Community Tech Support Drop-in
Outreach programme for in-person support

Overview:

In August 2021 we began piloting a series of 'Community Tech Support drop-ins' in four locations across Lambeth, Southwark and Croydon as part of an outreach programme designed to stimulate in-person support post pandemic lockdown.

By working with existing organisations that had either been closed or operating at reduced capacity we were able to provide support directly to their beneficiaries in parallel to their core offering as well as raise awareness in the immediate area and attracting new footfall. This also helped us to extend our support geographically and to reach some of the more isolated residents.

Our Community Tech Support drop-ins provide a friendly space for local residents to get questions answered or problems solved about their existing laptop, tablet or smart phone.

They also provide a quiet place to practice and to get trusted advice on other courses or equipment to buy.

These sessions are a chance for someone to drop-in with their device, sit down with member of our team or a volunteer to go help with a single issue or extend some skills in an informal setting.

We have also used the space to facilitate a device loan programme and upcycled donations.

Type of support provided:

The kind of topics we have covered include:

- Checking and refurbishing a 'dormant' laptop
- Setting up a new iPad and iPhone, transferring data via cloud storage.
- Setting up email addresses or unlocking online accounts
- Storage: moving and deleting files on phones / tablets and laptops
- Learning how to use a device and exploring settings and accessibility.
- Learning how to use word, copying and pasting and formatting.
- Using publisher to create a flyer for a new business start up
- Building confidence around sending and replying to emails
- Creating an account and making a fist purchase online
- Device loans and donations
- Advice on printers

Outcomes and Impact:

Across all of our drop-ins in 2021, we supported a total of **83 unique beneficiaries** across 41 sessions. Our total attendance was 315, with 61 beneficiaries attending more than 1 session. 9 Beneficiaries attended more than 1 location.

Of these 83 beneficiaries, we supported 39 from Croydon borough and 25 from Lambeth. We also supported residents from Southwark, Lewisham and Bromley.

We had help from 7 volunteers – with a combined total of 118 hours across all 41 sessions. At the current London Living Wage (£11.05 per hour), this equates to a contribution worth £1,303.90.

On the last week of drop-ins in 2021 we handed out Diversity and Equality monitoring forms to all our locations, and we had a 68% completion rate.

- 53% of those who responded were from a BAME background,
- 100% were over 55 and
- 24% were carers in some capacity.
- 65% female, 35% male

Alongside this we also handed out feedback and impact forms with a mix of wellbeing questions, confidence scales and qualitative feedback questions to give us an idea of how these sessions have impacted those who attended and highlight areas where we can improve.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive: Our average overall rate out of 5 for the programme is 4.8; for the format of the sessions 4.6; the tutors 4.8; and for volunteers 4.8.

We set out some confidence scales to measure how people felt their confidence had improved over the sessions:

- All those who filled out impact forms indicated they felt more confident using their devices after attending the sessions – with a high average score (on a scale of 1-7) of 6.1
- Most reported feeling more confident using the internet since attending the sessions – with an average score of 5.8
- Most reported feeling more confident asking questions – with an average score of 5.6

We also asked participants to tick a series of outcomes which they felt they had got out of the sessions:

- *Increased confidence using my device* – 94% said yes
- *More able to problem solve using my device – 81%*
- *I've been signposted to other useful resources – 44%*
- *I felt safer being online – 38%*
- *Reduced anxiety – 81%*
- *Feeling more connected to my community – 56%*
- *I learned some new things – 88%*
- *Increased wellbeing – 63%*

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Platform Café - Loughborough Junction

In October, we launched a cohort of this programme at the Platform Café in Loughborough Junction. We started with a total of 8 attendances, which leaped up to 18 in November and 24 in December.

Over 10 sessions we helped a total of **14 unique Lambeth resident**s, who found us in a variety of ways:

Referrals through Brixton Library, Loughborough Junction Action Group, residents who we met at Myatt's Field Community Centre Wellbeing event, and one resident found us on Google.

She has subsequently recommended another 3 people to come along with their questions and devices.

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Case studies:

Henry came to us via a referral from Quay Health Solutions, and he already had existing ties to Platform Café. He came with his iPad and iPhone to get them synced up and to learn some new things.

He attended every week without fail, growing in confidence and showing increasing curiosity about his devices.

He's excellent at troubleshooting but needed a touch of encouragement and reassurance. Henry is able to problem solve using his devices by looking up questions on google and is a lot more familiar with his settings and adapting his devices to suit his usage.

Minkah walked past Platform Café one day and popped in to say hello and find out what we do. He said he needed to start from the beginning, that he felt very unconfident and that he would like to be more independent, as his children do everything digital for him.

One of the main things he wanted to have his own email account independent from his children. There was a sense of him wanting to really fight back against just having someone do it for him – he demonstrated a strong ability and desire to learn, but struggled with confidence which made it difficult to get started and have a sense of direction with his learning.

At the end of the year, he sent an email to us:

"I will try to practice doing and checking emails over the holidays. Attending the sessions has given me great encouragement"

Ruth found us via google – having built up the courage to come along, she showed up with both a new and an old iPad. She was scared to move her data over from the old one in case she lost something and was very worried about 'getting it wrong'.

