

How one housing provider got their Digital Champion programme rolling



24th January 2019

CHP is a charitable housing association based in Chelmsford in Essex.

They were keen to support their customers, to be confident with using online services. In spring 2018 they joined Digital Unite's [Digital Champions Network](#) as part of the Lottery funded One Digital programme.



At the time of joining they didn't have anyone who helped others with digital skills and rated the ability of their employees to support people to get online as low. Now they have 12 trained Digital Champions who are regularly supporting customers with digital skills through one-to-one and group sessions and they're looking to grow this further.

Here, Franchesca Brampton, Community Hub Administrator, explains more about how CHP got their Digital Champion support rolling:

"In Melbourne, Chelmsford we have a community hub that is used by many of our customers for a wide range of activities such as maths tutoring, learning English as a second language and cooking classes. It also has a computer suite with good connectivity that was used regularly for training courses. It was an ideal base from which to start developing our Digital Champion activity.

"Having been working in the Hub for just over a year I had got to know lots of people who came regularly and directly approached those I thought might make good Digital Champions. I talked through what being a Champion involved and showed people the support on the Digital Champions Network. Then, if they wanted to give it a go, I gave them the details to register for the Network and start their training.

All of our Digital Champions are motivated by helping others

“Over a few months I enlisted around 12 Champions from a mix of backgrounds and ages. Some were apprentices working for CHP, some were customers, some were working part time and wanted to improve their own skills, some were retired but all were motivated by the idea of helping others.

“I identified around seven courses on the Network that I thought would cover the most popular areas customers needed help with such as online security, accessibility and finding a job and I encouraged the Champions to do these first. This seemed to work well to get them started as collectively they’ve gone on to complete nearly 90 training courses so far!

“I have been really surprised at how independent and pro-active our Champions have been. Quite a few of them knew people who needed help with digital skills at the outset. For example, one of our Champions knew other mums in the school playground looking for help so went ahead and arranged a session with them. Others downloaded the posters and flyers from the Digital Champions Network and used them to advertise their Digital Champion support in the communal lounges of the sheltered schemes where they lived.

“Our computer suite is also available to hire for sessions, so a couple of our Champions are now running regular sessions for groups of up to six learners at a time in the suite.

“The next step is for us to roll this out amongst our employees and encourage them to be Digital Champions, so we can reach other customers. We have already been drip-feeding stories about our Digital Champions within the organisation to raise awareness and the accredited Network course for frontline staff will help us with this too.

“We are also planning to further engage our leadership team with the Digital Champion approach and how it can really support digital inclusion alongside the digital development of services. Improving the digital skills and confidence of our customers are really important to CHP, particularly as we move towards offering more information, advice and access to services online.”



Being a Digital Champion helps those who become Champions too

“Overall we are really pleased with how things are going. To start with we weren’t sure how people were going to take to it, but we have learnt that if you pinpoint the right people as Digital Champions at the beginning, they can really fly with it. It does help for them to have a regular point of contact which, at CHP, is me and I have learnt about the importance of regularly motivating them to keep going. The Network’s resources have been really helpful with lots of useful information, not just the courses but all the resources as well. It was just what we needed.

“Being a Digital Champion is not just about helping our customers to get online but also helping those who become Champions too. They feel so rewarded by seeing how they are helping people and they are learning new skills as well. One Digital Champion learnt how to use Skype which she then passed on to her neighbour. This meant her neighbour was able to Skype her family in Australia and see her grandchildren for the very first time. Being able to make a difference like that is absolutely what motivates and inspires our Digital Champions. We are excited to see where we can go from here”.

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