Evaluation of the 2009 Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative

January 2010

Hibernian Consulting

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Foreword

The Irish economy in five years time will look very different to that of five years ago. There will be less emphasis on construction and more on the green economy and the smart economy. Our labour force will need more well-educated workers, and skills around information and communications technologies (ICTs) will be important for ALL workers.

A smart economy also needs more widespread use of technology in society – in schools, e-banking, online state services etc. A wider culture of technology use will support a creative, innovative economy, and a knowledge society.

Ireland has already taken considerable steps in creating this society. However, it is critical that we do not leave behind the sizeable part of the population that does not have access to ICT training through jobs or education. This includes many low-skilled workers, older people, people with disabilities and people who suffer other kinds of disadvantage or exclusion. The agenda of eInclusion dovetails with the national agenda on economic development.

Dublin Employment Pact has been involved in eInclusion initiatives for ten years and we commissioned the first detailed survey and study on the digital divide in Dublin in a 2003 report (Trutz Haase, Jonathan Pratschke, *Digital Divide – The Uptake of Information Technology in the Dublin Region*). The report had significant resonance, and was adopted in the final report of the Information Society Commission as a model for effective community based approaches to eInclusion. Having delivered large programmes relating to eInclusion for the government in 2006 and 2008, we were delighted to receive funding of €390,000 under the BeneƒIT Scheme for 2009 for the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative, which we implemented in close collaboration with our partners: Dublin City Council and Fastrack to IT (FIT) Ltd.

I would like to thank all of the people and organisations that were crucial in delivering the Initiative during 2009. Staff from the Knowledge Society Division of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources were supportive throughout. I would also like to thank George Ryan, Helen Mahon and their colleagues at FIT for their professional input; and Peter Dee, Oliver Hickey and others in Dublin City Council for their solid commitment to the programme and to eInclusion in Dublin. Lastly, strong praise is due to the many voluntary and community groups that responded to the programme, recruited participants and implemented local projects, sometimes at short notice.

I would like to thank Hibernian Consulting for their work throughout the year on the evaluation, and their work on the ground in preparing ICT plans for the Ballyfermot and Ballymun areas. This evaluation report stands as a valuable record of the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative.

The report demonstrates that the story of the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative is a very positive one. Strong demand exists for ICT training in local communities, with thousands of people prepared to give up their own time to attend and complete courses, for no financial return. Demand also exists for the upgrading of local infrastructure in disadvantaged communities in Dublin and elsewhere, to support

these communities in being fully part of the information society. Given the national move towards a smart economy, it is to be strongly hoped that government support for similar initiatives will continue and deepen in the coming years.

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January 2010

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Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1   BenefIT Scheme

The BeneﬁIT (Benefit from Information Technology) Scheme was implemented in 2009 by the Knowledge Society Division (eInclusion Section) of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. It provided financial assistance to assist those at greatest risk of being left behind as Ireland moves towards a knowledge (or information) society. In general, BeneﬁIT aimed to encourage ICT usage among people who had not previously used such technologies and among people with low previous usage or training.

BeneﬁIT built on previous eInclusion initiatives such as the ASC (Access, Skills, Content) Scheme. Like them, it provided funding to voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations and service providers working to build eInclusion. Five key target groups were identified under BeneﬁIT:

- Older people
- People with disabilities
- Disadvantaged people
- Unemployed people
- Other late adopters of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

BeneﬁIT sought funding applications in October 2008, with applications scored under a range of criteria including the number of people to be reached; quality of proposal; quality of impact on end beneficiaries; innovation; value for money; and ability of the organisations to deliver the project on the ground.

1.2   Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative

The Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative was chosen as a successful project for funding under the BeneﬁIT programme in December 2008, receiving funding of €390,000. In addition, further funding from the partners, especially Dublin City Council, give the Initiative funding in 2009 of over €500,000.

The Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative was led by Dublin Employment Pact (DEP) and other key partners were Fastrack to IT (FIT) and Dublin City Council and the Digital Hub. Further information on these partners is supplied in the following section. As the partners had previously implemented joint programmes to combat IT exclusion (through different combinations), this allowed the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative to build on proven methods of delivery and implementation structures in place on the ground.

The Initiative was organised around two complementary pillars or sets of activities.

The ***first pillar*** was the promotion of basic IT skills among BeneﬁIT target groups through the provision of training for 1,500 people. This would be carried out through

a network of community groups in Dublin and the Mid-East (see Chapter 3). Four IT courses developed (or part-developed) by FIT for people with low or no ICT skills would be available under the initiative:

- **E-Cert**, a non-academic computer course which familiarises people with no IT experience with practical aspects of computing, including MS Word, file management and internet usage.
- **e-Cert Communities**, which provides students with an understanding of online communities and allows them to set up a MySpace profile.
- **My IT!**, developed to allow learners with literacy, language and numeracy gaps to gain practical competency in basic IT tasks, such as booking tickets online, setting up an e-mail account, and finding information. The programme includes interactive narration and is particularly suited to people with poor eyesight or low literacy skills.
- **My Past, My Present**, a private social networking website to provide older people with a safe space to learn how to participate in an online community

This suite of courses aimed to ensure that the needs of different target groups under Bene*f*IT would be addressed, with courses for people in all communities.

The *second pillar* was increasing appreciation of the benefits of participating in the knowledge society, including through practical actions to promote ICT usage on the ground. During 2009, this comprised:

- Work in **Ballyfermot** to build on previous work by the local IT Forum to undertake actions to increase awareness and usage of ICTs;
- Work in Ballymun to identify actions that could be taken on the ground in 2009 to promote ICT usage and to provide funding for strategic pieces of local ICT infrastructure that would help to combat the digital divide in the area.

1.3   Partners in the Initiative

Information on the partners in the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative is provided below.

1.3.1 Dublin Employment Pact

DEP (see also www.dublinpact.ie) was established in 1998 and has worked on a range of labour market and social inclusion projects in the Dublin region. Its Board includes representatives of Dublin regional and local authorities, the local development and community sector, social partners, and relevant government and statutory agencies. DEP receives core funding under the NDP, administered by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It is undertaking a range of labour market inclusion initiatives during the current economic recession.

DEP has worked on eInclusion issues for over a decade, having identified in the late 1990s a need for ICT skills in the jobs market and supported community based projects to meet these needs. Original projects included a computer skills training programme in the Clondalkin Centre for the Unemployed to break the cycle of long term unemployment and 'Local-IT' projects in Kilternan, Rathcoole and Skerries to

promote the use of computers in rural communities by developing local IT centres and providing introductory training.

In 2003, DEP commissioned a study on the digital divide in Dublin (Trutz Hasse and Jonathan Pratschke, *'Digital Divide – The Uptake of information Technologies in the Dublin Region*). This study (undertaken with the four Dublin Development Boards) was the first survey of ICT literacy levels in Dublin. It set out a basis for improving ICT literacy in disadvantaged communities finding that: '*equality in access to new information technologies and the targeted provision of computer centres and training programmes in disadvantaged areas represent the most promising measures for minimising the threat of a growing digital divide'*.

The 2003 study provided an evidence base for DEP's community based approaches and was referenced by the Information Society Commission in a key report in 2005: '*A much stronger resource commitment is needed to developing structured and sustainable programmes to support engagement with ICT among disadvantaged groups and individuals. New community-based programmes should build on existing local development structures, be aligned closely with wider social inclusion objectives, and draw on the higher education sector for appropriate logistical and technical support.'*

In 2005-06, in partnership with FIT, DEP organised a large ***Community ICT Programme***. With funding from the Information Society Fund of the Department of the Taoiseach and support from the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the programme trained 600 people from 45 community organisations across five areas of Dublin (Ballyfermot, Ballymun, Tallaght, Clondalkin and Walkinstown) in practical ICT skills. A 2006 independent external evaluation of the project recommended it as a basis for further such initiatives (see Murray and Comiskey *'Evaluation Report on Dublin Employment Pact Community ICT Initiative'*).

A second **Community ICT Programme** was managed by DEP in association with FIT during 2008. Funded through the Access Skills Content programme of the Department of the Taoiseach, the programme involved training for over 2,000 people and the provision of ICT equipment and training to approximately 30 centres, including to organisations working with people with disabilities and older people, and community groups in disadvantaged areas. An independent evaluation of this programme noted its innovation in reaching large numbers of people (e.g. through peer-to-peer and volunteer training) and its consequent value-for-money[1].

1.3.2 FIT

FIT (see also www.fit.ie) is an employer-led initiative whose primary aim is to provide unemployed people with the IT skills needed to take advantage of job opportunities. FIT's labour market programmes provide a holistic approach to training and include work placements, company visits and assistance with CV preparation and job application processes. Advice, support and mentoring are provided to graduates after completion of training courses and over 70% of trainees progress either to employment or

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[1] Learning IT is available at www.dublinpact.ie

to a more advanced training course. FIT operates nationwide, with projects in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Navan.

FIT was one of the six European organisations that developed the eCert programme through a project entitled *EU Pedagogy for Addressing the Digital Divide*. This aimed to provide an innovative way for a broad spectrum of people to gain practical basic ICT skills. FIT allows access to eCert in educational and community settings and places an emphasis on its use with people experiencing social and digital exclusion.

FIT has strong European links and was working in 2009 on two projects funded under the EU's *Leonardo da Vinci* (Lifelong Learning) Programme.

1.3.3 Dublin City Council

As local authority for the Dublin City area, Dublin City Council (www.dublincity.ie) is involved in all aspects of the city's development. Its approach to economic, social and cultural development is guided by the ten-year plan 'Dublin – A City of Possibilities' which guides sustainable development in the city from 2002 to 2012. One section of this strategy, 'A Connected and Informed City', relates to ICT development. This sets a vision of Dublin as '*a city that harnesses the power of communications technology to connect and inform people, create opportunities and tackle social exclusion*.' It states that disadvantaged individuals and communities require core skills in computing, communication and digital media to overcome social exclusion and participate in an information age. 'A Connected and Informed City' includes the following objectives:

- To collect, analyse and disseminate information relating to the Strategy and the work of voluntary, statutory and community organisations in the city
- To develop the www.dublin.ie website as a focal point for information exchange in the city
- To develop a community media sector
- To develop appropriate infrastructure to allow all citizens to access ICT
- To build ICT capacity among all citizens
- To encourage initiatives to ensure that Dublin becomes a city internationally renowned as an e-city of excellence.

The www.dublin.ie website is now well developed and, as well as acting as a source of information in itself, acts as a gateway to allow citizens to access services, obtain information, and establish a web presence. It also enables local groups to develop an online presence and offers free website building tools, as well as events calendars, bulletin boards and fora where local events can be publicised. In addition, people can create 'dublin.ie' e-mail addresses.

A further Council initiative is with Age Action on the *Getting Started* initiative, which provides ICT training specifically for older people. Under this programme, training generally takes place in groups of four to five people. The initiative has also seen a number of Council sheltered housing complexes equipped with PCs, printers and broadband access.

In late-2007, a report from the Council's 'Citywide Wireless Broadband Access Services Working Group' reviewed options relating to a citywide wireless broadband service. It also undertook a socio-economic analysis of the Ballyfermot and Ballymun areas as regards digital exclusion and found 'a requirement to provide and support programmes that tackle the digital divide through inclusion'. The report went on to state that, 'on foot of the analysis undertaken, it has been decided to develop an action plan to reduce the disparity in access to technology and internet access in the Ballymun and Ballyfermot' (as initial areas), with a view to moving the usage of ICT up towards the national average levels.

As such, Dublin City Council has both a strong policy commitment and a strong practical commitment to promoting eInclusion in the city.

1.4   Formative Evaluation and Report Structure

The evaluation of the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative undertaken by Hibernian Consulting was formative, i.e. it involved working closely with project partners during 2009, and not just evaluating project outcomes on an *ex post* basis.

In relation to the part of the Initiative that provided training to 1,500 people, the evaluator maintained ongoing contact with FIT and tutors during the year, including through dedicated social networking sites for tutors. The evaluator also undertook an online survey of participants that completed courses between May and September 2009, covering a range of geographic areas and demographic groups.

