



ICT Signposting Guide for Small Voluntary and Community Organisations

This is a signposting guide for small voluntary and community to help them get better use out of their ICT and to support its effective management.

ICT

ICT stands for Information and Communication Technology. ICT is your hardware and software and all the technology you use to communicate with your stakeholders. This includes your computer or computers and communications medium such as websites and email as well as the way you manage information and data electronically.

When managed well, ICT can help us store information, communicate with each other, reach new audiences and make us more efficient and effective, achieving more with the same or less resources.

ICT is important for all organisations, regardless of size and including new and emerging ones. Efficient use of ICT will allow your organisation to operate more efficiently and underpin your long-term sustainability. It helps you do things better and do better things.

The ICT Hub is a partnership of national voluntary and community organisations. This partnership provides a range of services to help voluntary and community sector organisations benefit from ICT.

Plan, budget and fund your ICT

How can ICT help you achieve what you want to achieve?

What can ICT do for you, your organisation and the people you benefit? There are many new ideas and applications for ICT. The ICT Hub offers a wide range of training courses, seminars, free resources and ideas. As long as you are clear what your organisation is doing and wants to do, support is available through volunteers, consultants and the website.

- http://www.ict hub.org.uk/how_we_can_help/ (for general advice)
- http://www.ict hub.org.uk/articles/Buying_and_Commissioning_ICT.html
- <http://www.it4communities.org.uk> (for volunteers who can help you think things through)

How to develop an ICT Strategy and plan: ICT strategies help you plan resources and what to do next. For a comprehensive resource on developing an ICT strategy - www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/strategyplanning

An example simple ICT strategy for a small community organisation can be found at www.preponderate.co.uk/resources.htm

Cost and fund your ICT: When funding ICT remember to look beyond the cost of hardware and software and include maintenance and training costs too. www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/allocationfunds

Up to date information on funding and guides to help you are available from: http://www.ictHub.org.uk/how_we_can_help/Funding_03.html

Legal issues: There are many legal issues relating to the use of ICT in your organisation. Make sure you are aware of the key issues: <http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/legalissues>

Financial management and ICT: It is important that you budget effectively for ICT provision within your organisation. This resource will help you: <http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/budgeting>

Contact management and ICT: Having an effective database is one of the most important aspects of ICT in your organisation. The ICT Hub Knowledgebase has information on a strategy for planning, choosing and implementing a database for your organisation www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/databases

Fundraising and ICT: Which funders will specifically fund ICT – here's a start: www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/fundingict

Manage your ICT

Give your ICT a health check: You should be reviewing the way in which you manage ICT and prepare a range of comprehensive checklists to ensure you are on track. Here's how www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/healthchecklists

How to choose, buy and replace ICT: Need a strategy for buying, owning and disposing of ICT equipment? Yes! It's available from: www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/buyingowninghardware

Keeping your ICT safe: Carry out an ICT risk assessment to ensure you have identified and potential risks with your information technology. www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/riskassessment

Make your ICT accessible: Your staff, volunteers and service users should be able to use ICT regardless of any disability or impairment. Find out how assistive technology can make you more inclusive:

- http://www.ictHub.org.uk/how_we_can_help/accessibility_03.html

- <http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/myway/>

Make your website accessible: These days many voluntary organisations either have a Web presence already or want to get one. More and more people are becoming aware of the importance of accessible Web site design, but may be unsure of what's needed. The ICT Hub have produced a list of some online resources to help you ensure that your Web site will be accessible. Remember, making your Web site accessible is good for everyone, not only disabled people:

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/webaccessibilityresources

Install a free text reader: Many individuals could benefit from the ability to have the computer read text out loud. A free programme called ReadPlease can be downloaded to do this www.readplease.com

Is open source for you: The open source movement is attracting an increasing amount of attention - but is open source a practical solution for your organisation? This section on Knowledgebase, in collaboration with TechSoup, takes a look at what open source software is and the risks and benefits of using it.

