

ICT tools to support collaborative working

A model of collaborative working

ICT tools to support collaborative working

How this information can help

This information is aimed at chief executives, managers and trustees of organisations considering the use of online tools to enable collaborative working as well as those within voluntary organisations with responsibility for ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

Organisations using online collaboration might choose from a variety of available tools, some of which are well-established, some of which have potential that may not be fully understood, and some of which are new. This information examines a variety of ICT tools in each of these categories, and looks at the advantages and pitfalls each might offer. Case studies illustrate voluntary and community sector experience of a variety of ICT tools. Full versions of these documents are available at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/collaborate

It is useful for voluntary and community organisations asking:

- How can we communicate with our partners?
- How can large scale collaborations communicate?
- How can we share our information more effectively?
- How can we develop information together?
- How can collaborators share photos, audio and video?

Throughout this information, reference will be made to different types of tools. Individual applications of tools may be cited as examples and links given for reference. This in no way constitutes an endorsement of an application, or a suggestion that one particular application should be preferred above another.

How can we communicate with our partners?

Email

Email can save time and money that might otherwise be spent on mail or phone calls. It can also be used to transfer files. Emails may take the form of one-to-one communication, or they can be sent to many people simultaneously.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Messages are sent instantly	Quantity of advertising or 'spam email'	Legally, emails are treated just like written letters
Virtually everyone has access to email	Threats from viruses	Open to misinterpretation – difficult to express tone in a message

Further information on email is available on the ICT Hub's knowledgebase, as well as information to help you manage spam. Please visit www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/internetemail

Extranet

'Extranet' is a term coined to describe an online collaboration space, shared by people who may come from different organisations. It is derived from 'intranet', a collaboration space used within large corporations. Extranets can help a group of organisations share information and resources. Extranets may also incorporate:

- group calendars – which could be used to book rooms or equipment, or plan group meetings.
- event alerts – these can alert people when meetings are coming up, or when deadlines are close.

Some extranets use specialist software, but others can be accessed via the web using a web browser like Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Hosted externally from organisation, no server hardware or software required	Internet connection required to access information	Every extranet is different – needs to be carefully designed
Can be accessed from anywhere	Needs to be used to be useful	Expensive to set up, but there are cheap options

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Extranet: DirectSupport

DirectSupport is a free guidance and mentoring service for UK online centres, focusing mainly on community and voluntary centres. UK online centres are community based centres giving local access to computers, internet and email to those who would not otherwise be able to get online.

The DirectSupport Extranet is a web based collaboration system. There are collaboration areas which function like a set of shared email boxes. Messages and files can be sent in, read, forwarded, replied to and files downloaded by all subscribers to the extranet.

It provides a very cost-effective solution in that it brings together a complete package of solutions for communication and information sharing needs for a dispersed group of people. As people join the group they are given access to the extranet and can immediately see all previous activity. In contrast, frequently-changing groups are very difficult to manage if you are just using email.

The full case study is available online.

Chat or Instant Messenger (IM)

Chat programs allow people to communicate in real time, with each sender typing in the text they are 'speaking'. The system of more than two people communicating in this way is often called a chatroom.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Software is generally free	Need to be on the same software as your other contacts	May need to run more than one program, or a program like Trillian that enables connection to multiple networks at once www.ceruleanstudios.com
Users can see who else is online and available to chat	Can be a security risk	Systems which allow people to remain anonymous. Anonymity can lead to irresponsible use
Transcripts of conversations can be saved	Can be a distraction	Needs to be used to be useful and requires marketing and proactive interventions for it to work

Some of the best known packages are:

- AOL Instant Messenger
www.aol.co.uk/aim
- Yahoo! Messenger
uk.messenger.yahoo.com
- MSN Messenger
join.msn.com/messenger/overview
- ICQ
www.icq.com
- Google Talk
www.google.co.uk/talk

In addition, some extranet or intranet services may offer a chat program as part of their services.

Voice over Internet Protocol (or IP Telephony, Internet Telephony, and Broadband Phone)

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is the routing of voice conversations over the Internet or through similar networks. Using a broadband connection, phone calls between computers are free. Headsets and handsets that plug into a computer are the easiest way of using VoIP. Other features like video calls using webcams and chat (see above) are provided by VoIP software, and can be used to hold meetings between collaborating organisations.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Free 1-to-1 and conference calls	Quality of audio can be poor	Requires broadband connection
Software works on Mac, PC, Linux etc	Different systems do not work together	

One of the most popular VoIP software packages is Skype (www.skype.com). Skype users can speak to other Skype users for free through the internet. Skype also has paid services allowing users to call or receive calls or voicemail from traditional telephone numbers.

