Case study

Creating Enterprise

Creating Enterprise's Creating Futures team discusses their Digital Champions programme and how embracing diversity can support digital inclusion for all.

Creating Enterprise is a subsidiary of housing association Cartrefi Conwy and provides maintenance services to Cartrefi Conwy's 4,000+ properties. The social enterprise contracts and hires their own tenants to deliver maintenance services, while redistributing the profits to their Creating Futures Academy.

As Creating Futures team explains:

> "We hire our own construction team in-house, but then all the profits we generate from doing that get reinvested back into our Creating Futures team. This helps us to provide employment support, volunteering opportunities, digital training and all sorts of different things. So basically, the profits we make get recycled back into supporting the community.

To support their tenants and the wider community, Creating Enterprise has put in place a team of digital champions to train and mentor people in the use of digital technology and online services, as well as a full-time Digital Inclusion Officer, Mike Millership. Trained by Digital Communities Wales (DCW), these volunteers deliver tailored support on a range of topics. The team of digital champions includes those who've worked on COVID-19 wellbeing projects with Creating Enterprise, members of Creative Enterprise's Employment Academy, Cartrefi

Conwy tenants, and even previous users of these digital training sessions. Creating Futures team believes this pooling of skills and the drive to grow have been key to the success of this training programme.

They said:

> "We are adapting to what people want, but at the same time, we're increasing our own skills.
>
> In some cases, group attendees have gone on to become digital volunteers themselves. For them, being able to give that support back makes it all worthwhile."

While some training is delivered on a one-to-one basis, Creating Futures team have found that the group sessions have additional benefits. Along with increasing people's confidence and their ability to use technology, the group sessions encourage friendships and social connections amongst trainees.

Creating Futures team explained:

> "It's nice because you always get one person in the group who will help look after the others. You tend to see people bond quite quickly as part of a group because they help each other.
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> Having spoken to some of the people involved in it, generally their feedback is that it's been great to stay in touch with people and make new friends. That's been the most positive thing to come out of this project."

As well as receiving training from digital champions, tenants can access Creating Enterprise's Loan-IT scheme and borrow a data-enabled tablet for three months. This allows people to access technology they may be otherwise be excluded from. Digital champions also tailor their approach to each person's needs and ability, gently encouraging people to build their skills slowly.

They say:

> Digital skills can be a bit of a taboo for people. Some people in our groups may not have done anything with digital for a long time, or never envisaged themselves using digital or having a go at it. So, it's just about trying to instil in them that you can make a mistake on the tablets, it's not the end of the world and they've just got to keep trying.

Reflecting on a member who learned how to use Google Search and could look back on the place they visited with their late partner, Creating Futures team said:

> He didn't know how to use the internet and he had very, very limited digital skill. But he searched, he got the picture and he commented back to the digital champion, 'This is amazing, I can go there anytime I like now.' It's things like that which really stand out to me. I know it's only a picture but to him it meant the world.

For those hoping to develop a digital inclusion project, Creating Futures team recommends starting with an open and inquisitive mindset, as well as asking your target audience what would be most helpful. Creating Enterprise use consultations to discover what their tenants want and how it could be delivered. This ensures their projects are fit for purpose and benefit their audience.

Creating Futures team explains:

> A lot of people put a project together in the way they envisage it and that's how it goes, but you've got to involve everyone. There's no point in delivering something that people aren't going to engage with, so it's finding that balance between what people want and what you're able to deliver.

Creating Futures team also believes it's important to share resources and knowledge with other organisations, along with seeking feedback to improve their digital services.

They say:

> "
> We regularly catch up with the digital champions to find out any recent issues and how they've been overcome, which is helpful if another volunteer comes across a similar issue. Likewise, the tenants that are using the devices, once they've overcome an issue, they can share that and help the next person. So, it's constant learning from both sides.
> "

They also recommends that organisations:

> "
> Use the resources that are out there. Speak to other organisations and find out what's worked and what hasn't. We still speak to other organisations and find out how we can make things better.
> "

By continually developing and reflecting on the work they're doing, Creating Enterprise hopes to keep boosting digital inclusion and enrich the lives of their tenants and the wider Conwy community.

Top three tips from Creating Enterprise:

1. Engage with people, find out what they want
2. Share resources and knowledge
3. Continue to learn and adapt

Help your community learn life-changing digital skills with our free training.
Get involved here:

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