We helped her to set up her new iPad and she was very happy – she came back the following week to show us her ZX81 and an old laptop which had sat collecting dust. We took her laptop away to check it over and refurbished it for her, setting up Windows 10.

Since her first visit, Ruth has come on leaps and bounds in terms of her confidence and has even helped answer some other residents' questions.

Quotes:

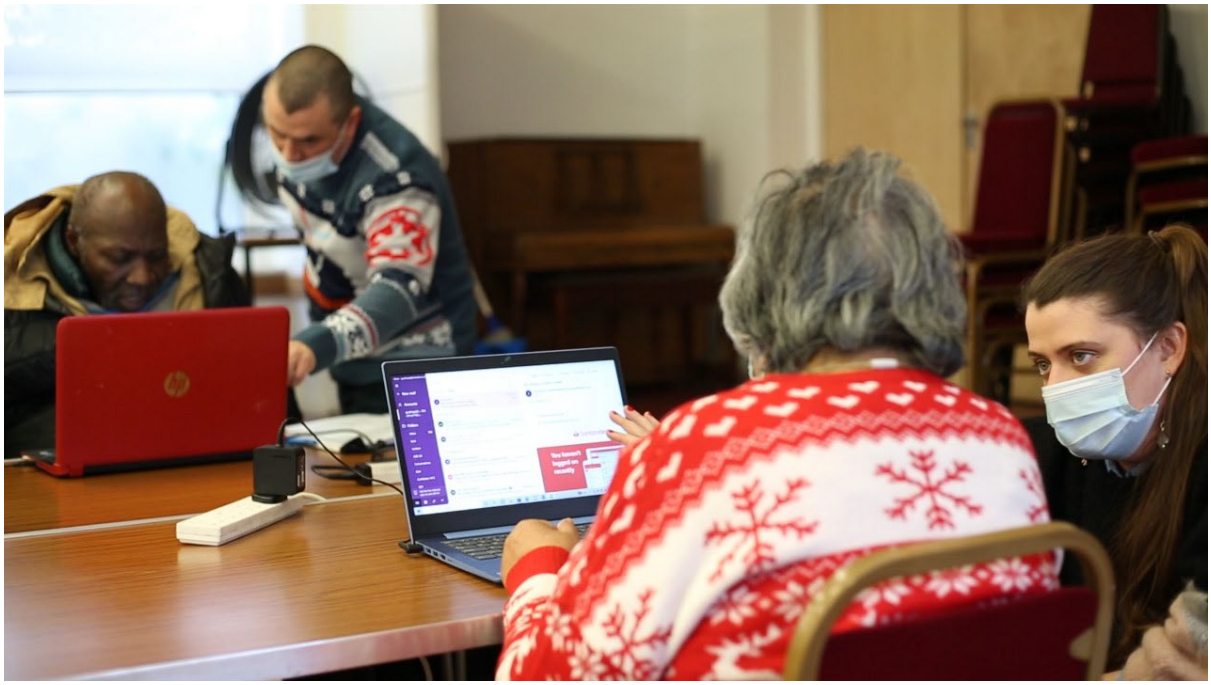
“Great session, I got good experience you can continue this programme. They gave me confidence - thank you very much.”

“A lot of my knowledge needs "refreshing" and Caspar and Eve are the very best at doing this without being patronising!!! I'm so glad that ClearCommunityWeb is returning as I have lots more that I need help with!”

“Tutors explained use of computer very well. One to one worked very well, I feel a lot more confident in using the computer after attending sessions, and so feel more integrated into the wider community.”

“I look forward to my Thursday morning tech group even though I hate getting up early! I've learned a lot from the very knowledgeable tutors.”

Age UK Croydon – Thornton Heath



In October we launched a cohort of this programme at Age UK Croydon. We started with 14 attendances in October which then leaped up to 42 in November.

We helped a total of 18 unique Croydon residents. These were a mix of referrals, walk-ins and existing Age UK Croydon and ClearCommunityWeb beneficiaries who had attended other online programmes.

We took referrals from Croydon BME, Croydon Social Prescribers, Red Cross Croydon and Age UK Croydon Personal Independence CoOrdinators (PICs).

Case studies:

Bernard started coming along to the sessions as a companion to another resident. The first few sessions he would come with her but by the end of the year he was coming every week on his own, often showing up first and getting himself set up without any assistance. He started the off coming along with a donated laptop to help with looking for work but lacked some confidence and direction.

Over time he's gained focus and has started taking a real interest in the activities to help him build the foundational skills to help him confidently use his laptop. This has helped him come out of his shell, engaging more with the activities and other people in the sessions, smiling and making jokes.

Emma joined one of our first sessions, she was dropped off by a neighbour for her first few sessions but now she comes on her own. Emma started off with almost no knowledge of how to use her smart phone and overall seemed very shy, quiet and unsure at first about knowing where to start and how we could support her.

She received 1-to-1 support with our volunteers Eulalee and Lisa, who slowly took her through the basics of navigating her phone to build up her skills and confidence and by her 6th session was able to send her first WhatsApp.