Further information about how to get started is available on the ICT Hub's knowledgebase, including what you need and what the options are.
Please visit www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/voip

How can large scale collaborations communicate?

Website

A properly publicised website is useful for disseminating information about an organisation or a project. However, conventional web pages tend to be static, can be difficult to keep up to date by those without technical knowledge and are not very interactive.

There are new forms of web publishing that are moving beyond this older model.

(See below, *How can we share our information more effectively?*)

Email list

Creating an **email list** allows a newsletter to be sent to a group electronically, cutting down on time, printing and postage. An email list is maintained on the internet rather than an individual's computer, so that it is accessible from anywhere. Members of the list are usually able to add themselves to an email list (subscribe) or take themselves off (unsubscribe). Because the list is on the internet, it is easy for the newsletter to be run by a small team of editors and for editorial control to rotate and for the list to be used from different locations. Modern email list systems can receive messages in plain text format, or HyperText Markup Language (HTML) the format which allows images and text formatting for web pages.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Large scale distribution possible for minimal cost	HTML emails are not always rendered properly by a recipient's email program High volume lists can be a source of overload	Spam filters may block emails from lists Setting your email to 'auto-reply' when subscribed to an email list

It is recommended that anyone wishing to communicate through an email list takes the following steps:

- send the message in plain text
- include a prominent and early link to a web page where the richer format can be seen.
An example of this is Sefton CVS (www.seftoncv.org.uk/funding/wordpress) who provide a monthly newsletter on funding information.

Further information about email lists is available on the ICT Hub's knowledgebase, including an introduction to email mailing lists and protecting your system from viruses.
Please visit www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/emailmailinglists

Email groups

Email groups are a development of simple email lists. Creating an email group allows networks of people to participate in a many-to-many exchange of emails. Emails are not sent out by one central editor. When an individual member of the group sends a message to the email address of the group, it is automatically sent to all group members. Email groups range from small private groups to large public or semi-public groups with several hundred members, such as the **charitywebforum** – see below.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Information is shared efficiently across a large number of collaborating users	Can be a source of overload	Setting your email to 'auto-reply' when subscribed to an email group
A web interface keeps a record of discussions	Space for files and messages can be limited for free services and other banner adverts	Free groups (like Yahoo) are advertising supported, adding footers to messages on the web interface

Email group software can be expensive but there are a range of free services, either using open source systems (like GNU Mailman – www.gnu.org/software/mailman/index.html) which require some technical ability to configure, or group packages such as Yahoo! Groups (groups.yahoo.com), Smartgroups (www.smartgroups.com) or Dgroups (www.dgroups.org) – specifically aimed at groups and communities in international development but offering facilities to other organisations in the VCS.

Further information about email groups is available on the ICT Hub's knowledgebase.
Please visit www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk

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Email group: charitywebforum

The Charity Web Forum is an email group originally set up to facilitate charities' sharing information and knowledge about the subject of the web. Most postings are from new or less experienced web staff and a fairly small core of 'experts'. Membership is moderated.

Any member can post an email to the group and the rest of the group will receive the email. Members can usually choose whether to receive the email immediately, as a daily digest or not at all, in which case they must visit the website to join in.

It is a good way for new or less experienced charity staff to get information and share learning without reinventing the wheel. The instant emails allow for lively discussions and sometimes postings can be extremely informative.

New members never check the past email exchanges for an answer to their question, which is understandable as there are many thousands, so the group tends to get the same questions repeated every few months by newcomers to the group.

The full case study is available online.

How can we share our information more effectively?

