BT's Sustainability Report 2007

Digital inclusion

let's make a
better
world

Digital inclusion

Technological change and globalisation are stimulating economic growth and increasing global prosperity on an unprecedented scale. But the benefits of these changes are unevenly distributed. Many people are excluded by factors such as poverty, lack of education, or prejudice.

Creating an inclusive society is a key part of our CSR strategy, and increasing access to technology is a key part of this. This section describes our approach to increasing digital inclusion, which has three elements:

- Connectivity – giving more people access to communications technology
- Content – working with partners to develop online content that benefits communities and small businesses
- Capability – helping groups and individuals use technology.

Our approach to digital inclusion

There is a large gap in access to ICT between developed and developing countries –known as the digital divide. BT's digital inclusion strategy is to encourage residential customers and small businesses in the UK to better understand the benefits of ICT to their lives and workplaces.

In the highly competitive UK market, access to ICT is less of a problem than elsewhere. But the most recent data from the Office of National Statistics (August 2006) confirms that factors such as age and income still prevent some people from using it.

Lacking the opportunity or skills to use ICT can reduce access to employment and information. In consultation with the UK government, we have set a target to reduce the number of digitally excluded people in the UK by 10% over three years (See KPI link below).

BT is a founding member of the Alliance for Digital Inclusion (ADI), an industry body for companies committed to increasing digital inclusion. In November 2006, BT hosted an ADI event where industry, government and the voluntary sector discussed how to work together to use ICT to promote social inclusion and community regeneration.

We do support a small number of projects in developing countries, such as the Lifelines India service.

Our partnership with UNICEF is also helping bring ICT skills to young people around the world.

Connectivity (ICT Access)

We provide a range of different connections, at home, in the office or on the move. The most significant is high-speed broadband, which provides a fast, always available connection to the internet via a conventional telephone line. We believe that use of broadband enabled services helps to reduce social exclusion.

More than 99% of UK homes and businesses are connected to broadband-enabled exchanges. By 2015, the productivity benefits of broadband could result in UK Gross Domestic Product being up to £21.9 billion higher than it would otherwise have been, according to the Centre for Economic and Business Research.

But the wider benefits will only be realised if people use the technology more. We promote broadband by encouraging its use, offering services that depend on it and through BT Community Connections.

BT Community Connections

BT Community Connections is an award scheme for voluntary and community groups that could benefit from internet access but don't have the resources to pay for it. It provides equipment and a contribution towards a year's broadband access.

So far Community Connections has:

- Enabled over 4,500 groups to get online, from older 'silver surfers' to playgroups, cultural groups, environmental initiatives and youth sports organisations
- Benefited an estimated five million people
- Won a prestigious Business in the Community Award for Excellence 'BIG TICK', and been highly commended in the Healthy Communities category at BITC's National Awards.

Citizens Online, a digital inclusion charity, interviewed more than 1,000 people who have taken part in Community Connections. They found overwhelming support for the scheme:

- 96% of interviewees rated it good or very good

"It was great, we had nothing, but nothing – just running on goodwill really – and now we are really starting to have some effect in the area." Award recipient – Scotland

- 95% of successful applicants rated the application process as very easy or easy

"It was very refreshing not to have to write a novel." Award recipient – Northern Ireland

- 94% felt the scheme met their expectations

"At the time of the award we had very limited funding, we would not be nearly so successful now if we hadn't such a good spec PC and broadband access." Award recipient – Yorkshire

Online content

There is a vast amount of information available via the internet, but there is still a need for content that benefits communities, small businesses and individuals. We provide useful content on our own websites, and help other organisations to do the same. Some examples are:

- **Charities** – We work with Recipero Limited (formerly IK Software), to provide free, simple-to-build websites to UK schools, charities and community groups. See our leaflet or case study for more information.

- **Netmums** – Netmums websites, supported by BT, provide local and general information for mothers looking after children, including contacts for new friends, where to find a toddlers' group and help on returning to work.

