Thurrock Adult Community College: All aboard! Let’s learn!

Summary

Through LSC funding Thurrock Adult Community College (TACC) purchased a single-deck bus, equipped with all the essential equipment that has allowed them to deliver fundamental IT skills within local communities. The bus travels to various local towns and villages which in turn has brought learning to the learners. This has proved to be very useful for those who perhaps have difficulty travelling to the main campuses or do not have the confidence to enrol on a course.

About Thurrock Adult Community College

Thurrock Adult Community College provides lifelong learning to Adults living in the borough of Thurrock. They offer a variety of short and long courses in a variety of subjects such as Leisure, Arts, ICT, Childcare, Literacy and Numeracy and more. We run both accredited and non-accredited courses.

The challenge

The college recognised that there were deprived areas of the borough that had either restricted or no access to learning facilities. It became apparent that many adults within local communities were finding it difficult to travel to the main campuses.

Therefore, there was a great need to make learning accessible for all within the region but in order to do so they needed a mobile platform to help bring learning to the community.

The activity

TACC initially reserved capital funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) through the Neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC) scheme.
The NLDC capital funding is available to help local voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver learning opportunities and support activities for people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

NLDC project leaders at TACC felt that in order to bring learning to the community, a form of mobile classroom was needed. They decided to invest in a single-deck bus with the intention of converting it into an entire mobile learning environment, equipped with the latest technology.

On board they have kitted the bus with 10 laptops and other peripherals including printers, monitors and a large LCD display for the tutor to demonstrate techniques. The most unique feature of the bus is the roof-mounted satellite dish which can deliver a relatively fast connection to each of the workstations within the bus.

The bus runs 4 days a week and travels to various locations within the borough. They run a free, 5 week, 2 hour session basic IT skills course for local adults. The bus parks in local community areas such as parks, outside pubs and near shopping precincts that are easy for everyone to find and travel to.

The outcomes

Since the launch of the GetOn2GetOn learning bus, the growth of interest has been exponential. The devotion to the quality of teaching and the overall upkeep of the
equipment has purveyed a positive and popular message within the community that
learning can be fun, free and accessible.

Gary Earley, the GetOn2GetOn Bus Co-ordinator explains, “We have done a lot of
promotion and I think that is good preparation and we’re now seeing the benefits of
it. More people are seeing the bus within the Thurrock area and are hearing about
other people having fun classes on board and getting to use computers.”

The bus has helped to bring a part of the college to local communities, where
perhaps a lack of facilities and local investment has prevented local residents from
learning before. The scheme has also provided them with the basic skills of
computing to use in everyday life such as writing documents, e-mails and more
importantly the ability to use the internet for shopping, browsing and online
communications.

**The impact**

The fun and relaxed nature of lessons aboard the GO2GO bus has helped the
learners develop the confidence to get to grips with the technology and also the
confidence to use it on an everyday basis.
Phylis, a student on the GetOn2GetOn programme explains her reasons for enrolling:

“I wanted to learn to use email and the internet as I have a computer at home but my son doesn’t have the tolerance to teach me.” She added, “It’s brilliant! Gary and Sherman (tutor) have been so helpful and I am now looking forward to starting a full course at the college.”

Gary mentioned, “It is empowering them to do something for themselves. It’s not just the technology, I think we have also given them the confidence that they can do anything and that will lead on to them taking on a further course at the college.”

The popularity of the bus and the courses it runs has “sewn the seed for a brighter future” as Gary explained. The hope is that the fleet of GO2GO buses will expand over time, therefore creating more opportunities for local communities to jump on board and learn. Also the flexible and adaptable nature of the technology on board means that it can be used for a variety of courses other than computing in the future.

Useful links

Thurrock Adult Community College

NLDC Handbook

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