Database

A database is a collection of records stored in a computer in a systematic way. Information will generally be organised so that it can be accessed by fields, such as name, organisation, town or city. It can also be accessed by keywords, for example by topic. People subscribing to a mailing list generally have their information stored in a database. Databases can be used to allow people to share information over the internet. They can also be used to create websites that are very easily updated by different people. Microsoft Access (office.microsoft.com/en-gb/default.aspx) is a popular desktop database but limited in its support for multiple users and collaboration. Other database programs like FileMaker (www.filemaker.com) and the open source MySQL (www.mysql.com) are much better suited to shared working, including use in websites.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Huge amounts of information can be stored and accessed quickly	Data can quickly become outdated and unreliable if it is not properly maintained	Information stored in a database is, in the UK, subject to the Data Protection Act www.ico.gov.uk
A well-designed database allows rapid cross-referencing	Different users may duplicate, delete or input incorrect information	Time must be invested in training database users

C A S E S T U D Y

Online database: CAN-Online

Community Action Network (CAN) is a UK organisation for social entrepreneurs. The CAN team and members deliver community projects in almost every field of social change and service delivery. CAN aims to stimulate new, entrepreneurial ways to tackle social problems more effectively and more efficiently by connecting people in communities, bringing together those from voluntary and community organisations with the public and private sectors.

CAN have an internet-based contacts database which can be managed by all its staff and partners, wherever they are located, using an internet connection. They use the database in traditional ways for mailmerges, label printing, event and contact management. Staff can edit records, add new ones and delete them. Data can be exported for use on other applications and imported from other sources. The same database is accessed directly by the CAN website to provide up-to-date information to website visitors on CAN membership.

A single shared database enables collaboration on equal terms by all users. The alternative would involve multiple copies of the data with central control where most users have read-only access to less than up-to-date data.

The full case study is available online.

Content Management System (CMS)

A content management system organises and facilitates collaborative creation of documents and other content. It can apply to any computer software system but is used more specifically to manage websites and web content, allowing many people to collaborate on editing a central website.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Users with little or no technical skills can add content to a website	Specially designed in-house system can be expensive	With more than one contributor, consistency of style and quality can be hard to maintain
A range of CMS software has been developed with the sector in mind	With more content, large scale websites can become difficult to navigate	Open source software may be free, but maintaining and supporting it costs time and money

Open source solutions can keep costs down. Three of the best known are Joomla! (www.joomla.org), Mambo (www.mamboserver.com) and Plone (plone.org). These do require technical experience to initially set-up and to re-configure a website, but once established they are straightforward to edit.

Another method, recommended by some web designers, is to use Macromedia Contribute (www.adobe.com/products/contribute). This is marketed as a low cost solution for people who need to update websites regularly, but do not have the technical expertise to use a web design package. Editing pages in Contribute has been designed to be almost as simple as editing a word-processed document.

Further information about CMS is available on the ICT Hub's knowledgebase, including *Knowing When You Need CMS* and *What Does A Content Management System Do?*
Please visit www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/managingcontent

C A S E S T U D Y

Content Management System: Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire County Council have been building up an ICT community since 2001 to help address rural isolation by providing information and services electronically. They built a Content Management System to allow communities to manage their own information. The system is easy to use with no technical skills required and has a hierarchical management system, so a user can register and add content at an appropriate level.

If organisations are transferring their existing website to this technology they can still maintain the look and feel of their existing website. Posting can be made village/district/county wide to enable people to reach as wide an audience as required. Rather than posting information many times on many different websites, information can be posted once and appear on several websites.

The full case study is available online.

Blogs

A blog (short for weblog) is a web-based publication usually consisting of a series of articles, like diary entries, in reverse chronological order. Blogging software is very easy to use, and most blogs can be updated using a standard web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox).

Blogs often focus on a particular subject, and can be useful as a form of content management system on a website, providing an easy way to add press releases or news in general. A typical blog can easily combine text, images, and links to other web pages and other media related to its topic.

Blogs can support collaboration in several ways. Readers of blogs are usually able to comment on individual postings, although this can be disabled by the owner. Several contributors (authors) can input into one blog, and links can be made between several blogs on similar subjects. In addition, most blogs use a technology called RSS (Really Simple Syndication) which enables users to aggregate and track the rapidly changing content on multiple blogs in a very personal and time-efficient way. The latest website Content Management Systems can take advantage of RSS to enable blog content to be displayed on multiple websites.

Blogs can be hosted by dedicated blog hosting services, such as Blogger (www.blogger.com) or WordPress (wordpress.com) which are free, or TypePad (www.typepad.com) which charges a fee.

