

Voluntary and Community Action

Free or low Cost ICT Solutions

Resource Sheet No. 2

July 2011

If voluntary organisations and community groups are to continue to deliver and enhance the benefits they provide to service users in an environment of change, competition and increasing expectations, they must operate effective ICT based operations and develop robust ICT strategies. This information sheet explores some of the free and low cost solutions and resources available to groups in Bedfordshire.

Resource sheets are designed to help voluntary organisations and community groups in Bedfordshire find information quickly and easily on the most relevant subjects.



If you have any suggestions for future sheets please give us a call on 01525 850559.

Why is ICT Important?

Efficient use of ICT allows organisations to operate more effectively and underpin their long-term sustainability. Well managed ICT can:

- save you money, time and resources
- help you communicate with more people quickly and easily
- manage information
- provide services in more innovative ways.

Other resources on the Hub's website include *Funding For ICT*, and introductions to 'New Media' and 'Open Source'.

Software

Donated

Charity Technology Trust's CTX Programme brings donated Microsoft, Symantec (anti-virus and internet security software) software and other products to qualifying UK charities. Charities are required to pay a small administration fee, but will still make savings of between 92-96% on typical retail prices. For further information, please visit www.ctxchange.org/getting_started

Free

Although Microsoft products have become the standard for most computer users, their dominance is now being challenged by OpenOffice. This is a software package which is available free of charge from www.openoffice.org and provides a similar range of options. Although it has some limitations it will work well for most day-to-day users of word processing, spreadsheets,

Help at the Hub

The ICT Hub have developed a comprehensive knowledgebase of practical advice on a huge range of ICT issues. This includes the *Starting Out Guides* specifically targeted at small groups covering the very basics of ICT and written assuming no prior knowledge of computers. www.ictHub.org.uk

ICT Management in a Nutshell

Also well worth a read is the newly published and excellent non-technical *Guide to Managing ICT in the Voluntary and Community Sector* downloadable from www.ictHub.org.uk/publications



presentations and much more, and is well worth a try before paying for Microsoft Office. If you are interested in exploring Open Source visit the ICT Hub for more information.

Free Websites

Web pages can really help a local organisation. The local dramatics society can promote their upcoming performance, review their last show, or ask for helpers. The local sports teams can give directions to their ground, post the team sheet, announce the changed practice times, show photos from the last game and drum up a crowd for the next game.

Community Website Builder

This service allows registered charities, voluntary organisations and community groups to build and maintain their own websites free of charge. To qualify you must provide a clear benefit to the community.

www.communitykit.co.uk/

IT Volunteers

If you would like an IT volunteer to help with a project contact Volunteer Centre Central Bedfordshire who will register your opportunity on the national www.do-it.org database and help recruit the right person for you. Give them a call on 01525 850559 or email them at volunteer@

action-centralbeds.org.uk for more information.

iT4Communities is an initiative to encourage companies and individuals with professional IT skills to volunteer these skills for the benefit of the community. This may be in database or website design, help with an audit and IT management strategy, or even mending computers and training staff in the use of software.

iT4Communities can be contacted on 020 7796 2144 or for more information visit their website:

www.it4communities.org.uk

You should first read *Working With ICT Volunteers*, an extremely useful knowledgebase article that looks at issues to consider when using volunteers for ICT.

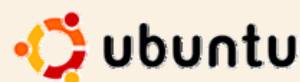
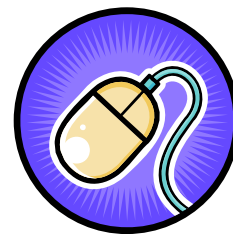
www.ichubknowledgebase.org.uk/workingwithvolunteers

Online Tools

Google Calendar

With Google Calendar, it's easy to keep track of all your organisation's important events in one place. You decide who can see your calendar and which details they can view. So you can add events and send invitations effortlessly and share your schedule with members and supporters.

www.google.com/googlecalendar/new.html



Ubuntu is the Open Source alternative to Microsoft Windows and aims to provide an up-to-date yet stable operating system with a strong focus on usability, regular releases, and ease of installation.

You can download Ubuntu for free, request a free CD or buy it on DVD or CD. www.ubuntu.com/

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How we can help!

Voluntary and Community Action exists to provide help and support to the hundreds of voluntary organisations and community groups selflessly working to improve lives in their own communities and beyond.

We can offer help in a variety of ways:

- Funding Advice
- Development
- Training
- Information
- Volunteering
- Partnerships