In relation to the second part of the Initiative, Hibernian Consulting provided support to the Ballyfermot IT Forum in early-2009 in devising their action plan for the year and maintained ongoing contact with the group thereafter. In Ballymun, the consultants undertook a range of consultations in the area to support the development of an IT Action Plan for the area and supported the process by which Dublin City Council evaluated the different local applications for funding.

The following chapters of the report are organised as follows:

- Chapter 2 places the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative in a wider national and EU policy context;
- Chapter 3 provides information and feedback on the training provided under the Initiative;
- Chapter 4 provides information on the work undertaken in the communities of Ballyfermot and Ballymun;
- Chapter 5 presents some brief concluding remarks.

The questionnaire used in the online survey of participants in 2009 is contained in Annex 1.
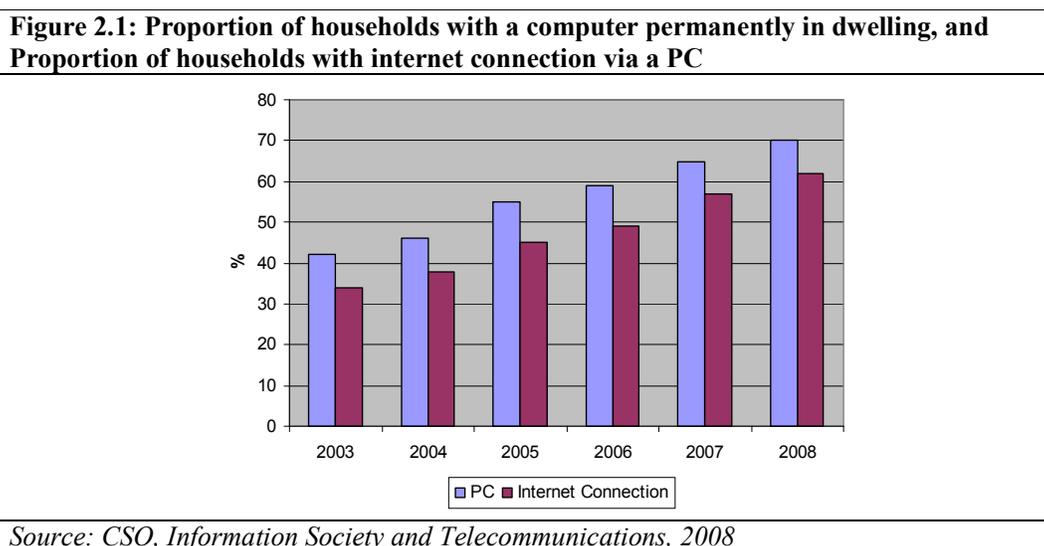
Chapter 2   Policy Context

2.1   eInclusion

'**ICT has great potential to enhance social inclusion and cohesion by empowering all Europeans to fully participate in, and contribute to, the economy and society.'**

European Commission (2006) *eInclusion - Creating a more inclusive Europe with technology*

In recent years, society has seen dissemination of ICT into almost every aspect of life. ICT creates opportunities for employment and education, facilitates social interaction and democratic participation, and provides access to information, entertainment and public services. However, certain groups are partially or fully excluded from ICT developments, which can result in exclusion from aspects of modern life.
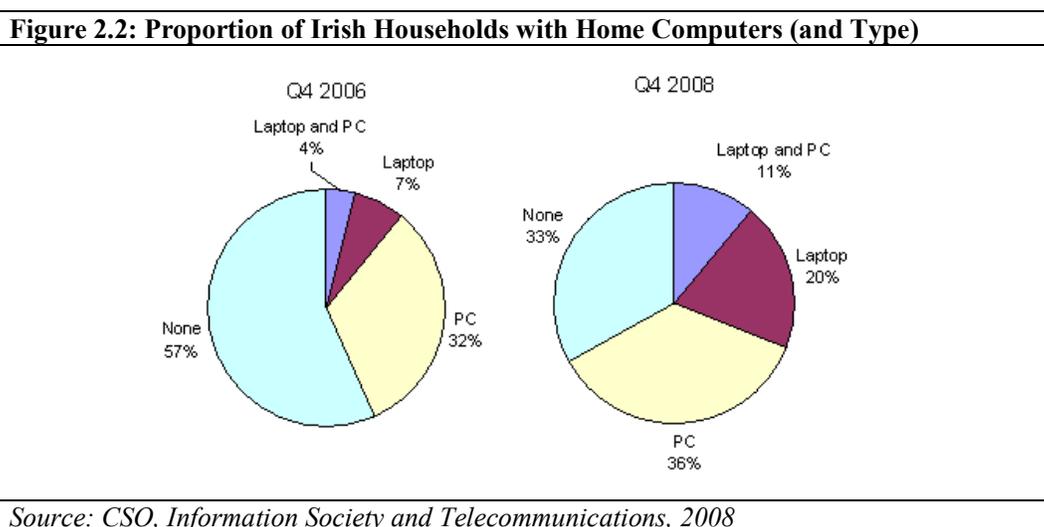
eInclusion focuses on the integration of everyone into the digital society. It encourages the integration of those at risk of being excluded from ICTs, and their access to new technologies. The EU's Riga Ministerial declaration notes that eInclusion "means both inclusive ICT and the use of ICT to achieve wider inclusion objectives. It focuses on participation of all individuals and communities in all aspects of the information society".

Figure 2.1 shows the rapid increase in ICT penetration in Irish households in recent years. In 2008, 70% of households had a computer and 62% of households had internet access (of which 68% had broadband connections).

Figure 2.1: Proportion of households with a computer permanently in dwelling, and Proportion of households with internet connection via a PC

Source: CSO, Information Society and Telecommunications, 2008

A separate 2008 study for ComReg found that about two thirds of Irish people were using the internet. It found particularly high usage for 15-24 year olds (82%), those living in Dublin (73%) and those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (76%).

The rapid increase in computer penetration across Ireland can be seen in Figure 2.2, with the proportion of people having a computer in their home rising from 43% to 67% in just two years.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of Irish Households with Home Computers (and Type)

Source: CSO, Information Society and Telecommunications, 2008

The above figures are reflected in advertising where it now commonplace to refer people to a website address for further information and in the media, where access to the internet allows a viewer or listener to experience the programme again, to interact with the programme or to access extra material. Some services (e.g. Ryanair Check-In) are moving to, or becoming, exclusively online services.

Yet as technology is widely adopted in Ireland, there remain distinct differences in the level of usage by different groups. For example, the CSO found that, by 2008, 92% of those aged 16-24 had used a computer, the figure was only 31% for those aged 65-74 years. Similarly, whereas 87% of 16-24 year olds had used the internet (implying that there still 13% who had not), the equivalent figure for 65-74 year olds was only 22%.

The data also show that women are somewhat more likely than men to have used both a computer and the internet, with workers more likely to have used ICTs than unemployed people and those working in the home or retired least likely to have used ICTs. Furthermore, the census of 2006 shows strong geographic patterns and these are shown in relation to Ballyfermot and Ballymun later in this chapter.

Thus, while Ireland as a whole has experienced a strong movement towards the use of new technologies in the past decade, this movement has not affected all people or groups individually and there is evidence that some groups are falling behind, or are in danger of falling behind. This fact, and the increasing centrality of technology to society, is what underpins the idea of eInclusion.

2.2 EU Policy Context

'eInclusion policy aims to reduce gaps in ICT usage and promote the use of ICT to overcome exclusion, and improve economic performance, employment opportunities, quality of life, social participation and cohesion'

Riga Ministerial Declaration, 2006

There is a strong EU dimension to the promotion of eInclusion.

In 2005, the EU adopted **i2010: European Information Society 2010** as a policy framework to foster the development of the digital economy and information society. Designed to harness the positive contribution that ICT can make to quality of life, the economy and society as a whole, one of its three principal priorities is the development of an inclusive technological society.

The EU's 2006 **Riga Ministerial Declaration** (signed by 34 countries) addresses eInclusion in a number of fields, including:

- **eAccessibility** - making technologies accessible to those with chronic, short-term or age related functional limitations
- **Inclusive eGovernment** - stimulating public participation in governance with the aim of strengthening democracy
- **ICT and Ageing** - supporting elderly people and improve their quality of life by allowing them to harness the benefits of technological advances
- **Digital Literacy and Competences** - developing skills and competencies among European citizens. Action is focused on:
    o Key competences, the instruction of basic ICT skills (with a halving of gaps of digital literacy between groups at risk of eExclusion and the wider population)
    o Lifelong learning, with a focus on older people and people with disabilities
    o eLearning, involving the use of technologies to gain new skills
- **Digital Divide: ICT and Geographical Inclusion** - using ICT to eliminate geographical and economic isolation, and to ensure that all European citizens are integrated into the European economy and society
- **ICT and Cultural Diversity** - using ICT to encourage the exploration and celebration of different cultures, customs, languages and communities in Europe

In 2007, the European Commission adopted the **Ageing Well in the Information Society Action Plan**. This is an i2010 Flagship Initiative and encourages the engagement of older people in the information society. This Plan is accompanied by a new joint European research programme on ageing well. Over €1 billion will be spent before 2013 on research into ICT designed to improve the lives of older people at home, in the workplace, and in society in general.

At end-2007, a Ministerial Debate on eInclusion recognised the following:
- "Promoting eInclusion is a major European objective, since information and communication technologies (ICT) are an essential instrument for economic and social progress for all. A more inclusive information society is a fundamental part of the response to pressing demographic and cultural challenges in Europe and the world.

- Despite many important efforts and initiatives to improve eInclusion that have led to considerable progress, significant digital divides still persist. In particular, marked differences regarding regular internet use and digital competences persist in correlation with socio-demographic variables such as education attainment level.
- Further action is therefore necessary from all stakeholders to improve eInclusion in Europe. Efforts must focus on enabling the conditions for the use of ICT, on accelerating effective participation of individuals lagging behind in the information society, especially those at risk of social exclusion, and on integrating actions across policy domains and stakeholders' agendas."

A further e-Inclusion Ministerial Conference in November 2008 was the biggest e-inclusion event ever organised in Europe and concluded that, in the context of the economic downturn being experienced in the EU, it was more necessary than ever to support vulnerable people, with ICTs an essential tool to achieve this objective.

Work to implement the **i2010: European Information Society 2010** policy continued during 2009, e.g. with workshops on the use of assistive technologies in self-service terminals and advances around the use of service and social robotics for older people. A major conference is to be organised on eHealth as part of the Spanish EU Presidency in March 2010.

2.3   Irish Policy Context

Irish policy has prioritised eInclusion for some time and **New Connections – A Strategy to Realise the Potential of the Information Society**, published in 2002, cited eInclusion as a 'key priority of government' with a focus on promoting participation and technological capacity among all members of society. The role of the community and voluntary sector in promoting ICT integration was emphasised.

Towards 2016, the ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement, states that government policy recognises the 'the ubiquity of technology, the need to use technology as a tool in the drive towards Knowledge Economy activities and the need to provide for greater inclusiveness'. It also calls for 'specific actions on awareness of, access to, and application and greater exploitation of ICTs with a view to stimulating and encouraging greater engagement with and participation in the Knowledge Society', in the context of the EU's **i2010** policy framework.

The **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016** outlines specific eInclusion actions including:
- a nationwide broadband scheme to provide 100% broadband coverage
- breaking down barriers to lifelong learning
- exploiting existing ICT infrastructure in communities
- an ICT and Content Strategy for Schools
- an eAccessibility Charter between business and disability organisations
- better accessibility and usability of public service information and services.

Under the heading 'Knowledge Society Strategy', the Dept. of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources published a July 2009 report entitled **Technology Actions to Support the Smart Economy**. This strongly restates the government's commitment to eInclusion: "The government recognises the importance of eInclusion. Attaining higher levels of eInclusion will result in benefits for all. Citizens, businesses and society all stand to gain from more people participating in the knowledge society. Government therefore remains committed to working to achieve a more eInclusive society. This will be achieved by building on previous initiatives and by involving key stakeholders and focusing on priority issues and groups. Our objective is to realise a future in which all can enjoy the benefits and opportunities that the Knowledge Society can offer".