Alternatively, they can be run using blog software (such as Movable Type – www.sixapart.com/movabletype) on regular web hosting services. In both cases some technical expertise will be needed to set up the software, but once done blogs can then be very easily maintained by anyone with basic computer skills.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Easy and cheap (often free) to set up and update	Must be monitored for spam comments	Hosted services may not be tailored as much as blog software that you can run yourself
Regularly updated parts of a website can be easily transferred to a blog	If posts are not regular the blog can look moribund, and an alternative tool like email should be considered	Content posted on a blog is usually 'live' immediately

C A S E S T U D Y

Blogging: ruralnet|uk

ruralnet|uk is a rural regeneration charity which promotes a living and working countryside and finds new ways to help rural communities improve and strengthen their local economies. It has specialist skills in Information, Communications and Collaboration Technologies (ICCTs) and wide experience covering their potential and appropriate use for rural areas.

A year ago, they started experimenting by putting their daily online digest of development news, xPRESS Digest, in the form of a weblog (See ruralnet.typepad.com/xpress). Although still in prototype form, several users are already pulling xPRESS Digest's RSS feed into their own news information systems. A future development could be the opening up of the editorial control to allow several organisations to contribute content to the xPRESS Digest Service.

Blogs have been developed for online consultations, as they enable users to input their views easily by posting comments and feedback.

Following on from this, they 'blogged' their annual Conference, ruralnet|2005. In future years the ruralnet|uk conference weblog will be used to enable delegates to car share.

The full case study is available online.

C A S E S T U D Y

Blogging: ICT Hub and the Media Trust

The ICT Hub and the Media Trust are working together to promote the use of “new media” technology — technology which helps organisations to communicate using the internet — to the voluntary and community sector. This aims to help the voluntary and community sector communicate more effectively and efficiently with its stakeholders, and offer services in more innovative ways. They are running a series of seminars around the country on topics such as blogging, podcasting and wikis.

The Media Trust is using a blog to update its development news online at www.mediatrust.org/Blog/index.php. It provides access to information about the seminars on new media which have been run around the country, some of which are available as podcasts, thus demonstrating how easy it is to do.

Collaborative editing

Collaborative editing allows simultaneous editing of the same document by different partners using different computers in different locations. Using tools like Writeboard (www.writeboard.com/), or JotSpot Live (www.jotlive.com/), it is now possible for several authors to contribute to a single document over an internet connection. As well as collaborative word processors, collaborative spreadsheets are now emerging.

Wikis

A wiki is a more sophisticated collaborative editor, not just restricted to editing single documents. It is a type of website that allows users to easily add or remove pages. It allows existing pages to be edited and links between pages to be created. It is essentially a website that can be changed by those who visit it. Different options exist to control who can do what. At one extreme some wikis allow anyone to edit what they find without the need for registration. This ease of interaction and operation makes a wiki an effective tool for collaborative writing. In essence, a wiki is a simplification of the process of creating web pages combined with a system that records each individual change that occurs over time, so that at any time, a page can be reverted to any of its previous states.

It is now becoming more common for wikis to be created and edited by a few people (such as the American Flu Wiki – www.fluwikie.com).

Pros	Cons	Beware
Instant editing, easy to keep up-to-date, mistakes can be easily corrected by rolling back to an earlier version of the page	Editing a wiki is often not as simple as a normal word processor and may have more limitations	Users need to overcome barrier of being able to edit as well as read a web-page
Minimal training needed to add and edit pages	If a completely open wiki is used, it must be moderated or managed by an editor	Wikis need animation to foster collaboration. For new users, the ability to edit a web page directly is unnatural and can be a barrier

C A S E S T U D Y

Wiki: ladder4learning

ladder4learning promotes “learning” for people and organisations in the community and voluntary sector in South East England. Ladder4learning have developed a Jargon Buster Wiki because they felt the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is guilty of using an overwhelming range of inaccessible terms and acronyms.

The rapidly changing nature of the sector means that new initiatives and their corresponding terms come and go and it can be very hard to keep up-to-date with the latest jargon and acronyms. While a number of Jargon Busters exist, they rapidly become outdated. A wiki allows for rapid and regular updating by anyone in the VCS and this enables a collaborative approach on a national scale.

Users can register as members of the wiki, or they can use the wiki as a guest and remain anonymous. The success of this collaboration can be seen by the fact that the majority of definitions are added to and edited by people and groups outside ladder4learning.

They are aware that with such collaborative, free-use tools there is always the potential for abuse of the site, for example the addition of inappropriate words and definitions. To date, this has not been an issue with this Wiki.

