



## ICT HUB CASE STUDY – RURAL ICT HUBS ACROSS DORSET

### ***Organisation name:***

Connecting Dorset

### ***Summary:***

Connecting Dorset is a major project which aims to provide ICT 'Hubs' across the rural communities of Dorset. In total 120 of Dorset's 200 village and community halls and all 156 parish and town councils will be offered the opportunity to participate in the project, which will provide hardware, software and training to support the activities of village halls and parish councils. The aim is to improve community participation and use of ICT to overcome barriers to services, learning and government involvement.

This countywide project is being delivered by Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils and Dorset Community Action, in partnership with Citizens Online. Principal funders include Dorset Rural Renaissance, Capacity Builders, BT, Dorset County Council and Magna Housing.

### ***What happened?***

The project was approved in Spring 2007 and key staff were recruited. The first phase of installations of equipment has begun, along with a training programme for village hall volunteers who will then be able to offer support to other users of the equipment in their local community.

The project is supplying a package of a broadband wireless router, laptop with extra monitor, keyboard and mouse, Microsoft Office 2007 software, a choice of multifunction colour or mono laser printer, standard email address, training, ongoing support and, for village halls only, a contribution towards the first year's running costs.

The project will feature two types of training. The first is for those with some experience of ICT, but who want to make sure that they are really confident with using the Internet, email, Word, Excel as well as things like avoiding people who go phishing! Then there will be training for people who are completely new to ICT, which will start with the basics of using a computer.

So far (at the time of writing, February 2008) 11 village halls are fully connected and a further 8 signed up and being implemented. 56 Parish Councils have been connected to date and a further 29 signed up.



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### ***What difference has ICT made?***

Local people can make use of the equipment in village and community halls for a huge variety of reasons, for example:

- **Information** – access to the internet, e.g. help with homework, research family history, reading the paper..... the list is endless.
- **Communication** – email friends and family all over the world, use instant messaging, join special interest forums, and much more.
- **Education** – learning about ICT and increasing skills, online and distance learning such as learndirect.

Local clubs, the Parish Council and other hirers can use the Internet for meetings, training sessions and presentations in the hall. This could make the village halls more attractive to hirers and generate extra income.

### ***What was learnt?***

While recruitment of the Parish Councils has gone roughly to plan, the recruitment of village halls has been much slower than originally anticipated. Key to success is identifying a 'champion' within the community who can make things happen at a local level.

Connection of telephone lines to broadband in rural locations has given some difficulties of availability and cost.

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## **FIND OUT MORE:**

### ***Organisation's web address***

[www.connectingdorset.org.uk](http://www.connectingdorset.org.uk)

### ***Regional Champion***

Julie Harris – South West Regional Champion (COSMIC)

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### ***Knowledgebase***

Giving Your Service Users Access To Your Computers

<http://www.ict hub knowledgebase.org.uk/publicaccesstoyournetwork>

I Can't Get Broadband – Help!

<http://www.ict hub knowledgebase.org.uk/cantgetbroadband>

Allocating And Recognising Responsibility for ICT

<http://www.ict hub knowledgebase.org.uk/allocatingresponsibilityforict>