An emphasis on using community and voluntary sector organisations is seen in the Bene*f*IT Scheme, under which the *Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme* was funded. The government has also used the community and voluntary sector in previous eInclusion initiatives, e.g. the **CAIT Initiative (Community Application of Information Technology)** and the **Access Skills Context Initiative**. The importance of the community and voluntary sector in relation to digital inclusion is noted in **Towards 2016,** which states: 'The role of intermediaries, including community & voluntary organisations, in reaching late adopters of technology will be critical to implementation of this Strategy'.

Since 2008, the government has emphasised the building a *smart economy* in Ireland as a medium-term way for the economy to move back to economic growth. Key elements of the smart economy will include an emphasis on innovation across the whole economy, new ideas and knowledge, science and technology, a skilled workforce and an environmental orientation. Given this vision, strong ICT skills are likely to be crucial for workers, young people leaving school and for all citizens.

2.4   ICT Usage in the Initiative's Areas of Focus

While the training in the *Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative* was rolled out across Dublin and the Mid-East, the part of the Initiative relating to the provision of strategic local ICT infrastructure was focused in Ballyfermot and Ballymun.

The choice of these two areas stemmed from a Dublin City Council report in 2007 entitled: *Citywide Wireless Broadband Access Services Working Group Report*. While part of this group's work related to broadband in the city, the group was also asked for input on a Digital Inclusion Action Plan for the city. The report states: 'On foot of the socio-economic analysis of the initial target areas … it has been decided to develop an action plan to reduce the disparity in access to technology and internet access for the Ballyfermot and Ballymun areas. The goal is to increase the demand for broadband and PC ownership to levels above the national average.'

The Council's report notes previous (pre-2007) work by the Council in relation to eInclusion, including:

- Previous cooperation with the Dublin Employment Pact and FIT on community ICT programmes;

- The Community Links Programme, through with the Council has worked with the Dublin Institute of Technology to roll out community based digital training programmes in inner-city housing schemes; and
- The Sheltered Accommodation, through which the Council began in 2008 to install hardware and software, internet access, and support, around ICTs in its senior citizen complexes.

The Council's decision to focus on Ballyfermot and Ballymun has been affirmed by data from Census 2006, which was published after the Council's plan.

Figure 2.3 shows data relating the proportion of households in Ballyfermot (by local Electoral Division) that owned PCs in 2006, compared to the state as a whole.

Figure 2.3: Proportion of households owning PCs in Ballyfermot and the State

Source: CSO, Census 2006

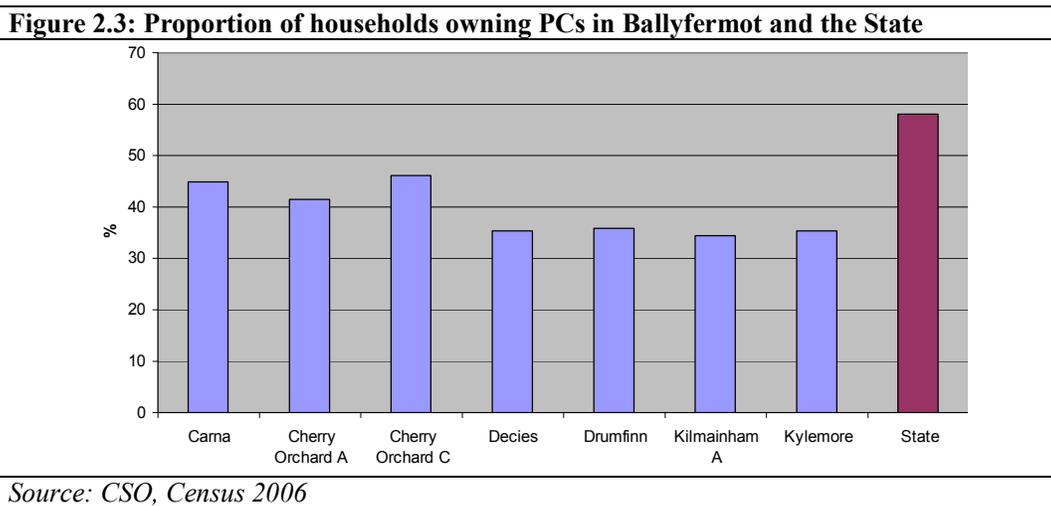Figure 2.3 shows that PC ownership in all parts of Ballyfermot was lower than the national average. In fact, for the EDs shown, average PC ownership in 2006 was 38%, compared to a national figure of 57%.

Census results in relation to internet access are shown in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Proportion of households with internet access in Ballyfermot and State by Type of Access
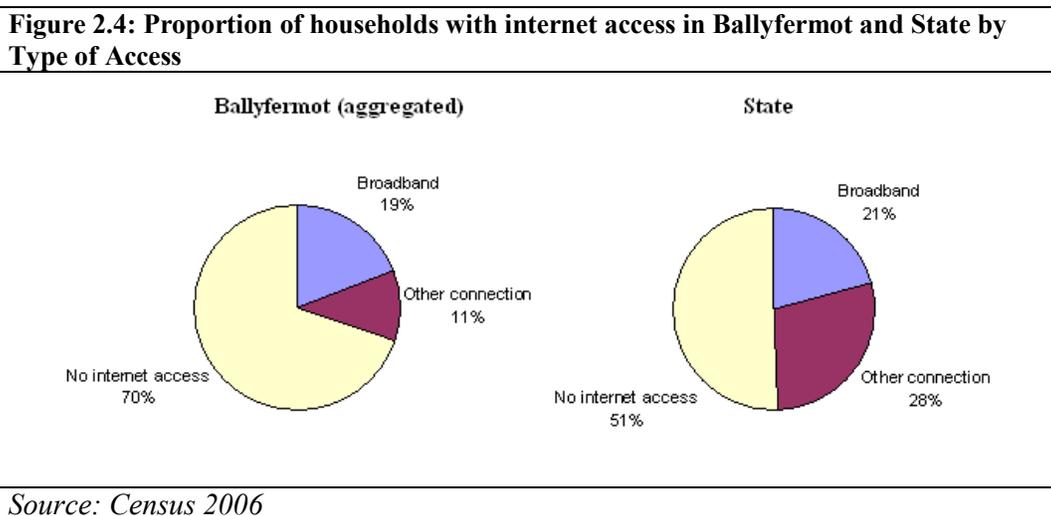

Source: Census 2006

Figure 2.4 shows that, while 51% of people nationally did not have internet access in 2006, the figure for Ballyfermot was significantly higher, at 70%.

Similar patterns are evident in relation to Ballymun. Figure 2.5 shows that, in 2006, the four Electoral Districts that made up the area of the Ballymun Partnership up to 2009 had PC ownership levels of between 37% and 45%, compared to the national figure of 57%.

Figure 2.5: Proportion of households owning PCs in Ballyfermot and the State

Source: CSO, Census 2006

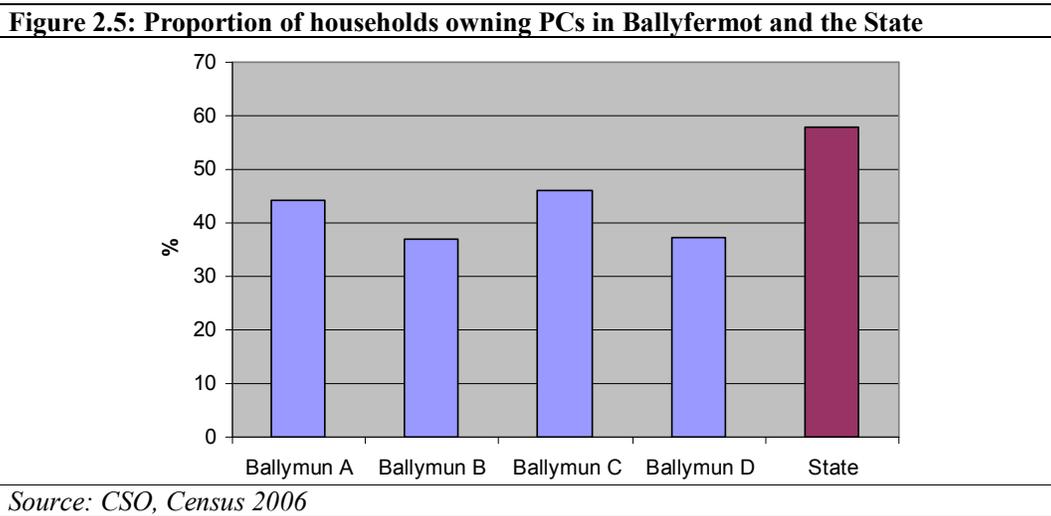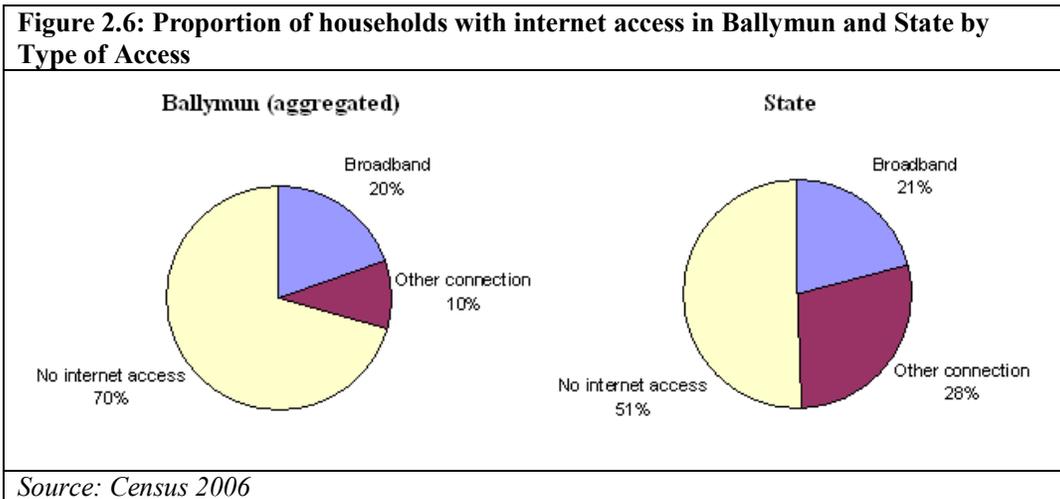Figure 2.6 shows that the figures for internet access in the Ballymun area are almost identical to those in Ballyfermot, with 70% not having internet access in 2006.

Figure 2.6: Proportion of households with internet access in Ballymun and State by Type of Access

Source: Census 2006

Figures 2.3 to 2.7 show a clear justification for actions in relation to eInclusion in the Ballyfermot and Ballymun areas.

Chapter 3   IT Training under Bene*f*IT

3.1   Suite of Training Courses Offered

3.1.1 eCert

The eCert course is a non-academic course that familiarises people with no IT experience on practical aspects of computing. It was developed by partners from five EU countries and has been delivered in the UK, Italy, Bulgaria and Slovenia, as well as in Ireland. The course comprises ten lessons/modules, as shown below:

Table 3.1: List of eCert Modules	
Lesson	**Aim**
1	**Basic Computer Skills**: Students will become familiar with the keyboard, computer components and mouse movement. Students will become comfortable with desktop appearance
2	**Microsoft Word:** Students will become competent in inserting and changing the appearance of text with format tools. They should be able to spell-check and proofread a completed document
3	**Microsoft Word**: Students will be able to produce an enhanced document using added tools in the format menu
4	**Microsoft Word:** Students will become competent in producing an invitation or flyer to incorporate clip art, borders and shading
5	**File Management:** Students will understand a computer's filing system and be able to organise files and folders
6	**File Management**: Students will recognize the program used through file extensions
7	**Internet:** Students will access the internet using a browser, enter a web address and navigate using a search engine
8/9	**Internet:** Students will be able to create and access an email account, send and receive emails and add attachments when necessary
10	**Accessories:** The student should feel competent using accessories provided with their computer software. This lesson will also consolidate all aspects of the course and revise and consolidate these
Source: FIT, eCert Tutor Induction Programme Manual	

Students of an eCert course are provided with a Student Training Manual which is a reference tool during the learning process. They also receive a Student Assessment Record and, when a lesson is over, students complete an exercise from their assessment record to be checked by the tutor. eCert does not have one end exam but uses these ongoing assessments to ensure students have followed the course modules.