The full case study is available online.

Are there other tools that can help us?

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds

An RSS or web feed, is a way of allowing people to monitor when websites have added new content. It turns, or syndicates, headlines, articles, pictures and even audio from many websites into a standard format that can be read in one place by a program known as a newsreader or aggregator.

In order to receive an RSS feed you must 'subscribe' to it for free. As soon as new content is posted on the website you have subscribed to, it is received automatically without having to keep visiting the original website.

There are various ways of receiving an RSS feed.

- Web browsers like Firefox (www.mozilla.com/firefox), Opera (www.opera.com) and Safari (www.apple.com/macosx/features/safari) allow their users to add RSS feeds to their list of bookmarks (favourites).
- Personalised portals such as My Yahoo! (uk.my.yahoo.com) and the Google Personalised Home (www.google.co.uk/ig?hl=en) offer a user-friendly way of subscribing to RSS feeds.
- An online newsreader (i.e. Bloglines – www.bloglines.com) can check a list of feeds on behalf of a user and display any updated articles that it finds all on a single easily managed screen.

All of these services are free.

Many news sites, blogs and other collaborative software tools like wikis and collaborative editors automatically generate RSS feeds. Subscribing to these feeds enables collaborators to keep up-to-date with a wide range of relevant information sources, comments and changes to documents in a very time-efficient way. Using RSS, it is quite feasible to keep track of new content on multiple websites with ease.

Pros	Cons	Beware
Can keep up to date with large numbers of websites quickly	Not very user-friendly to subscribe to RSS feeds	Can be a source of information overload
Information can be easily transferred from one website to another, without having to manually update pages	Not well known technology in the sector	

The ICT Hub is offering an RSS feed on its knowledgebase of ICT good practice resources. Please visit www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/whatisrss

C A S E S T U D Y

RSS feeds: VolResource

VolResource aims to provide practical resources for people involved in voluntary or community organisations, making use of communications technology such as a website and email newsletter. Their dynamic news pages give the flexibility to allow voluntary organisations to add their own news.

They have used an off-the-shelf blogging tool (WordPress) to support their news service and at the same time opened up the service so that others can contribute their own news. The ability to categorise news items, a feature of most blog services, enables news items to be keyworded which in turn means that users of the service can subscribe to a subset of the service that is of interest to them.

VolResource found that, once set up, the system is very straightforward to maintain. However, they report that different versions of RSS can cause confusion for users, although most feed readers/aggregators can cope with most formats. Incorporation of content into website from an RSS feed is still complex. However, this will improve as RSS becomes a standard feature of website content management systems.

The full case study is available online.

Browser-based conferencing

A new development on the internet is web browser-based conferencing and collaboration platforms that provide real-time visual communication without the need for downloading or installing additional software. An example of a free tool that supports this is Vyew (vyew.com/content). In addition to allowing shared viewing of presentations, files, photos and even a participant's desktop in real-time, there are also tools for whiteboarding, annotating, text chatting, and phone conferencing.

Online whiteboard

An online whiteboard allows collaborators to contribute by 'drawing' on a shared virtual whiteboard. Again there are free versions of this tool such as GEWhiteboard (www.imaginationcubed.com) and others that are commercially available such as Groupboard (www.groupboard.com).

Screencasts

A screencast is a digital recording of the output seen on the computer screen. Often, an audio narration is added, which makes this a very useful tool for creating demonstrations, or for training people in how to carry out procedures using a particular computer program. Screencasts can be shared by placing them online embedded within a website e.g. ScreenCastsOnline (screencastsonline.com/sco) or by copying them to a CD.

There are some free packages available for making your own screen casts, such as Wink (www.debugmode.com/wink). Commercial packages include Camtasia Studio (www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp) for PC and Snapz Pro for the Mac (www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/snapzprox).

Online Collaborative Organiser

These are ICT tools that can be used collaboratively to carry out a range of simple project management functions. The applications allow collaborators to have a central page that holds to-do lists, implementation notes, photos and attached files. Collaborative organisers like Backpack (www.backpackit.com) are available in a limited free form.

BaseCamp (www.basecampHQ.com) is a more sophisticated but easy to use web-based project collaboration tool. It makes it possible to centralise group communication with collaborators, assign to-dos and tasks, post messages and gather feedback, organise simple scheduling, share files and track people's time, without having to download any software. This package has a free trial period, but needs to be purchased if it is to be used long-term.

