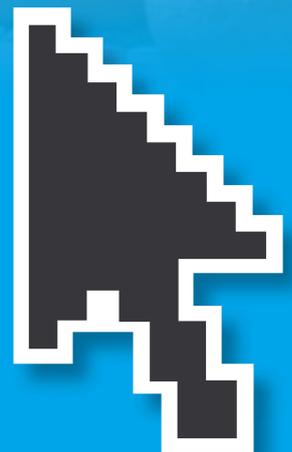# MAKING **IT** WORK!

How the 2009 Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Initiative
promoted Digital Inclusion and Economic Recovery

*An initiative of Dublin Employment Pact, FIT and Dublin City Council supported by
the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources*

fit
fastrack to IT

Dublin
Employment Pact

Dublin City
Baile Átha Cliath

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS, ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
AN ROINN CUMARSÁIDE, FUINNIMH AGUS ACMHAINNI NÁDÚRTHA

"I will now be able to share photos with my daughter and her children, who live abroad"

The BenefIT Scheme

The BenefIT (Benefit from Information Technology) Scheme was implemented during 2009 by the Knowledge Society Division of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. It provided funding for community and voluntary groups to assist people at risk of being left behind as Ireland moves towards a knowledge society.

The Scheme promoted the use of computers and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by people who previously had a low level of use. It had a particular focus on:

• Older people
• People with disabilities
• Disadvantaged people
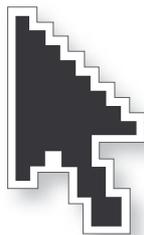
The Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme

In late-2008, Dublin Employment Pact came together with Dublin City Council, Fastrack to IT (FIT) and the Digital Hub to operate a programme under the BenefIT Scheme. The Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme (on which this publication focuses) had two pillars:

• Training for 1,500 people in relation to the basic use of ICTs
• Specific actions to promote ICT infrastructure in two areas identified as suffering from a digital divide: Ballyfermot and Ballymun

The programme received BenefIT funding of €390,000, supplemented by funding from project partners (especially Dublin City Council) to give a total budget of over €500,000.
• Unemployed people
• Other late adopters of ICTs

EU Policy

The EU's 2006 **Riga Ministerial Declaration** contains a strong commitment to eInclusion and includes a call for actions in relation to:

Digital Literacy – developing general ICT skills among all European citizens

eAccessibility – making technologies accessible to people with disabilities and all citizens

Inclusive eGovernment – stimulating public participation so as to strengthen democracy

ICT and Ageing – improving the quality of life for older people by allowing them to harness the benefits of new technologies

A major EU eInclusion Conference in Vienna in December 2008 concluded that eInclusion was more important than ever in the context of the European economic recession.

Policy in Ireland

The move in Ireland to a knowledge society in reflected in statistics that show that, in 2008, 70% of households had a PC, 62% had internet access and 93% owned a mobile phone.

The inclusion of all Irish citizens in the information society was expressed clearly a national policy goal as far back as 2002. The goal has been repeated in numerous policy documents since then, including the **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-16**, which outlines specific eInclusion actions including a nationwide broadband scheme, breaking down barriers to lifelong learning, exploiting ICT infrastructure in communities and schools, and using technology to make public services more accessible.

The government emphasises the importance of rolling out this agenda in cooperation with the community and voluntary sector, as in the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme.

Since late-2008, the government has emphasised the importance of building a *smart economy* in Ireland. This work is led by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and requires a general upgrading of Irish ICT skills.

In July 2009, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources reaffirmed its commitment to eInclusion, saying:

"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."

"The course was really useful and has given me the confidence to use computers in the future"

IT Training

Training Programmes

Four training programmes were provided under the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme.

E-Cert, a non-academic computer course which targets people with no IT experience on the practical aspects of computing, including MS Word, file management and internet usage. Over 75% of participants took this course.

E-Cert Communities, which provides students with an understanding of online communities and allows them to set up a MySpace profile.

My IT!, which allows learners with literacy, language and numeracy gaps to undertake basic IT tasks, such as booking tickets online, setting up an e-mail account and looking up information. It includes interactive elements and can be used by people with visual impairments.

My Past, My Present, a social networking website that provides older people with a safe space to learn how to participate in an online community.

The training was delivered through FIT and all participants were provided with training packs and web support.

Who Undertook Training?

During 2009, a survey of participants showed that 61% of trainees were women.

Over half of all trainees were aged over 55, with a further one-third aged between 35 and 54. This suggests that the training reached many people who normally do not take up training courses.
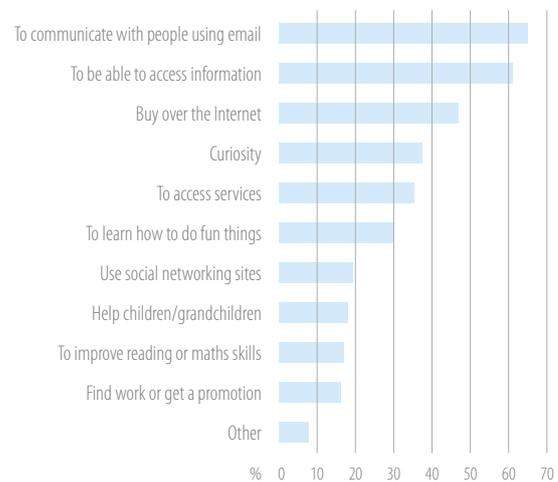
30% of participants were retired, with another 30% working, mostly in part time jobs. One in five respondents was unemployed, with the other participants working unpaid in the home. Thus, the IT courses were availed of by people in a wide range of employment situations.