Students also receive a CD resource kit entitled Computer and Internet Resources for Everyone, which contains a booklet with basic computer information and a CD including links to helpful websites. Web support is available at www.e-cert.eu.

Course tutors for eCert receive a Tutor Induction Programme to provide background to the course and familiarise them with material on the syllabus.

3.1.2 e-Cert Communities

e-Cert Communities facilitates learning at Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced levels. It is in CD format and lessons are available as text onscreen or as step-by-step DVDs. The course provides a good understanding of online communities and allows students to set up a MySpace profile. Once a student has successfully set up his or her profile, they can email FIT, which issues an e-Cert Communities certificate.

The booklet accompanying the student CD provides an overview of online communities and gives details of popular networks - MySpace, Bebo, Facebook, Virtual Tourist, YouTube and Flickr. It also provides information about 'phishing', spam, and the safe use of computers by children.

3.1.3 My IT!

This product was developed by a transnational partnership, funded by the EU *Leonardo Da Vinci* programme, in a project called The Write Skills.

My IT! allows learners with literacy, language and numeracy gaps to gain a practical competency in accessing the internet and carrying out basic IT tasks. It is an interactive resource available either on the internet or on CD, and can be used with or without tutor direction. Its exercises are at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. The programme includes interactive narration and is therefore also suited to people with visibility problems.

My IT! allows learners to develop their literacy, language and numeracy skills through practical tasks such as filling in online job applications.

My IT! is not externally certified, and allows learners to select exercises of interest to them to make up an individual learning plan. There is an accompanying Tutor Induction Programme which information about the exercises, the role of the tutor and how the programme incorporates literacy, language and numeracy skills.

Once learners have completed their individual learning plan, they receive a 'My IT! Passport' which contains personal details and a list of the exercises successfully completed. The Tutor Induction Programme specifies that 'tutors are encouraged to relate My IT! to broader certification frameworks whenever possible. This can be achieved in some cases by integrating the My IT! exercises in formal courses, e.g. Introductory ICT Courses aligned with National Qualification Frameworks.' In addition, tutors 'encourage learners to progress in their learning by encouraging further non-formal learning or by suggesting suitable and relevant formal courses'.

The accompanying CD comes with a student booklet which uses cartoon strips to show practical applications of each of the exercises.

My IT! contains seventeen exercises in six thematic groups, as listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Thematic Groups and Exercises in My IT!
About IT: Mouse and keyboard skills; Basic IT tasks; Using the internet   **Leisure and Entertainment:** Booking a ticket online; Playing a music video; Looking up sports results   **Communication:** Sign up to Hotmail; Email and attaching; Subscribe to an existing forum; Creating a new group; Subscribing to an online newsletter; Instant chat/messaging   **eCommerce:** Look for information/entering personal data/ buying a TV   **Work:** Filling in an online CV   **Active Citizenship:** Finding information about the local area

3.1.4 My Past My Present

My Past My Present is a private social networking website, which provides a safe learning space for older people so they can gain skills and experience the benefits of participating in an online community of peers. It cannot be found by surfing or using search engines or accessed by anyone not invited. Participants learn how to become members, meet fellow members, join forums, upload photos and videos, create interest groups, chat, add events and blog.

3.2   Organisations Funded under BenefIT

The above four training courses were delivered during 2009 to at least 1,500 people (this number was the number paid for but it is known that extra people attended many of the classes). The 47 official locations of training are shown in Table 3.3, together with the numbers paid for under the programme.

Table 3.3: Training Organisations in 2009 under *Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative*		
	Organisation	**No. of Trainees**
1	An Cosán (Jobstown, Tallaght)	10
2	Ballymun Read and Write Scheme	10
3	Bawnogue Community Training Centre	20
4	Bawnogue Women's Development Group	10
5	Belcamp Estate Steering Group	10
6	Ceeds (Arus Rualach, Clondalkin)	10
7	Colaiste Eoin (Adult Literacy Service Finglas)	20
8	Deise Training (Waterford)	18
9	Digital Hub / D8 CEC	250
10	Edenmore CDP (Community Volunteers)	10
11	Enable Ireland (Crumlin, Dublin 12)	7
12	Finglas South CDP	10
13	Friendly Call Service (Blanchardstown)	110
14	Friendly Call Service (Kerry)	50
15	Kilbarrack Coast Community (Drugs Rehab)	10
16	Kildare Rehab	40
17	KWCD LES (Crumlin)	10
18	Larkin Centre (Dublin 3)	150

19	Lusca Beo (Seniors in Lusk)	30
20	Co. Meath VEC - Comm. Ed. using IT Bus	100
21	Mercy Family Centre, Weaver Square (Dublin 8)	10
22	Northbrook Workshop	16
23	Northside Centre for Unemployed (Coolock)	250
24	Project West CDP (Seniors in Finglas)	10
25	Quarryvale Community and FRC	10
26	Rathmines Partnership	10
27	Ronanstown CDP (Seniors Clondalkin)	20
28	Rowlagh Women's Group (Seniors Clondalkin)	10
29	S.C.O.I.L	15
30	Scoil Mochua (Central Remedial Clinic Lucan)	10
31	SOLAS Women's Centre (Ballymun)	10
32	Station 1 (Probation Services Lucan)	10
33	St. Helena's (Community Training in Finglas)	10
34	St. Kevin's College (Finglas)	10
35	St. Micheal's House (Glasnevin)	10
36	St. Micheal's House (Templeogue)	10
37	St. Oliver's Traveller Centre (Lucan)	10
38	Tallaght Centre for the Unemployed	10
39	Tower Programme (Probation Service Clondalkin)	10
40	Co. Wicklow VEC Community Education Bray	40
41	Co. Wicklow VEC West Wicklow Youth	60
42	Youthreach Ballymun	10
43	Youthreach Clondalkin	10
44	Youthreach Granby Lane	20
45	Youthreach Killendarden	10
46	Youthreach Priory (Tallaght)	4
47	Youthreach Sherrard Street	10
	Total	1500

In addition to the above places, there was supplementary funding of training in Ballyfermot and Ballymun through the other pillar of the programme. It was expected that this would lead to between 200 and 300 further people being trained.

Table 3.3 shows good geographic variation in locations and shows the Mid-East part to the programme, with 100 places each being delivered by Co. Meath VEC and Co. Wicklow VEC and over 100 further training places in Waterford, Kildare and Kerry (the last included due to its link to the Friendly Call programme in Blanchardstown).

The names of beneficiary organisations shows a link to the target groups under Bene*f*IT, e.g. organisations such as Rehab and Enable Ireland work with people with disabilities, Youthreach links to young people, there were programmes targeting older people in Lusk, Finglas and Clondalkin, there were specific organisations working with Travellers and ex-offenders, and many organisations are based in areas with higher than average levels of disadvantage, which also tend to be associated with poor labour market outcomes.

As such, Table 3.3 indicates that the programme was successful in targeting its training at the Bene*f*IT target groups.

3.3 Online Survey of Participants

Feedback on the training programmes was obtained through an online survey. This survey was developed by Hibernian Consulting, and was administered between March and September 2009. Tutors delivering courses were sent monthly email reminders containing a weblink to the questionnaire, and were requested to ask their students to fill it out during their final lesson.

In total, the questionnaire comprised 28 questions divided into four sections:

- Before the IT Training
- The IT Training
- After the IT Training
- Some Information about You

The questionnaire took approximately ten minutes to complete and a copy is available in Annex A.

3.4 Who Undertook the Training?

Some 173 individuals completed the questionnaire in full with another 24 people completing it in part. A small number of respondents were tutors on the courses (13), while the remainder were students.

Of the 162 respondents who indicted their gender, 61% were female. A similar ratio of females to males was found in the evaluation of the 2008 *Dublin Community ICT Programme* where 65% of respondents were female. This reflects the fact that women are more likely to undertake community based training and may also reflect a gap in training for people working in the home. The bias towards female participation also partly reflects the take up from older people, as discussed below.

Figure 3.1: Gender Breakdown of People Undertaking Training (2009)

Total Responses: 162
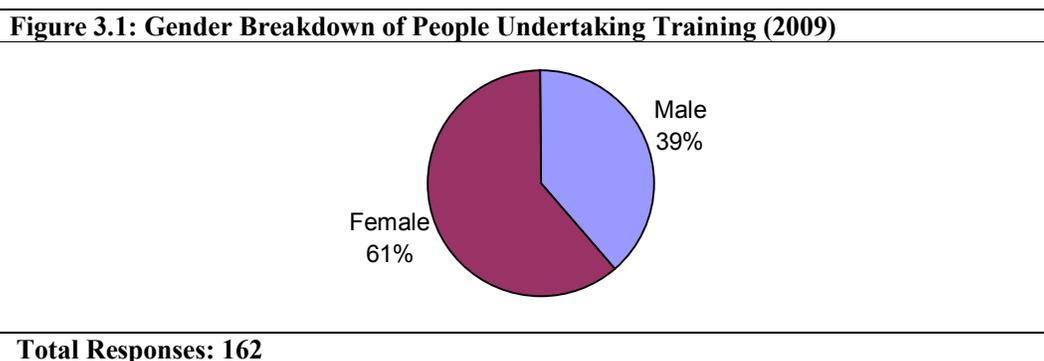
The age distribution of participants is displayed in Figure 3.2. Only 14% of respondents were under age of 35, while 54% were aged over 55. One in ten respondents was over the age of 75.

Figure 3.2: Age Profile of People Undertaking Training (2009)
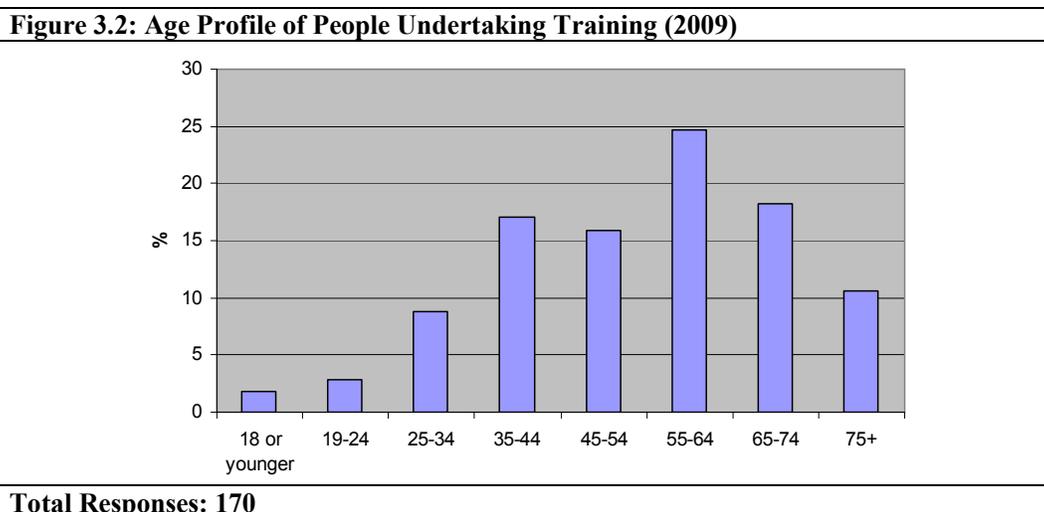

Total Responses: 170

Figure 3.2 suggests that the programme was particularly successful at reaching older age groups, and shows a high level of demand from older people for ICT training.

Almost 92% of respondents were born on the island of Ireland, with 8% born outside the island.

