half of the project we aimed the Easy PC sessions exclusively at people over 55 years of age who suffer from digital exclusion.



In our evaluation of the Job Advice project we recorded a greater need for less structured but more detailed and ad hoc support, given impromptu by the Centre staff. The job advice service continued separately in a less rigid way. Most service users were firstly coming to use our public computers in the main lobby for writing CVs, filling out online job applications or general online job search. We then started responding to that need by giving people ad hoc support when asked, formatting and printing their CVs and signposting them to careers' advice sessions. Our office and reception staff were given guidance on how to respond to these kind of queries and we logged the visits which received support from staff. The advantage of this approach to the service users was that we could provide help during the Centre opening hours 9 am – 9.30 pm and when it was most needed, when they had a

deadline for an application, for example. We recorded more visits and built relationships with people. It brought better results than organising two hours' workshops or scheduled a day of one-to-one sessions.

The support we had for job advice service has now run out and we are currently looking for longer term funding for both projects. We will be aiming to restart the dual impact service from April 2017.

Development points for the project

- Consider opening Easy-PC sessions to participants of all ages again
- More emphasis on skills for work
- Improvements to the Centre computer suite
- Installation of tablets in the lobby for community use
- Train all staff in mental health awareness
- Consider linking with other organisations
- Ensure signposting is available for further support needed.



2010



2013



2016

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