

Appendix A: Universal Information Offer Workforce Development Programme

Case study

Demonstrating the impact of the library's digital workforce training

At the end of last year (2014) a library user called Mrs S. asked at Portsmouth Central Library about improving her internet skills. She had a laptop at home, but only a very basic knowledge of how to use it. Recently widowed, she wanted to learn new skills and meet new people. Mrs S. used to be the secretary of a local club and wished to promote the club online once she had learnt more online skills.

All Portsmouth library staff had recently started SCL's digital workforce training, so when Mrs S. asked a library assistant about internet training, the assistant was able to encourage her and direct her to myself, Portsmouth's Digital Inclusion Librarian. I then contacted her to find out what her requirements were and after a chat about her internet experience and interests, I booked Mrs S. on a series of computer courses, including Microsoft Excel, Power Point, Word and Desktop Publishing. Mrs S. had completed her ECDL and CLAIT in 2002 but couldn't remember a lot of it, so needed a refresher. These courses were all provided for free in Cental Library by a Highbury College tutor. Mrs S. thoroughly enjoyed the courses, and even developed a Power Point presentation for her club. She also managed to make a spreadsheet for all of her household expenditure and uses it on a daily basis.

After completing the courses, Mrs S. wanted to further develop her internet skills, and contacted me again. This time, I managed to book her on to a one-to-one session at Southsea Library, to cover eBay and FaceBook. The session was run by Mrs T., a library volunteer who over the past couple of years has spent many hours assisting many Portsmouth residents to improve their IT skills, from beginner level to tailored sessions on social media, eBay, new laptops, tablets or just general troubleshooting. Since the library staff completed the workforce training, our volunteer has noticed a surge of interest from library users and she is now booked up for IT sessions for the next two months. Once again, Mrs S. enjoyed the session, and can now keep in contact much more frequently with her children and grandchildren via FaceBook. They live in other parts of the UK and in the internet age they rarely pick up a phone to talk. She said: 'I found these sessions at the library extremely helpful and very interesting. The tutors I've had have been excellent.' She is planning to attend further courses, including intermediate IT, creating a newsletter and digital photography. She has also recommended the library's courses to many of her friends and to her daughter.

I am now Access and Learning Librarian but I still cover the IT courses. I have heard our students say that the courses 'open up a whole new world' many times. Having the SCL digital workforce training has really opened the eyes of our library staff to the importance of online access, and has helped them encourage our readers to take the first steps online.

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