As would be expected from the older age profile, the most common socioeconomic status indicated was retired, accounting for almost 30% of respondents. Another 30% were in employment, with a majority in part-time jobs. One in five people were unemployed, while 15% were working unpaid in the home. Thus, the training courses were availed of by people in a range of labour market and employment situations.

Figure 3.3: Socio economic Status of People Undertaking Training (2009)

Total Responses: 163
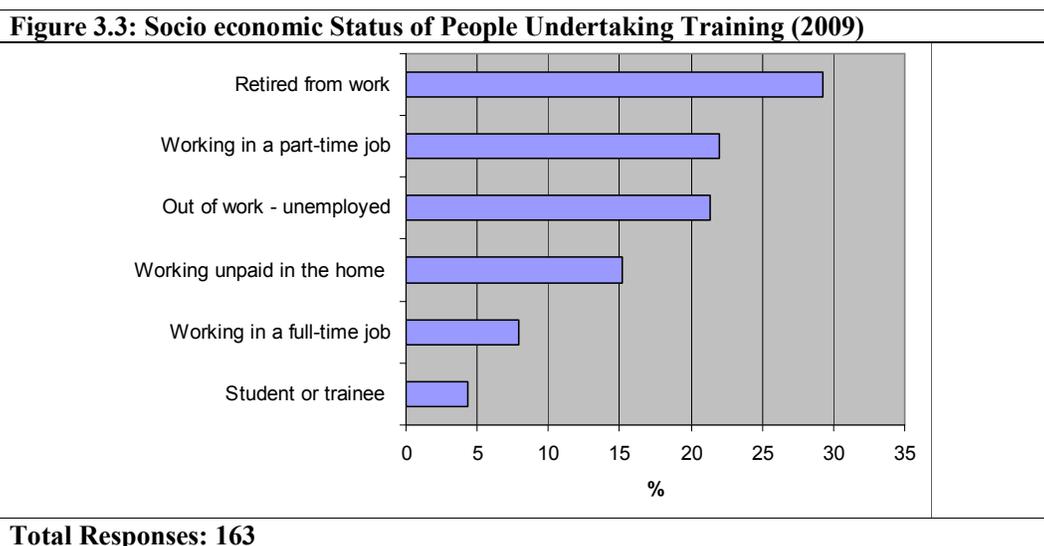
A majority of respondents had access to a computer and the internet in their homes, as is evident from Figure 3.4. Older people were less likely to have access to technology, with only 52% of those over the age of 65 indicating that they had access to a PC where they live compared to 72% of all respondents and 82% of those aged under 35.
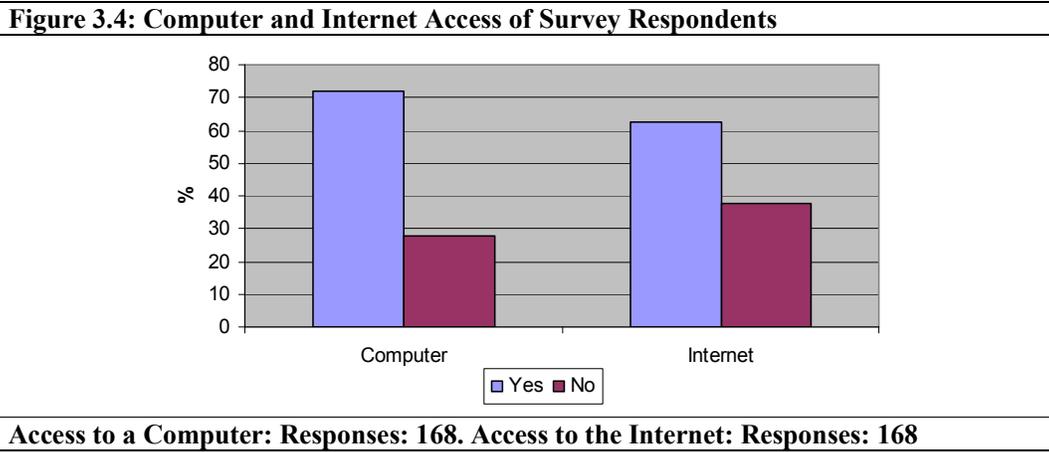
Figure 3.4: Computer and Internet Access of Survey Respondents

Access to a Computer: Responses: 168. Access to the Internet: Responses: 168

Figure 3.4 suggests that, while the programme was successful in reaching the BenefIT target groups, and was focused on disadvantaged areas, it may still be that people within these groups that have some existing computer access (e.g. through another family member having bought a computer) are more likely to attend training. This suggests that there may still be a challenge to reach others in these groups, who have no existing access to a computer or the internet. It may also suggest that people with such access may say: 'I will do this free course to learn the skills to enable me to use the computer that is already in the house'.

Of the course options available, over three quarters of people took the e-Cert course (Figure 3.5), with the second most popular course being My IT!

Figure 3.5: Courses Undertaken by Training Participants (2009)
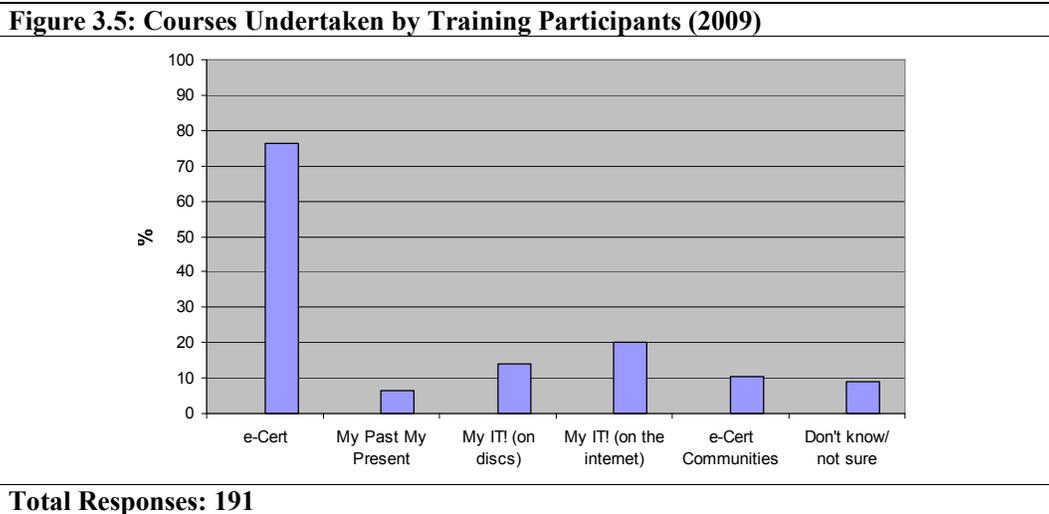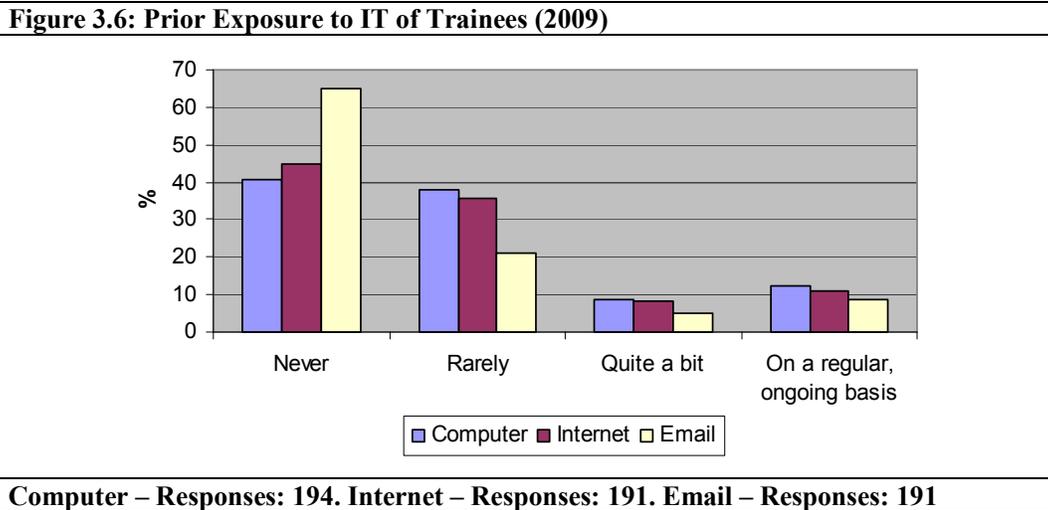

Total Responses: 191

Figure 3.6 shows the level of prior IT experience of students before these courses. It suggests that the programme attracted people with low ICT skills, as 80% had 'never' or 'rarely' used a computer, the internet or email prior to the training.

Figure 3.6: Prior Exposure to IT of Trainees (2009)

Computer – Responses: 194. Internet – Responses: 191. Email – Responses: 191
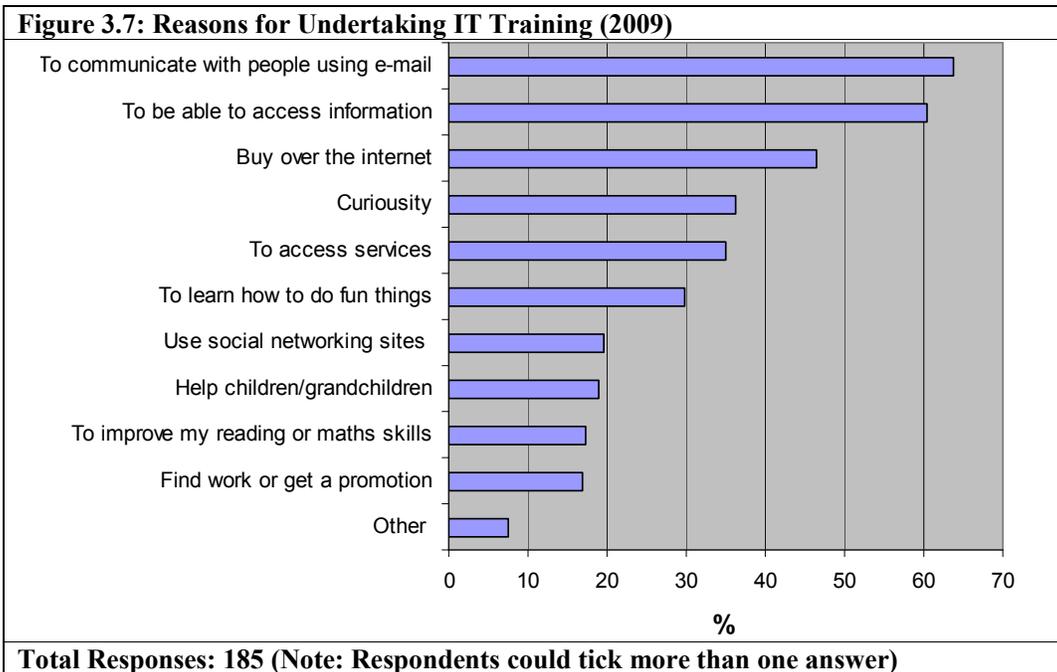
Just over half of respondents under the age 34 (52%) had 'never' or 'rarely' used a computer prior to their participating, compared to 90% of those over age of 65.

Some three quarters of respondents said that they were nervous of IT and computers before the training. This includes 90% of those over age 65, but only 30% of those under age of 34. These figures suggest that alienation from IT may be a particular issue for older people.

3.5 Views on the Training

The reasons cited by trainees as to why they wanted to take the training are shown in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Reasons for Undertaking IT Training (2009)

Total Responses: 185 (Note: Respondents could tick more than one answer)

The most commonly cited reason for undertaking the training was to learn to communicate using email, cited by 64% of respondents. Over 60% of respondents indicated that learning how to access information was a reason for doing the course with learning how to buy things over the internet the third most important factor.