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/opensourceoftware

Data protection: Here's a comprehensive introduction to the data protection act together with issues that you need to consider

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/dataprotectionactintroduction

Information Commissioner: All public and private organisations are legally obliged to protect any personal information they hold. Public authorities are also obliged to provide public access to official information. The Information Commissioner's Office exists to help you understand these obligations and keep you updated as and when they change. www.ico.gov.uk

For up to 80% off hardware and software check out

http://www.ictHub.org.uk/discounted_deals/

Harbottle & Lewis: for information on intellectual property

www.harbottle.com

Bates Wells & Braithwaite offer guidance on liability and defamation -

http://www.ictHub.org.uk/articles/Liability_and_defamation.html

A good overview of the legal issues around ICT as they develop: <http://www.out-law.com/>

Patent Office: for information on trade marks, copyright, designs and patents, including details of how to register trade marks, designs and patents.

www.patent.gov.uk

Data Protection Act: read the full act here

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980029.htm>

Manage your PC

Make best use of your PC

PC housekeeping is important to keep your computer running smoothly. Read more at:

- <http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/maintenancetips>
- <http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/troubleshootingpcs>

Manage information and save time

What's the best way to manage information and what difference will it make? A database to store your contacts information and manage relationships can make a big difference. Prices start from around £100.

- <http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/doyouneedstrategy>
- <http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/buyingadatabase>

Sweat the internet

The internet is a great source of information and research but there's a lot to get through. Here are some tips for making the best use of search engines to find what you need: <http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/searchingtheinternet>

Get yourself trained: People's learning styles, comfort with technology and training needs vary widely. Some staff may be happiest learning from a book and experimenting on their own, while others may require the individual attention and support of a tutoring session, or the group discussion and structured assignments of a formal class. Read more here:

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/selectingtraining

Communicate using ICT

Take control of email: There are many issues to consider when using the Internet for communications – email, instant messaging and Internet telephony.

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/emailcommunicationservices

Your website: When you develop a website for your organisation, there are many issues you need to consider. The following resource is a comprehensive introduction to what you need to think about.

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/yourwebsite

New media, new ideas: From blogs to wikis, from MySpace to YouTube. How can you make the most of the free publishing tools available?

http://www.mediatrust.org/new_media/index.php

Making Sense of the Internet, Mark Watson, published by National Institute for Social Work (1998), ISBN 1 899942 23 8, £6-50. Subtitled 'a guide for small voluntary organisations', available via DSC.

<http://www.dsc.org.uk/charitybooks.html>

VoIResource: Guide to web accessibility

www.volresource.org.uk/briefing/webacc.htm

Getting support

Developing projects with volunteers

You may know what you want to do but not know how or where to start. Volunteers are excellent at supporting you on projects, providing ideas and advice and developing simple websites and databases. They can even help you identify consultants. A great source of ICT and new media volunteers can be found at:

- www.it4communities.org.uk
- www.mediatrust.org

External technical support and how to find it

Sometimes you just can't fix all your IT problems yourself. For a guide to using external technical support and where to find people to help, check out:

- <http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/whyyouneedsupport>
- <http://directory.ictHub.org.uk>

Circuit riders: generally work with small organisations which can't always afford to employ an IT specialist or to pay for professional technical support. Circuit Riding still makes sense even if an organisation has the money to do these things: most small organisations don't need full-time IT staff. Circuit Riders are mobile technology development and support workers, each of whom supports a caseload of organisations. For more information on circuit riders, or to find a circuit rider to help your organisation

<http://www.ictHub.org.uk/circuitriders/>

Internal support – what skills do you need? The underlying role of computers is to enable staff to get on with delivering a service more effectively. Most users do not want to be technical experts, or to worry about how well the computer is performing. However, somebody in your organisation has to take the responsibility.

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/responsibilityforsupport

How to choose a supplier and manage a contract: The ICT Hub strongly advise organisations to have ICT support from external companies, especially where the technology includes networks and servers. This article provides practical guidance on working with an IT support company

www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/workingwithsupportcompanies

Project management

Any project you undertake will need some basic project management. This needn't be scary or complicated and the Knowledgebase has an excellent guide to what and what not to do:

<http://www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/whatisprojectmanagement>

Conclusion

We hope that's helped. There are yet more resources available at www.ictHub.org.uk and if you need a friendly ear, the helpdesk is available on 0800 652 4737. ICT is a great tool to do things better and do better things and there's no better time to start experimenting and make a difference for your clients and communities.