How can collaborators share photos, audio and video?

Sharing material on the web for people to access or download can avoid the significant problems of emailing large files. It can be a very low cost and easy way of making available resources that would otherwise be hard to share using an existing website. High resolution photographs, audio and video files are very large and so it makes sense to store these online with a specialist service provider and not necessarily in the space provided by the organisation that hosts the other parts of your website. These specialist providers will have the huge storage capacity and very high-speed internet connections required to handle such large files.

- **Photosharing:** These services allow digital photos to be uploaded and shared with groups or universally. Photos can be sorted or grouped by theme or event. The best-known example is Flickr (www.flickr.com).
- **Podcasting:** This is a way of distributing audio and video files, over the Internet for playback on mobile devices (such as iPods and other MP3 players) and computers. It can be a useful method of sharing recorded presentations. Podcasts can be distributed automatically using RSS

feeds, allowing people to subscribe to a podcast and receive new audio and video programmes automatically as they are released.

- **Video sharing:** This is similar to photosharing. Websites allow users to upload, view, and share video clips. Two popular sites that do this are Google Video (video.google.com) and YouTube (www.youtube.com).

How can the cost be kept down?

Most of the tools discussed here are low cost or free to users. This is because many of them use open source software, some carry advertising and others offer a higher level of service which you have to pay.

Open Source

Pros	Cons	Beware
Open source software can be freely used and passed on	Support can be patchy and difficult for newcomers to access	Whilst in theory it is possible to adapt applications for an organisation's own use, considerable technical expertise is needed

To save money you need to be creative and have some degree of technical knowledge. Where this exists, organisations, and even individuals, are 'bolting together' the free tools and services available to provide sophisticated web-based systems that deliver text, photos, audio and even video material. Visitors to these websites see an integrated whole. However, the photos users see may be hosted on Flickr and the video may be coming from YouTube while the news section of the site may be delivered using a blog. Furthermore, once set up, these composite websites are so straightforward to maintain that the Communications Officer, not the Website Manager, will be empowered to add new items themselves.

What next?

If you wish to take your interest in ICT tools for collaboration further please visit the I-See-T website at www.i-see-t.org.uk for more information on the tools described here. There is also a “sandpit” area of the I-See-T website where you can try out some of these tools for yourself.

The **ICT Hub** (www.ict hub.org.uk) offers a range of free and low cost resources to help you use technology to collaborate. The ICT Hub’s “knowledge base” is an online database of good practice briefings on topics such as ICT management, internet and email, and databases.

To complement these online resources, the ICT Hub offers a series of seminars to increase the voluntary and community sector's knowledge of new media and inspire the sector to make use of blogs, podcasts, video and other online resources. These seminars have an emphasis on knowledge and skills that can be put to use immediately and require little or no budget. The seminars are aimed at small to medium sized organisations and will be at an introductory level.

The ICT Hub is publishing research into the future trends and impacts of technology on the sector. There will be four reports available for free: *ICT and consultation and campaigning*, *ICT and accountability*, *ICT and social networks*, and *ICT and delivering services and the e-government agenda*.

For further information about the ICT Hub please visit www.ict hub.org.uk or for free ICT advice call 0800 652 4737.

To receive information about the ICT Hub sign up on the website or email ictresources@ict hub.org.uk

Disclaimer

NCVO cannot accept liability arising from reliance on this information. It is for guidance only and should not replace legal advice.

Further information

NCVO's Collaborative Working Unit (CWU) offers information and advice to help voluntary and community organisations make decisions about whether and how to work collaboratively. It serves their managers and trustees as well as engaging with infrastructure bodies, funders and policy makers.

Email: collaborate@ncvo-vol.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7520 2440

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/collaborate

NCVO, Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

For CWU guidance on developing joint working agreements between voluntary and community organisations, please visit www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/jointworkingagreements.

For CWU models & case studies outlining good practice in the different ways that voluntary and community organisations can work together, please visit www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/jointprojects.

ruralnet|uk is a rural regeneration charity that works through promoting and enabling collaboration, research, consultancy and information transfer. ruralnet|uk's I-See-T project is exploring ICT for collaboration in the VCS. This year-long project aims to share the experience, tools, advantages and pitfalls of using ICT for collaboration with organisations in the VCS that could benefit most.

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