A total of 14 respondents gave other reasons for undertaking the training, as listed in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1: Other Stated Reasons for Undertaking IT Training

"I'm starting college soon, and will need computer skills"

"It will help with the ECDL course I am starting in September"

"Using the computer helps to keep my mind alert"

"As a trainer, I wanted to improve my programme"

"I wanted to become computer literate"

"To get used to using the computer and keyboard"

"To update my computer skills"

"To respond to a need for training members of the local community"

"To assist me in learning about file management"

"To feel more comfortable with computers"

"To keep up with technology"

Trainees were asked about the level of difficulty of the course and their responses are shown in Figure 3.8.

Figure 3.8: Opinions of Trainees on Level of Difficulty of IT Training (2009)

Too hard 9% Too easy 2% About right 89%
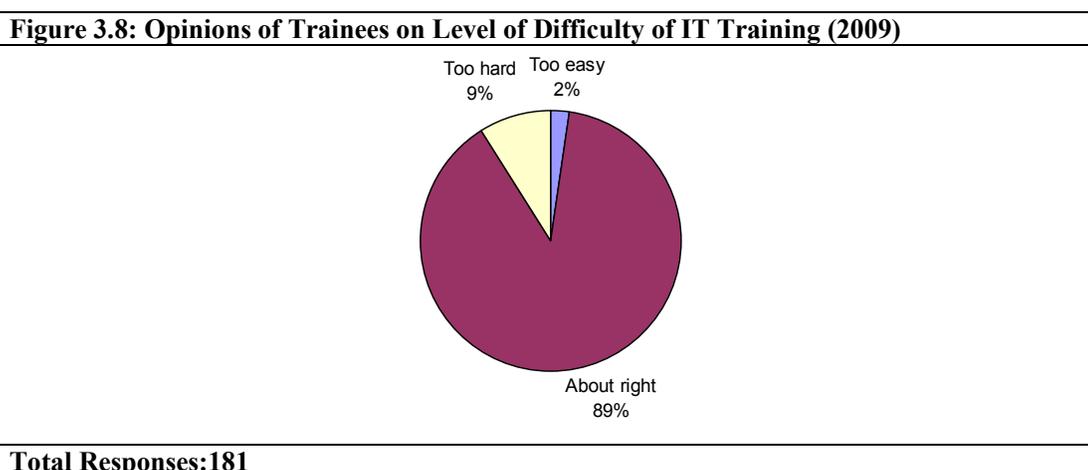
Total Responses:181

Figure 3.8 suggests that almost nine out of ten trainees felt that the overall difficulty level of the course was about right. While 9% of respondents felt that the training was too hard, this rose to 27% among people over the age of 65, perhaps reflecting their lower prior exposure to IT as noted earlier, and also perhaps the need for a somewhat slower pace for older trainees.
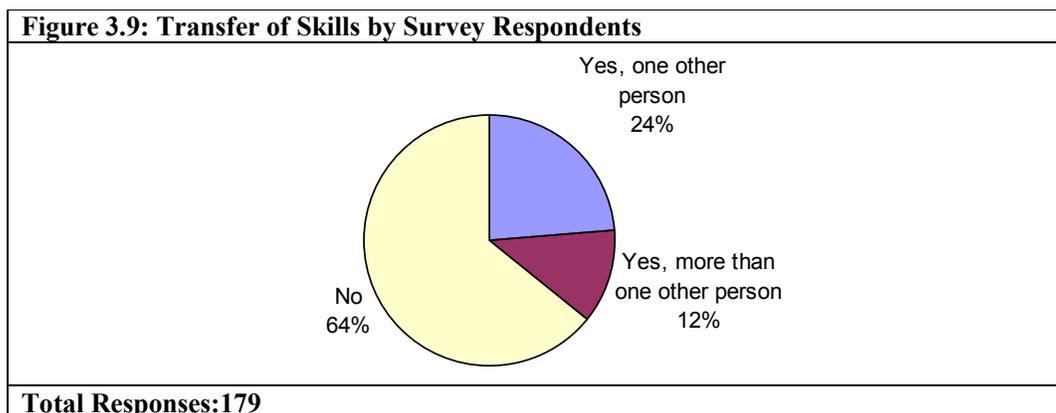
Students were asked a range of questions about practical elements of the training and, as is evident from Table 3.3, the vast majority of students were satisfied in relation to each of these.

Table 3.4: Reactions to Tutors, Location and Materials			
	Poor	**Okay**	**Good**
Quality of Teaching	1.1	4.5	94.4
Quality of Materials	0.6	12.0	87.4
Location of Course	1.7	12.4	85.9
Time when Training is Held	0.0	15.3	84.7
Quality of Teaching – Responses: 179. Quality of Materials – Responses: 175. Location of Course – Responses: 177. Time when Training is Held – Responses: 177			

A number of comments by students on their tutors are shown in Box 3.2.

Box 3.2: Comments about Tutors
"The tutor was very patient, informative and helpful" "If it wasn't for my trainer, I wouldn't have had the confidence to start my training and I wouldn't have stuck with it. I found the delivery of the course to be great" "Our teacher was very good: interesting and understanding" "The tutor was very helpful and knowledgeable and always available to answer questions, which was very helpful"

Spillover effects from the training are evident from Figure 3.9 which shows that 36% of students had taught at least one other person some of the skills they learnt as part of their IT course (and this was by the end of the course, when the questionnaires were completed).

Figure 3.9: Transfer of Skills by Survey Respondents

Yes, one other person 24%

Yes, more than one other person 12%

No 64%

Total Responses:179

Younger participants were more likely to pass on their skills, with 57% of those under the age of 34 teaching at least one other person something they had learnt compared to 7% of those over the age of 65.

Figure 3.9 suggests that the programme is extremely cost effective in that its already relatively low cost per head (€175 per person per course as charged by FIT) was reduced further by this extra peer-to-peer training that occurred. These 'multiplier effects' would increase further in the medium term.

Almost 60% of respondents for whom the question was relevant felt that this training would help them to find a job or to progress in their current job. Fewer than 10% did not feel that this course would help them progress in their career.

About 60% of respondents felt that the presence of others in their class assisted them in the learning process.

Figure 3.10: Effects of Other Students on Learning

Total Responses:183
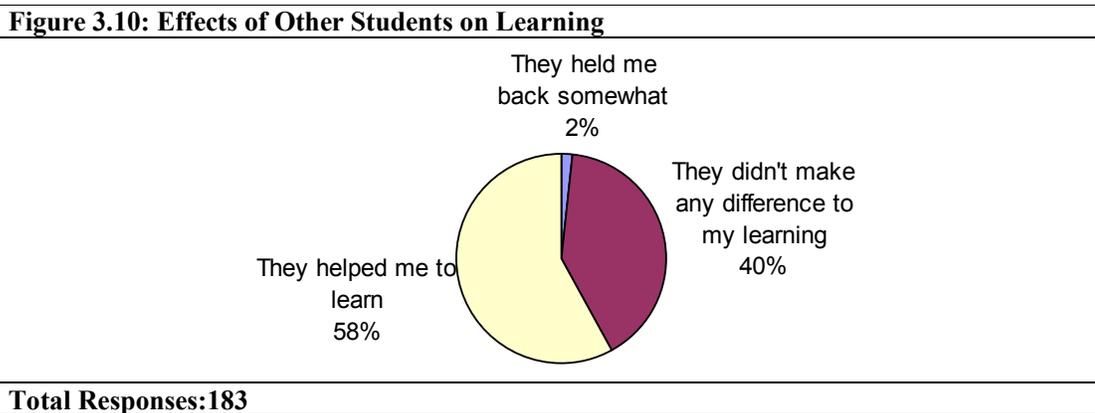
It appears that older participants benefited in particular from the group setting, with 76% believing that the group situation helped them to learn. By contrast, fewer than half of those aged under 34 believed this. A higher proportion of men than women said that the group situation helped them to learn (68% vs. 53%).

The value of having other people also undertaking training appears to differ across the four Bene*f*IT courses, as indicated in Table 3.4 below, with e-Cert Communities students finding having peers especially useful, while less than half of My IT! students benefited from their presence.

A total of 94% of trainees would recommend their course to a friend and just 1% (two people) would 'probably not'. Every respondent over age 65 would recommend the course to a friend. The figure was lowest for the eCert Communities students, where some 60% would recommend this course to a friend.

A similarly high figure of 93% of respondents found the training 'very useful'. A total of 73 respondents had never used a computer prior to participating in this course and every single one of these found the course 'very useful'. Thus, this programme appears to be especially useful to those starting with no IT skills. A selection of comments from students is shown below.

Box 3.3: Feedback from Trainees on IT Training (2009)

"I found the course very helpful. I had no computer skills when I started. I have a lot more confidence in using a computer now"

"I found the whole experience most rewarding from an academic and social perspective"

"It was great meeting all the people on the course"

"It is very helpful and makes you comfortable with a computer"

"The relaxed atmosphere helped me to learn"

"It is a ideal for older people"

"One of the best things I have done"

"It has been a fantastic course. I loved every minute of it"

"Very well presented and at a pace that can easily be followed"

3.5   IT Usage in the Future

The majority of trainees intend to utilise their IT skills in the future, and to undertake further computer training.

Figure 3.11: Planned Future IT Usage of Trainees (2009)
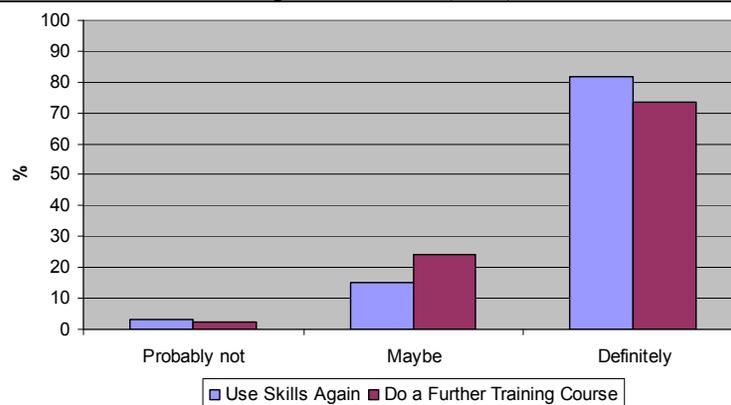
Use Skills Again: Responses: 175. Do a Further Training Course: Responses: 174

Female respondents were more likely to want to do a follow on course with 81% saying they will 'definitely' do further computer training compared to 66% of men.

Students of My Past My Present who are most eager to do a further training course (at 89%) with the figure lowest for eCert Communities (at 40%). The figures for My IT! and e-Cert were 68% and 74% respectively.

Comments in relation to future IT usage are in Box 3.5 below.

Box 3.5: Comments on Planned IT Usage in the Future
"It was a very good course as I learned things that I didn't know and can use in the future"
"I think the course is really useful and has given me the confidence to use computers in the future"
"I will use the computer again in the future to contact my brother and sister over the internet with a webcam and to play games on the internet with the kids"
"It was very enjoyable. I look forward to starting another course"
"It has opened a new interest for me. I hope to do another grade"
"I hope to do ECDL after this course"
"It was very good, and I would now like to learn more about computers"
"I would like another course on Word and Excel"

The most common usage to which the trainees plan to put their new IT skills is looking up information (70% of trainees), as Figure 3.12 shows.

