

Digital support for job seekers: Stockport Libraries

Stockport Libraries are part of a movement to breakdown the barriers to digital exclusion in Stockport called DigiKnow. DigiKnow is a network of organisations, community groups and volunteers across Stockport, who make it easier for residents to find informal help to get online and improve their digital skills in their local community.

The aim of DigiKnow is to tackle the levels of digital exclusion in Stockport so that individuals are empowered to use online services for their benefit.

Stockport Libraries have brought a range of key strengths to this project, including our ability to bring partners together and our welcoming, non-judgemental spaces. This has been especially important in our partnership with Stockport Job Centre.

Stockport Central Library now hosts digital training for jobseekers who have been unemployed for 13 weeks. These sessions are delivered by a variety of partners who support job seekers in developing their digital skills. These partners include Lloyds Bank, a DigiKnow partner brought in library staff.

In the past, these sessions were hosted at the Job Centre but the new group meeting in the library has led to great successes. The meetings are three days a week, with groups in the morning and the afternoon. As a member of the Job Centre said:

'Since they started at the beginning of July attendance has been well above 58%, increasing significantly as the sessions progress. I believe that this is due to the venue being more local and community based for our customers, they feel more at ease and more open to the opportunities available.'

I have actively encouraged customers to register with the library and to make use of the facilities available. Customers are now utilising the computers, Wi-Fi and other services offered.

With regards to the community partners we have invited to deliver the sessions, they have expressed the benefits of having the library space to engage directly with customers and as a result have seen significant take up of their opportunities.

Collaborating together in this way is not only building better links between ourselves and our community partners and providers but also allowing for meaningful engagement with our customers moving them closer towards relevant support and employment.'

This partnership has highlighted the vital role libraries play in enabling a service that is having a vital impact in reducing unemployment by re-skilling job seekers. Those who attend the sessions discover the wide variety of services the library has to offer and the benefits we bring.