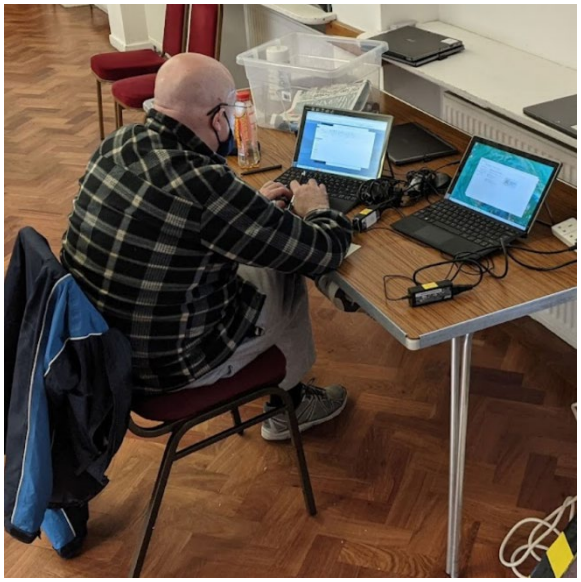
"I am able to use my mobile more confidently and send my first WhatsApp to friends."

Greta came in for the penultimate session of the year – she was known to us already via Croydon BME forum.

She brought along her laptop which was having difficulties running updates, was slow overall and impacting her confidence in accessing her emails and using the internet. We took it away for a service and she was very happy with the result.

Though she initially came to get her laptop fixed she came along to our last session in her Christmas jumper and stayed on to happily participate in some of the laptop activities.

Upcycling project:



In parallel to the drop-in sessions, we ran a laptop upcycling project with help from our volunteer Philip, using out-of-use laptops donated by Age UK Croydon.

Philip checked, wiped and set-up Windows 10, creating user accounts, running updates and downloading software to get them ready for donating onto Croydon residents and organisations.

So far we've distributed 6 of these laptops already to organisations and residents in Croydon:

- 2 laptops went to WalkWithMeUK.
- 3 laptops were donated to residents who were either self-referred or referred in via Making a Difference.
- 1 laptop was donated to a beneficiary who attends the Community Tech Support drop-ins.

Quotes:

“I love everything about the class, very helpful tutors and friendly.”

“The tutors were very attentive.”

"I have done only two weeks, but I have gained much help. I look forward to continuing if the project continues and I have the opportunity of rejoining the classes. Much thanks to tutors, volunteers and AgeUK.”

“It has helped me a great deal. It has helped me to get out of the house more which is good for my wellbeing.”

“Everything was very good. I can't fault the sessions and tutors. Keep up the good work.”

“I can search for Info - I can use email, therefore more in contact with people I know. Not solely reliant on the phone. I can use a computer for writing script.”

“I have learned to switch onto my new messages, how to highlight and choose similar images e.g. colour changes. I have had my machine serviced so I can access beginning and step-by-step internet”

“Use my email better, also using the mouse accurately and for more concentration with the mouse. It has helped me with formatting my books. Awaiting one to be published soon.”

Upper Norwood Library Hub (UNLH) – Crystal Palace

In August 2021 we launched a cohort of this programme at UNLH. We started out with 19 attendances in August and jumped up to 48 in September, 34 in October and 44 in November and 39 in December.

6 volunteers donated their time, a total of 34 hours across 15 events. Eulalee, Graham, Lisa, Laura, Steven and Veronica helped provide direct 1-to-1 support to residents, set up the space, prepare teas, and take attendance.

We helped a total of **44 unique residents from across Croydon, Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Bromley**. These were a mix of referrals, walk-ins and existing ClearCommunityWeb beneficiaries who had attended other online programmes.

Mobile Phone / Tablet Bootcamp:

As part of this programme we also ran additional sessions dedicated to mobile phones and tablets.

These provide an opportunity to practice some of the fundamental skills of using a Mobile Phone or Tablet for the first time.

It's a fun and informal and a new way of learning. This is designed for people completely new to using a tablet or those finding it difficult remembering new information and 'computer jargon'.

Case studies:

Michael was referred to us via Age UK Croydon. He wanted to learn how to use a smart phone. We donated him a SIM and he came for a number of sessions, diligently practicing and learning how to navigate his phone, send texts, WhatsApp, make calls and send emails.

In Michael's own words: *"I had a smart phone idle for a year, no-one available or willing to teach me. Then I heard about the classes at the CP library run by Caspar and capable volunteers. The help given was really good - and after a few sessions and good tuition, it suddenly clicked and I was using the smart phone for myself."*

Quotes:

"Very good session and informative. Need to put into practice. I appreciate your great service in the combating isolation and loneliness in the community. Well done!"

"This morning was very informative, very well explained and I will put all of my learning into practice. Well appreciated Sue and Caspar."

"Very helpful to get out of the house and meet with other people."

"Today's workshop was very interesting, helpful and very good to do our notification of events and days and months and take time, I have got a lot more confident"

"Lovely Thank you all"

"I enjoy the class, learned something new. Looking forward to further classes, thanks to the staff."

"Loved it thank you"