80% of respondents had 'never' or 'rarely' used a computer, the internet or email before. The programme was therefore very targeted at those most at risk of experiencing the digital divide.

Views on the Training

The most common reason why people took the training (see diagram) was to learn to communicate using email. Accessing information on the internet and buying things over the internet were the next most important reasons.

Why People Took the IT Training

Bar chart – horizontal axis labelled % from 0 to 70:
- To communicate with people using email
- To be able to access information
- Buy over the Internet
- Curiosity
- To access services
- To learn how to do fun things
- Use social networking sites
- Help children/grandchildren
- To improve reading or maths skills
- Find work or get a promotion
- Other

Where was the Training Delivered?

Training was delivered during 2009 to over 1,500 people through 47 local organisations in Dublin and the Mid-East.

An Cosán (Jobstown, Tallaght)	Friendly Call Service (Blanchardstown)
Ballymun Read and Write Scheme	Friendly Call Service (Kerry)
Bawnogue Community Training Centre	Kilbarrack Coast Community (Drugs Rehab)
Bawnogue Women's Development Group	Kildare Rehab
Belcamp Estate Steering Group	KWCD LES (Crumlin)
Ceeds (Arus Rualach, Clondalkin)	Larkin Centre (Dublin 3)
Colaiste Eoin (Adult Literacy Service Finglas)	Lusca Beo (Seniors in Lusk)
Deise Training (Waterford)	Co. Meath VEC - Comm. Ed. using IT Bus
Digital Hub / D8 CEC	Mercy Family Centre, Weaver Square (Dublin 8)
Edenmore CDP (Community Volunteers)	Northbrook Workshop
Enable Ireland (Crumlin, Dublin 12)	Northside Centre for Unemployed (Coolock)
Finglas South CDP	Project West CDP (Seniors in Finglas)

About 90% of people were happy with practical elements of the training, including the teaching and materials, the location of the course and the times when classes were held.

One student said:

"If it wasn't for my trainer, I would never have had the confidence to start the training or to stick with it".

There are high spill-over effects from the training and, even before people had finished their training, more than one in three had taught at least one other person some of the skills they learnt. Thus, this is a very cost effective programme, as the initial training was implemented at only €175 per head, and this excludes knock-on multiplier effects, which increase over time.

Almost 60% of respondents for whom the question was relevant felt that this training would help them to find a job or progress in their current job. The courses therefore also have strong labour market benefits.

94% of people said that they would recommend their course to a friend. And four out of five said that they would do a follow-on computer course if one was available.
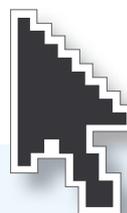
The locations are listed below and the table shows the wide geographic coverage of the programme.

Quarryvale Community and FRC	St. Oliver's Traveller Centre (Lucan)
Rathmines Partnership	Tallaght Centre for the Unemployed
Ronanstown CDP (Seniors Clondalkin)	Tower Programme (Probation Service Clondalkin)
Rowlagh Women's Group (Seniors Clondalkin)	Co. Wicklow VEC Community Education Bray
S.C.O.I.L	Co. Wicklow VEC West Wicklow Youth
Scoil Mochua (Central Remedial Clinic Lucan)	Youthreach Ballymun
SOLAS Women's Centre (Ballymun)	Youthreach Clondalkin
Station 1 (Probation Services Lucan)	Youthreach Granby Lane
St. Helena's (Community Training in Finglas)	Youthreach Killendarden
St. Kevin's College (Finglas)	Youthreach Priory (Tallaght)
St. Micheal's House (Glasnevin)	Youthreach Sherrard Stree
St. Micheal's House (Templeogue)	

Investing in Local Communities

Why Ballyfermot and Ballymun?

Dublin City Council has a strong commitment to eInclusion. In 2007, its research led it to prioritise the areas of Ballyfermot and Ballymun in relation to digital inclusion.

This decision is supported by data from the 2006 census. This shows that PC ownership by households in Ballyfermot was 38%, compared to 57% nationally. Internet connectivity was 30%, compared to 49% for the county as a whole.

The same pattern was found in Ballymun, where PC ownership by households varied between 36% and 46% in 2006, well below the national average of 57%. Internet connectivity was just below 30%, compared to the 49% national figure.

Work in Ballyfermot

The Ballyfermot IT Forum
The **Ballyfermot IT Forum** was established in 2003 and has undertaken many ICT projects with the local community since then, including development of the website www.ballyfermot.ie. The Forum's strategic plan for 2009-11 says that its mission is:

'To enable every resident of Ballyfermot to have awareness of, and affordable access to, IT to enrich the quality of their lives and to support them in seizing life's opportunities'.

