

Neighbourhood Fund proposals

Application No. 1

Funding Source	Neighbourhood Fund
Name of Project	RU Ready for UC
Lead Organisation	Springboard/ShARP

Total cost of Project	Total Match Funding	Total NF Application
£44,500	£0	£44,500

Project Description:

Springboard and ShARP will restart work on RUready4UC project.¹ This project will raise awareness of public access computers in the Coalfields and support participants in making their applications for Universal Credit (UC) and support them in meeting the requirements for UC. Springboard will lead on the project, utilising established financial monitoring and control procedures, marketing and promotional materials whilst providing an outreach service to encourage participation within the community. Focused on the requirements set by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) sessions will be delivered by qualified staff to support participants in accessing the internet for online entries onto Universal Jobmatch, the DWP 'Find a Job' portal and Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS).

The close partnership between Springboard and ShARP will facilitate effective IAG for participants as they will have the opportunity to access digital skills and / or tailored benefit and money management advice whenever they are ready to engage in each aspect. A signposting process will also be established to ensure participants access the support they require.

ShARP will provide a benefits advice check and develop opportunities to work in the Charity Shop as a volunteer and in centre as additional value building.

The cost of living crisis has increased the number of people with little income or substantially reduced disposable income, experiencing periods of crisis and hardship where they have had to rely on Foodbanks or seek financial support from family and friends to manage as best they can. Our role is to help people manage their UC effectively so no sanctions are imposed and adapt finances as quickly and as easily as possibly to ease financial difficulties to prevent crisis and hardship. Within these changing times there are so many unknown possibilities that people may need support with.

The partners will actively promote the project and recruit people they know who will need support through these current financial times and increased job losses. Following first contact, which can be through a partner or self-referral, ShARP are commissioned to deliver First Tier Welfare Rights by Sunderland City Council and will see a number of people who will benefit from referral to the new project. Those who are unemployed often lack confidence and need support to identify their strengths and skills, enhancing participants ability to recognise these will be part of the project

The project will deliver up to 8 sessions per week (this will include drop in sessions, pre-booked or sessions over the phone/internet) across 5 venues including ShARP, Houghton-le Spring library and ELCAP. Sessions will be delivered over 3 hours and will include group type workshops with allocated times following sessions for 1:1 advice.

The project will provide a wide range of information in addition to classroom based ICT training and education;

- What is Universal Credit and what does it mean for me?
- How to apply for and open a Basic Bank Account
- How to prepare for making a UC claim by budgeting

¹ It has been identified that many claimants are already on universal credit but it has been decided for RUReady for UC to remain the project's name so residents are aware it is the same project, as it is already known and established in the Coalfields

- How to manage new arrangements for Child Care costs
- How to claim UC
- How to apply for an Advance Payment
- How to make a monthly budget work
- Manage the process – keep Journal up to date, talk to DWP, get help from Advice providers
- How and where to get other help if needed – key contacts including Crisis Support/ Mental Health services
- How to budget your money and look at the best services available such as which electricity company to use. Also include Free school meal applications
- Job search websites and advice on skills set in order to apply for the right role
- Further opportunities available

When people are identified as having other issues or vulnerabilities during the sessions, the relevant partner will be alerted and will be helped by the ShARP worker to provide further assistance including help to engage with other support e.g. local Jobcentre, DWP, housing providers and digital Inclusion type projects across the coalfields area. By the end of the project the residents of the Coalfield area will be more informed on public access computers in the area, more confident to use IT equipment and on-line services and be equipped with the knowledge and contacts for welfare advice.

The collaborative approach will ensure participants are supported to best access IAG, training and 3rd party services during these times to meet local needs. The project will run to March 2024.

Recommendation: Approve: The project will meet the Delivery Plan priorities of ‘Increase Digital Learning’ and ‘Improve Job Opportunities’.

Application No. 2

Funding Source	Neighbourhood Fund	
Name of Project	Digital Inclusion	
Lead Organisation	Springboard	
Total cost of Project	Total Match Funding	Total NF Application
31,500	£0	£31,500

This project has been running in the Coalfield community for over a year and a half and has been highly successful: it is a much-needed service for the local residents. The funding for the Digital Inclusion project will end in December 2022 and this funding application is to secure further funding to have the project continue running till March 2024.

The project increases public access to computers, raises awareness of services available within the Coalfields area and provide participants with appropriate training to increase their individual digital skills to use IT in their everyday life. It also develops confidence and ability to effectively use a range of services from key stakeholders including, but not limited to, Sunderland City Council, DWP, NHS and Third Sector support organisations. However, it is not limited to formal services and allows residents to access IT for recreation. We support and guide clients to access social media and general internet searches. It allows clients the freedom but ensures their safety online to browse the internet for personal reasons this can include shopping, gaming, banking etc or for example, if a client wishes to search for their family history we will support in their IT use to do this. It is a service responding to individual’s requirements as we move further into the digital world.

A dedicated member of staff will work with organisations with digital hubs to inform, engage, and be supported by this project within the Coalfields. This staff member will liaise directly with the Coalfield Area Committee. This collaborative approach ensures any support and training developed is complimentary to the current local offer in order to reduce the risk of duplication or possible negative impact on any local organisations. Building on the current work Springboard have completed we will continue to liaise with residents and possible participants across the Coalfields signposting to partner organisations when appropriate.

Supported by qualified staff, participants will receive up to date, appropriate Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) to identify what support they need and receive efficient signposting covering how and where to access services. First contact with the project will initiate an assessment process to identify whether the individual requirements are informal or formal.

Informal support will include drop in sessions at the Digital Hubs. For those closer to the labour market and seeking employment they can access timetabled programmes allowing individuals to attend small group sessions covering employability training and vocational training and where possible, work experience. Signposting will inform participants of other drop in sessions in partner sites. Times and locations for drop in sessions will be advertised locally and our website.

Sessions will provide support on the basics of using a computer or digital device including tablets and smart phones, accessing the internet for online shopping or research for personal interest, sending emails, social media such as Facebook and Instagram, managing money online, staying safe online, access to GP services online and NHS choices.

Springboard Staff have an established partnership with DWP aimed at supporting participants into employment, it is anticipated this will form a significant part of digital skills support for many of the participants. By the end of the project the residents of the Coalfield area will be more informed about the range of provision in the area, more confident to use IT equipment and on-line services and be equipped with the knowledge, qualifications and personal contacts to access support.

As part of this project we will work in partnership with other members based within the coalfields ShARP, ELCAP, Houghton Racecourse Community Association and representatives of the Nidderdale Centre (Gentoo). We have led on the identification of what is currently available and to identify areas of need to support local residents in developing their digital skills.

Recommendation: Approve: The project will meet the Delivery Plan priorities of 'Increase Digital Learning' and 'Support the Voluntary and Community Sector'.