- **British Sign Language** – We asked British Sign Language (BSL) experts to produce a simple sign language guide to broadband and the benefits it offers. We are the first major UK company to provide a BSL section on our website.

- **Plain language guides** – We believe that using technology can improve people's lives. Using the internet, people can shop online, apply for jobs and keep in touch with friends and family. We understand that some people find this difficult, perhaps because of worries about learning something new, the cost or because they have a disability. We have provided some information on computers and accessories to help people to overcome these problems.

See Arts for All and BT's Heritage Collection for more examples.

Case studies

'Click' on the links below to view the following case studies:

- Lifelines India
- City Gardeners

Lifeline for India's farmers

A new phone-based information service is providing vital information to rural farmers in India. Until recently, the farmers were only able to access important veterinary and agricultural information at community meetings.

Lifelines India was set up by BT, Cisco, and charity OneWorld, and is designed to promote digital inclusion in the developing world. Thanks to Lifelines, farmers can now get accurate and up to date information 365 days a year, via a new telephone system.

Farmers dial the Lifelines number, often using a community telephone, and record their question on an automated message system. Dedicated staff at OneWorld pick up the messages and source the required information from a panel of experts, using sophisticated communications technology. The OneWorld staff then leave answers to the questions as a recording on the phone, which the farmer can pick up after 24 hours.

After design and pilot phases, the service was launched in October 2006. Around 400,000 farmers from 400 villages in regions of northern India have access and the service is taking more than 2,500 calls per month. Plans are in place to extend the service to more villages in the neighbouring Madhya Pradesh region. We are also exploring opportunities to use the same technology to provide knowledge and advice in other sectors, such as education.

Web success for city gardeners

A free website from BT has helped a Birmingham allotment site become a thriving and productive community facility.

Several of the 97 plots at Perry Barr were vacant and neglected until committee members heard about our free website programme.

Now every plot is filled and there's a waiting list for the first time in 25 years. What's more, the success story has caught the attention of the media – with TV, film and radio production teams becoming regular visitors.

Committee member Betty Farruggia, who built and runs the website, said: "We read about the website in a newsletter from the Allotments Regeneration Initiative and we thought we would give it a go. That was about a year ago and we've become much more popular. It's brilliant – I don't think we would have had as much success without it."

Through the website, the allotments have become nationally recognised. They've featured on BBC Online, on BBC Radio Four's Gardeners' Question Time several times, and on BBC2's Gardeners' World programme. Film companies have also used the site as a backdrop.

The website initiative is part of BT's corporate social responsibility programme and aims to increase digital inclusion as part of our Inclusive Society strategy. Community groups, schools and charities are able to build and maintain their own websites for free, all without the need for technical expertise.

Mike Hughes, BT head of digital inclusion, said: "So far around 2,000 free websites have been built under the scheme. This group took the time to tell us how much it appreciated it and what a difference it has made to it, and we're delighted to receive that kind of feedback."

ICT capability

Despite widespread availability, many people in the UK still do not use the internet and other new communications technology. Research such as the July 2006 Ofcom consumer panel report, Older people and communications technology, shows that the barriers to use of ICT are increasingly lack of skills, mobility and motivation, rather than access or affordability.

Through our digital inclusion projects we try to demonstrate, with partners, how communications can help improve society by reducing social exclusion. Our projects focus on helping older people and disadvantaged communities and individuals to gain the ICT skills that can help improve their lives.

We also support other organisations doing similar work through the eWell-Being awards.

Community projects

BT has supported the EverybodyOnline project since 2002. Run by the charity Citizens Online, this programme is designed to help disadvantaged communities and individuals across the UK use digital technology.

Project officers in local communities work full-time to promote digital inclusion. They develop a network of local access points, learning programmes, partner organisations and volunteers.