Under the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme, the Forum identified priority actions and those implemented during 2009 included:

• Establishment of a network for teachers from local primary schools, where cooperation in relation to ICT is discussed
• Beginning of a cooperative process to develop websites for local primary schools
• Campaign to encourage usage by all local organisations and people of the www.ballyfermot. ie website (e.g. discussion forum on the site for Leaving Cert students was seen as very useful)

Upgrading of Local Infrastructure

Ballyfermot IT Forum worked closely with Dublin City Council to identify priority infrastructure needs for 2009. Key examples of investments that occurred under the programme are listed below.

In the **Cherry Orchard Family Resource Centre**, funding was supplied for 10 PCs, broadband and two interactive whiteboards.

"One interactive white board has been installed in our training room and is used as a resource by various tutors teaching adult education classes, not just in IT but in literacy, Irish, tracing your family tree etc. This has been of tremendous benefit to all participants, especially for those with literacy problems."
Marie Delaney, Project Coordinator

In the **Markievicz Community Centre**, funding was provided to install PCs, broadband, an interactive whiteboard and for refitting of the computer room.

In the **Ballyfermot IT Centre**, significant renovation work allowed the Centre to greatly expand its IT training of people with disabilities.

"The community of Ballyfermot has now got one of the most up to date community ICT facilities in Ireland."
Dolores James, Centre Manager

Funding was provided for eight flat screen monitors for The Orchard Community Centre.

The **Ballyfermot IT Forum** was supported with the ongoing delivery of its Strategic Plan. This includes the hosting of the www.ballyfermot.ie website

Work in Ballymun

As Ballymun does not have an IT Forum, the programme undertook a process of consultation with key local organisations including Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership and the Ballymun Community Facilities Forum. Subsequent applications for funding to Dublin City Council led to funding for the organisations listed below.

The **Ballymun Enterprise Centre** received funding to upgrade its training facilities to support local unemployed people and those starting enterprises.

The **Ballymun Library** created a Youth Zone – this included new PCs with large LCD screens, a gaming zone, music CDs and DVDs. As well as being used by young people in themselves, they act as a reason for local young people to visit the library.

"The teenagers want the Games Night to be a monthly event. It seems likely that the numbers will grow as the word spreads. It should be possible to offer information on these nights – perhaps career or health information."
Mark ffrench-Mullen, Divisional Librarian, Dublin City Public Libraries

The **SOLAS Women's Development Centre**, based in one of the Ballymun Towers, received funding for laptops and broadband to allow training for disadvantaged local women.

The **Larkhill Active Retirement Group** received funding for PCs, broadband and a printer to facilitate its work with, and training of, older people in Larkhill and Whitehall.

The **Cluid Housing Centre** at Marewood Court received funding to upgrade its IT facilities to allow for training of older people who live in the complex and other local older people. This will also allow internet access for this community.

Funding was provided to **14 local schools** for a range of ICT equipment. This was coordinated by the local School Principals' Network.

Funding was provided to create a wi-fi zone in the **Axis Arts and Community Centre**, and to install a number of PCs to which the public will have access.

Partners in the Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme

Dublin Employment Pact (see also www.dublinpact. ie) has worked on projects to overcome the digital divide since the late 1990s and produced a landmark report in 2003 on the digital divide in Dublin. It has delivered large, fully evaluated ICT programmes on behalf of government in 2006, 2008 and 2009 to bring the benefits of new technologies to disadvantaged people and communities in the greater Dublin area.

Fastrack to IT (FIT) (see also www.fit.ie) operates primarily to provide unemployed people with the IT skills to take up job opportunities. FIT operates nationwide, with projects in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Navan. It developed the different training modules used on this programme and oversaw the delivery of the IT training at almost 50 locations.

Dublin City Council (see also www.dublincity.ie) has a vision of a city that harnesses the power of communications technology to connect and inform people, create opportunities and tackle social exclusion.' The Council is responsible for the www. dublin.ie website which is a central source of information on the city. It also works with Age Action in relation to the Getting Started initiative, which provides ICT training to older people, and has equipped sheltered housing complexes with PCs, printers and broadband access in recent years.
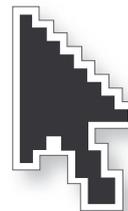
ICT Programme Steering Group
Back Row: Philip O'Connor (Dublin Employment Pact),
Peter Dee & Oliver Hickey (Dublin City Council).
Front Row: George Ryan (FIT), Karen Reid (Dublin
Employment Pact), Finbar McDonnell (Hibernian Consulting).

Why This Programme is Important

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.

For this reason, Dublin Employment Pact is proud to have led the 2009 Dublin and Mid-East Community ICT Programme, which we implemented with our partners. This publication shows some of the key elements of that programme. It demonstrates the fantastic value for money delivered through programmes such as this, which are implemented in cost-effective ways through cooperation with the community and voluntary sectors.

I would like to acknowledge the ongoing support from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources as well as the support from all those organisations and people who helped to implement the programme. Thank you! We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Philip O'Connor, Director, Dublin Employment Pact
January 2010

For further information on the programme visit www.dublinpact.ie