Figure 3.12: Planned Use of IT Skills by Trainees (2009)

Total Responses:181
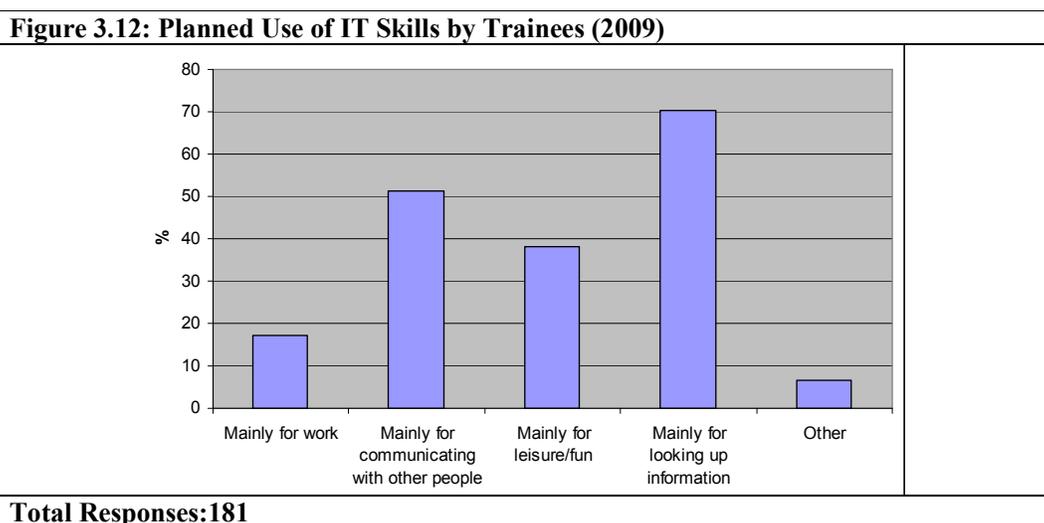
Figures 3.11 and 3.12 suggest a strong desire by most trainees for further training, with trainees having clear views on the tasks on which they would like to focus their subsequent training, and computer usage.

Chapter 4   Promoting eInclusion in Ballyfermot and Ballymun

4.1   Work of Initiative in Ballyfermot

4.1.1 Work of the Ballyfermot IT Forum

The Ballyfermot IT Forum was established in 2003 under the EU URBAN Initiative. During 2003-05, it existed as a network and coordinated local IT training (ensuring no duplication, sharing of resources etc.). It appointed a Coordinator in 2005 and became a vehicle for the community to undertake ICT projects and to obtain funding for these projects. In recent years, the Forum has obtained funding from (among others) the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, the Dormant Accounts Fund and Dublin City Council. A key project was the development of a website (www.ballyfermot.ie) to serve local community organisations.

In late-2008, in part supported by the Dublin Employment Pact and FIT, the Forum prepared a strategic plan for 2009-11. This confirmed its mission as being as follows: 'To enable every resident of Ballyfermot to have awareness of, and affordable access to, information technology to enrich the quality of their lives and to support them in seizing life's opportunities'. It also identified actions that the Forum and its members would work to achieve over the 2009-11 period.

In February 2009, as part of the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme, a special meeting of the Ballyfermot IT Forum identified priority actions for 2009. Facilitated by Hibernian Consulting, the meeting was well attended by local organisations. Among actions identified as priorities were:

- Establishment of a primary school ICT network for Ballyfermot. A first meeting of this network was held on 4th March 2009 in Mary Queen of Angels school, with a number of subsequent meetings held during the year.
- Development of school websites for the 10 local primary schools. This work started in 2009 with websites developed or improved for a number of schools. The work will continue in 2010.
- Establishment of a secondary school network. This has taken longer to start but it is hoped to start this in the first half of 2010. 2009 did see the development of a Leaving Certificate Forum on www.ballyfermot.ie, which was very successful.
- Establishment of a network for ICT Coordinators of local youth organisations. It is hoped to start this network or to encourage greater coordination between these Coordinators during 2010.
- Campaign to encourage greater usage by local organisations and people of the www.ballyfermot.ie website. This did happen during 2009 but constant work is required to encourage groups to use the website and the associated discussion forums etc. The photographs section has been a success with photos of local events posted on a regular basis. The 'news' section is also well used with events posted regularly. However, the idea of local blogs has not really taken off and may need further consideration (or may just need more time to develop).

- Need for upgrading of ICT infrastructure in specific identified locations, with coordination of applications in this regard. (See next section – this was undertaken successfully in 2009).

During the year, the IT Forum gained funding of approximately €25,000 from Dublin City Council (under the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative) to support the implementation of its 2009-11 Strategic Plan. This reflects the priority placed on this work by Dublin City Council and the other partners in the Initiative and allowed for part-time secretarial support to the Forum during 2009 (and into 2010). It also allowed for the ongoing hosting of the www.ballyfermot.ie website.

The IT Forum therefore made progress in its work during 2009, against a backdrop of a difficult funding environment for many community organisations. Its role may be more important than ever in 2010 and 2011 as these will be years in which funding will be scarce for community projects.

4.1.2 Funding for Local Infrastructure

In relation to upgrading local ICT infrastructure, the Ballyfermot IT Forum coordinated applications to Dublin City Council under the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative. Following consideration of these applications, funding was awarded in 2009 in relation to the organisations listed below.

Table 4.1: Allocation of Funding to the Ballyfermot Area (2009)		
Organisation	**Purpose of Funding**	**Amount Allocated**
Cherry Orchard Family Resource Centre (FRC)	Installation of 10 PCs, broadband, 1 printer and two interactive whiteboards in The Bungalow	€16,000
Markievicz Community Centre	Installation of PCs, broadband and interactive whiteboard and redesign/ refitting of existing computer room	€16,000
Ballyfermot IT Centre	Replacement of existing main door with disability accessible replacement together with a ramp, handrails and related works.	€18,000
The Orchard Community Centre	8 flat screen PC monitors	Under €5,000

Table 4.1 shows a total amount of funding for ICT infrastructure to combat the digital divide of almost €60,000, excluding the funding to support the IT Forum and the hosting of the www.ballyfermot.ie website.

Funding for The Orchard Community Centre was allocated late in 2009, to create more space for the Centre's training room. Information on how the other three funding allocations were used is presented in the following sections[2].

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[2] The following sections draw on reports submitted by the different groups to Dublin City Council

4.1.3 Cherry Orchard FRC

Cherry Orchard FRC said that, of the infrastructure it received, one interactive white board was installed in its training room as a resource for class tutors in adult education. This related not just to IT but to subjects such as literacy, Irish, flower arranging, Tracing your Family Tree etc. It was "of tremendous benefit to all participants, and makes education much easier especially for those with literacy problems". The FRC senior citizens' group was availing of the white board to watch DVDs as part of a Social Inclusion Project.

The second interactive white board and nine computers were installed in the computer training room. The FRC was running E-Cert, ECDL and IC3 computer courses which were proving very popular, with a strong take up in 2009 from newly unemployed people. Its Digital Photography Group was also using the computers as their specification allowed participants to experiment with different techniques.

The final computer and the printer were installed in the FRC office, improving its administration function.

The FRC said that it was delighted with the investment. "This has allowed us to offer a first class service and high speed internet access to our participants from Cherry Orchard and Ballyfermot. It is apparent that in the current economic climate our services are needed more than ever. We have a marked increase in participants who wish to improve their knowledge of the internet. It is our intention to maximise the return on the investment by advertising our availability to the community and by providing quality services through the technology provided."

The group was planning a campaign in 2010 to target local men who find themselves unemployed.

4.1.4 Markiewicz Community Centre

On foot of the funding received (obtained in association with the IT Forum and the local RAPID Coordinator), the computer room in the Markiewicz Centre was upgraded. Previously the room had 11 computers, which were 12 years old. These were on large computer desks to accommodate the bulky monitors. A lot of room was taken up by equipment and desks and students had to operate in cramped conditions, causing problems for the tutor as it was difficult to move around, leading some students to think that they did not receive the full attention of the tutor.

With this 2009 investment, the Centre took the opportunity to upgrade its computer room. Its walls and ceiling were repainted and counter-top desks were installed on both sides of the room to accommodate the new flat-screen monitors, with PCs stowed beneath. By replacing the large desks, a significant amount of space was created, allowing comfort for students and dramatically increasing circulation space. The Interactive White Board at the end of the room ensures all students receive full attention in an efficient manner.

The Centre stated: "The new computers are modern, fast and stylish. For those studying accredited courses, booking online, or surfing the internet, they make the exercise an enjoyable one. The upgrade of our computer room has enhanced our centre and provides an accessible and welcoming environment to our students".

4.1.5 Ballyfermot IT Centre

The objective of funding for the Ballyfermot IT Centre was to create a centre of excellence allowing for disability access. In fact, not only did the Centre create disability access but the funding acted as a catalyst for a wider upgrading of the Centre, which will underpin its work for the medium term.

The funding from the Council allowed for the kitchen to be restyled, the front hallway to be refitted with four fire doors and panelling of the walls, a retiling of the back porch and an upgrading of the reception area. This created a further knock-on effect as the landlord renovated the back entrance with new paving slabs and was considering installing new windows into the centre.

The Centre commented: "This funding has assisted us in networking more effectively throughout the Dublin area. Ballyfermot has now got one of the most up to date community ICT facilities in Ireland."

4.2   Work of Initiative in Ballymun

4.2.1 Deciding on Priorities for Ballymun

The Ballymun area does not have a local IT Forum and, as such, to enable funding under the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative, it was necessary to undertake consultation to develop a plan to identify local investment priorities.

Hibernian Consulting undertook a range of local consultations in spring 2009 including meetings with the local Dublin City Council office, Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership and the Axis Centre, and telephone interviews with over 20 organisations as regards their ICT usage and perceived local priorities. A number of written submissions were also received and a discussion was held at the April 2009 meeting of the Ballymun Community Facilities Forum (whose members include Ballymun Regeneration Limited and the Ballymun Community Organisation Network). This led to a draft ICT plan for the area for 2009 and an overview of existing ICT-related activities.

The plan balanced different priority areas under the Bene*f*IT Initiative, with funding proposed for training of people from the Initiative's target groups as well as for key items of infrastructure. Following consideration of the plan by Dublin City Council, the DEP and FIT, the draft plan was broadly agreed. The Council then requested detailed applications from local organisations and followed this up by meeting these organisations in autumn 2009 (to visit the facilities and to discuss issues such as management of the groups, financial controls, security, IT maintenance etc.).

Following this detailed process, it was decided to provide funding to eight local projects, as listed below.

Table 4.2: Allocation of Funding to the Ballymun Area (2009)		
Organisation	**Purpose of Funding**	**Amount Requested**
Ballymun Enterprise Centre	Funding towards the purchase of 8 PCs, one interactive whiteboard, a 24 port switch and a networked laser printer. These will support local unemployed people, especially those starting their own businesses	€8,000
Axis Arts and Community Centre	Creation of a wi-fi zone in the centre and installation of a number of PCs for public access	Approx. €8,000
Primary Schools (through Principals' Network)	Funding for 14 local schools to purchase equipment, primarily laptops for classroom use	€20,000
Larkhill Active Retirement Association	Funding for laptops, broadband access and a printer for the Larkhill Scout Hall (used by multiple groups)	€3,000
SOLAS Women's Development Group	Funding for laptops, broadband access and a printer for this group, which is located in one of the Ballymun Towers	€3,000
Cluid (Marewood Court) Older Persons' Housing Complex	Funding for laptops, broadband access and a printer to support training for older people from this centre and from other local groups	€10,000
Ballymun Library	Funding to support the creation of a youth zone (see next section)	€8,500
Multiple Organisations	Training in relation to eCert and the other training modules under the Initiative	€35,000
Note: Financial amounts are amounts requested rather than allocated and final amounts were still under discussions in some cases at end-2009		

Excluding the final successful application listed (which related to training), the amount requested for funding for the first seven applications (relating to infrastructure) amounted to just over €60,000.

With the exception of funding for the library, funding was allocated in late-2009 and equipment was being installed in early-2010. As such, information was not available for the evaluation on how the infrastructure was being used. However, the evaluator visited all of the organisations listed and all explained how the funding would be of great benefit to their organisations and clients/target groups.

4.2.2 Ballymun Library – Youth Zones

Funding was allocated to the Ballymun Library in summer 2009 in relation to the development of the Youth Zone in the library.

This forms part of a wider project by Dublin City Public Libraries which aims to provide an environment and facilities that are attractive to young people. Following consultations with groups of young people and a questionnaire survey, and research on good practice internationally, a plan for Youth Zones in a number of Dublin library was developed, with the following elements: Study Area; Lounging Area; Internet Access Area; Listening Post Area; Magazines; Music CDs; DVDs; Gaming Zone.

By mid-2009, the Library Service had already installed six PCs with internet access in the Ballymun library as well as two media towers, two study desks with power points for laptops and four tub seats with tablets (small worktops) attached.