The last annual review shows the project has:

- Enabled 4,300 people to attend sessions to try out new technology in locations where they feel comfortable
- Helped over 1,000 of these to significantly improve their skills
- Developed local networks of 150 active volunteers
- Helped 16 people into employment in a single project, saving an estimated £143,000 in state benefits
- Developed projects in art, music and multimedia to engage people in ICT using the things that matter to them.

Helping older people

The charity Age Concern's 2004 LifeForce survey identified that internet usage decreases in the UK the older people get.

Helping older people get online and learn about new technologies is at the heart of a three-year partnership between Age Concern and BT, which began in 2005.

The overall objective of the project is "to create and maximise the opportunities for older people to both realise the benefits, and engage with Information Computer Technology (ICT) in order to live more fulfilling and productive lives."

The project set out to transform Age Concern's 150 nationwide computer drop-in centres and access points into a network of Silver Surfer Clubs. It includes an award scheme to enable the clubs to grow and provide ICT training for staff and volunteers.

Following lessons learned in the first year of the project, the network will re-launch in spring 2007 as part of the Digital Inclusion Network. In the first year:

- A total of 1,356 older people used a pilot Silver Surfer Club within six months of becoming a member
- 918 were new users
- 68% of new users continued learning
- 46% of all people who attended a Silver Surfer Club went more than once.

In the 2007 financial year, BT also supported Silver Surfer Week, a week-long event to promote ICT to older people, and the Silver Surfer of the Year Awards.

Bridging generations

Young people often have excellent internet skills. Our BT Internet Rangers website was designed with the help of young people, to pass on their knowledge to adults. The site contains various guides, support materials and activities that make being an internet teacher fun for children of all ages.

We also organise Internet Ranger Days, where relatives visit schools to learn from children how to use the internet. For example, in November 2006 more than 100 schoolchildren in the Crosby area of Scunthorpe took part in an Internet Ranger Day organised by BT and North Lincolnshire Council's digital inclusion unit.

Promoting well-being online

BT sponsors the eWell-Being awards, which are run by the sustainable development charity SustainIT. Now in their fifth year, these are the UK's only national awards to celebrate the social, economic and environmental benefits of ICT. They aim to identify and reward the most innovative uses of ICT by local authorities, businesses, voluntary organisations and academic institutions.

The 2006/07 Awards received 130 entries in six categories. The winners in the two BT-sponsored categories were:

- Age and Disability – AbilityNet, for its remote assessment service for helping people to overcome physical barriers to using a computer
- Digital Inclusion – the e-learning Foundation, for its work to make sure all schoolchildren have access to learning resources through ICT.

Digital inclusion - Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Description	Measure	Target
UK Addressable Broadband Market	A measure of the geographical reach of broadband	99.8% of UK homes and businesses have access to broadband.	Replaced by new digital exclusion target.
UK Internet Usage	% of UK population who have not used the internet in the past three months.	36% of UK people digitally excluded.	To reduce the percentage of people who are digitally excluded by 10% (i.e. to 32.4%) by 31 March 2010

Digital inclusion Targets

Start Date	End Date	Description	Update	Target Status
April 2007	March 2010	BT will work with relevant organisations in the public, private and charity sector to reduce the percentage of people who are digitally excluded by 10% over a three year period, commencing in 2007.		New
April 2006	March 2007	BT will maintain its Broadband coverage at 99.7% and actively look for economic opportunities to extend.	As of 31st March, 99.8% of all UK households were enabled.	Completed
April 2006	March 2007	BT will work in partnership with Citizens Online and others to develop up to Six Everybodyonline projects in Northern Ireland.	Six everybody online projects have been implemented.	Completed
April 2006	March 2007	BT will develop a new digital inclusion target for use in the 2008 financial year.	The new target is to 'reduce the number of people who are digitally excluded by 10% (i.e. from 36% to 32.4%) by 31 March 2010'.	Completed

Broadband coverage