Under the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative, the Library applied for further facilities including gaming related equipment, large LCD screens, listening posts and funds to support the roll-out of activities for young people.

In late-2009, the library had begun to run games nights, which it was hoped to run monthly. It was also hoped to use these nights to provide career, health and other information. It may also be possible to offer inter-Youth Zone competitions via the Internet as Youth Zones are developed in other libraries.

The Library Service reported that DVDs and music CDs were proving very popular with young people and there was a plan to select further music CDs in 2010.

Ballymun Library saw more teenagers coming in to study and to use the Internet in 2009, reflecting the extra study space and extra Internet access available. A staff member was working with Young Ballymun on the possibility of a writing workshop series for teenagers.

Discussions were continuing with the Dublin Institute of Technology, the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology and the National Centre for Technology in Education as regards the development of the Youth Zones across the greater Dublin area. The funding under this Initiative ensures that Ballymun will be in the forefront of this development.

Chapter 5   Summary and Conclusions

5.1   Summary of Key Findings

This evaluation relates to the implementation, in 2009, of the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative. This was conceived by the Dublin Employment Pact and involved two other core partners: FIT Ltd. and Dublin City Council. The partners had previously worked together on digital inclusion projects in 2006 and 2008.

With 75-80% of its funding from the national Bene*f*IT Scheme (under the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources), the programme had funding of just over €500,000 in 2009.

Chapter 2 shows that the Initiative was implemented in the context of a rapid diffusion of technology in Ireland in recent years. By 2008, 70% of all Irish households had a home computer and 62% had access to the internet. PC ownership is therefore now becoming the norm in Ireland and those without PC or internet access, or who don't know how to use them, will increasingly be excluded from the Irish economy and from Irish society in the decade ahead.

Chapter 2 also shows that the Initiative fitted with EU and national policies in relation to eInclusion. At EU level, policies in the Riga Declaration of 2006 remain highly relevant and there is a strong emphasis on eInclusion at EU level. In Ireland, policies to promote eInclusion have been in place for almost a decade and have brought many people into the development of the information society during this time. The government's commitment to eInclusion was reaffirmed in a 2009 policy document and fits with broader economic efforts to develop a smart economy in Ireland.

Chapter 3 relates to the first pillar of the Initiative's work, i.e. the provision of training. It showed that the training was delivered to 1,500 participants at 47 locations in Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, Meath, Waterford and Kerry. Chapter 3 found that one in three trainees passed on skills to others, even while undertaking the course, and this figure will increase over time. In addition, over 200 training places were funded through the second pillar of the Initiative, implying that training leading to certification was provided to over 1,700 people with perhaps 800 more people learning skills over time from these trainees, giving a total number of beneficiaries of some 2,500.

In relation to the profile of the trainees:
- 61% were female and 39% male, reflecting broader trends in adult education;
- Over half of the trainees were aged over 55, suggesting a particular interest from, and focus on, older people in the Initiative;
- Over 30% of participants had a full-time or part-time job and a further 20% were unemployed, suggesting that the Initiative had sizeable labour market effects;
- About 70% of trainees had a PC in their home, suggesting that such people (who may not themselves have knowledge of how to use the PC) may be more likely to attend eInclusion training courses than people without a PC at home or ready

access to one. This implies that a further group may still remain at risk of eExclusion.

- More than half of the trainees had 'never' or 'rarely' used a computer before.

The evidence suggests that the training organized by FIT under the Initiative was highly targeted at people at a high risk of eExclusion.

Asked why they were taking the training, the most common reason given was a desire to communicate with others using email. The next most common responses were to access information on the internet and to purchase items on the internet. These show how a desire to use email and the internet is now the norm in Ireland.

Trainees expressed satisfaction with course materials, tutors, course locations and the times when training was held. This suggests that the Initiative was responsive to the needs of the different groups of trainees. The level of difficulty of the courses was seen as appropriate by the vast majority (although one in four of the older trainees found the classes went at too fast a pace). Satisfaction with the four courses on offer was generally high, although it was lowest for the eCert Communities course.

The high level of trainee satisfaction was reflected in over 80% of participants saying that they would definitely use the skills that they had learned in the future, and over 70% saying that would definitely undertake a further ICT training course.

Chapter 4 relates to spending under the second pillar of the programme, i.e. the investment in strategic community ICT infrastructure in Ballyfermot and Ballymun, areas identified by Dublin City Council as a focus for its work in combating the digital divide in 2009.

In Ballyfermot, the Initiative helped support the local IT Forum, which acts as a driver for local eInclusion projects. Notable successes in 2009 related to the creation of a network of ICT Coordinators from local primary schools and the beginning of a coordinated approach to developing websites for the schools. The year also saw further development of the www.ballyfermot.ie website. In relation to infrastructure, the Initiative funded development at Cherry Orchard FRC, the Markievicz Community Centre, the Ballyfermot IT Centre and the Orchard Community Centre.

In Ballymun, a consultation process led to an action plan in relation to community ICT and the funding of eight strategic ICT projects. These related to funding for the Axis Arts and Community Centre, the Ballymun Enterprise Centre, a Youth Zone at Ballymun library, 14 local primary schools, the SOLAS Women's Development Centre, the Larkhill Active Retirement Centre and the Cluid (Marewood Court) Older Person's housing complex.

5.2   Conclusions

Both parts of the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative were successfully implemented in 2009, which demanded considerable work from the partners involved. Given the changes in the community sector during the year, with funding tight and competing demands on organisations' time, this was a considerable achievement.

In relation to the training part of the Initiative, this provides excellent value for money for the taxpayer. The cost per trainee for delivery of training charged by FIT was €175 and including all administration costs of the Initiative, the charge was under €250 per person. This is generally for ten classes per trainee and ignores the fact that people transfer skills to friends and family members. It also does not include the expense of renting locations or finding trainees (done by the community groups) or of purchasing PCs or internet access, which many people either already have or will be encouraged to do by the courses. Also, no training grants are paid as people attend in their own time and at their own cost. In other words, the funding leverages a considerable number of additional inputs from community groups and trainees.

In return for this expenditure, people who attend the training learn basic ICT skills and begin using a computer and the internet. These are generally older people, women working in the home or others who may not have easy access to ICT training and are at high risk of being left behind by the information society. These people overcome their fear of new technologies and are likely to act as champions in their families and with their friends as regards ICT usage. They will aid the general diffusion of technology in society and this underpins the medium-term development of a knowledge/smart economy in Ireland. As such, the public benefits from the training strongly outweigh the costs, in economic and social terms. If such training had to be accessed by people through private training courses, the cost involved would be many times greater.

Working through the community and voluntary sectors not only increases value for money, it also means that the courses are highly responsive in terms of the times at which they are offered and their supports for participants. This model of promoting eInclusion training (proven in Ireland over a decade) is reaffirmed by the Initiative.

From discussions with the partners, the Initiative could have delivered twice the trainee numbers if the funding was available – thus, there remains high demand for introductory ICT skills. It is likely that there are hundreds of thousands of people nationally who would take up such training if they had the opportunity to do so.

The survey of training participants showed a high desire for follow-on training and there are gaps in this regard at present.

In relation to the work in Ballyfermot and Ballymun, this investment in community ICT infrastructure allows people who don't have PCs at home to access them in the community. It provides facilities to allow for further local IT training, for different target groups. It also serves to strengthen the different community groups in a time of economic hardship and may encourage them to increase their role around ICT. While it is too early to measure the impact of the specific investments, the general approach seems sound and Dublin City Council is to be commended for its work on eInclusion.

The overall conclusion therefore is that the Initiative itself was well implemented, and well overseen by the Dublin Employment Pact. The logic underpinning the Initiative was sound and remains strong and it is to be hoped that public investment in community ICT programmes to promote eInclusion will be maintained, and even increased, during the economic recession.

Annex 1   IT Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was used to survey all participants in ICT training under the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative.

1.   Before the IT Training

Welcome to our Questionnaire! Over the past weeks you have been attending IT training classes. To improve this training for others in the future, we would be grateful if you would take five minutes to answer our questionnaire. Please note that the questions refer only to the recent training you have done. All answers are fully confidential. Thank you!

1. Before getting involved in this training, how often had you used a computer?
- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ On a regular, ongoing basis

2. Before getting involved in this training, how often had you been on the internet?
- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ On a regular, ongoing basis

3. Before getting involved in this training, how often had you used e-mail?
- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Quite a bit
- ○ On a regular, ongoing basis

4. Before this training, had you ever done any IT or computer classes?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

5. What computer training course (or courses) are you currently doing?
(You can tick more than one answer)
- ☐ e-Cert
- ☐ My Past My Present
- ☐ My IT (on discs)
- ☐ My IT (on the internet)
- ☐ e-Cert Communities
- ☐ Don't know/not sure

6. Before this training, would you describe your attitude as:

○ Nervous of computers and IT

○ Comfortable with computers and IT

7. Are you

○ A student on this course

○ A trainers on this course

2.　　The IT Training

1. What was it that made you decide to do this IT training?
(You can tick more than one answer)

☐ Curiosity

☐ To help me to find work or get a promotion

☐ To be able to help my children/grandchildren e.g. with homework

☐ To be able to communicate with people using e-mail

☐ To help me to use social networking sites like Bebo, Facebook or My Space

☐ To learn how to do fun things, such as playing games or downloading music

☐ To buy things over the internet, such as books, flights, holidays, CDs

☐ To access services such as online banking, paying for motor tax, FÁS

☐ To be able to access information, such as finding out what is on in the cinema, checking sports results, reading the news

☐ To improve my reading or maths skills

☐ Other - please specify

_____

_____

2. In terms of difficulty, the overall level of the training is:

○ Too easy

○ About right

○ Too hard

3. What is your opinion of the location where the training is held?

○ Poor

○ Okay

○ Good

4. What is your opinion of the time when the training is held?

○ Poor

○ Okay

○ Good

5. What is your opinion of the quality of the trainers?

○ Poor

○ Okay

○ Good

6. What is your opinion of the materials provided as part of this training?

○ Poor

○ Okay

○ Good

○ Didn't receive any materials

7. Have you taught anyone else (e.g. a friend or family member) any of the skills you have learnt?

○ Yes, one other person

○ Yes, more than one other person

○ No

8. Do you think that this training will help you to find a job, or to progress in your job?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't know

○ Not relevant to me

9. What is your opinion of the other people also taking the course with you?

○ They held me back somewhat

○ It was good to meet them from a social perspective, but they didn't make any difference to my learning

○ They helped me to learn

3.   After the IT Training

1. Do you think that you will use the skills that you have learnt during this course?

○ Probably not

○ Maybe

○ Definitely

2. If you plan to use a computer again in the future, will it be:

☐ Mainly for work

☐ Mainly for communicating with other people

☐ Mainly for leisure/fun

☐ Mainly for looking up information

☐ Other?

3. Would you be interested in doing further computer training?

○ Probably not

○ Maybe

○ Definitely

4. Would you recommend this training to a friend?

- ○ Probably not
- ○ Maybe
- ○ Definitely

5. Overall, would you say that you found the training:

- ○ Not that useful for me
- ○ Somewhat useful
- ○ Very useful -I'm very pleased I did the training

4.   Some Information About You

1. Are you

- ○ Male
- ○ Female?

2. What age are you?

- ○ 18 or younger
- ○ 19-24
- ○ 25-34
- ○ 35-44
- ○ 45-54
- ○ 55-64
- ○ 65-74
- ○ 75+

3. In relation to the world of work, which one of the following would you say best describes you?

- ○ Working in a full-time job
- ○ Working in a part-time job
- ○ Out of work -unemployed
- ○ Working unpaid in the home (e.g. a housewife, or looking after children)
- ○ Retired from work
- ○ Student or trainee (outside of this course)

4. Were you born on the island of Ireland?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

5. Do you have access to a computer where you live?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

6. Do you have access to the internet where you live?

- ○ Yes

○ No

7. Is there anything else you would like to say about the IT training?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire!