Helpful guides to supporting people remotely:

Guide 3: How to offer virtual employability advice

Through conversations with our partners across the UK, it’s evident there’s a huge appetite for supporting people in the local community remotely. We’ve heard amazing stories about how staff at community organisations and libraries have been finding ways to substitute the face-to-face support that is valued by so many of the people they regularly help.

That’s why we’re working with various partners to create a series of easy-to-follow guides for delivering digital skills support remotely. Each guide will include a bit of background information, and a few simple steps you can follow to give it a try.

This guide comes from Paul Davies, Managing Director at Destinations Saltburn, who has created some guidance for diagnosing support needs and giving suitable advice around employability from a distance, using digital technology.
The context

Destinations Saltburn has developed an approach which builds on promoting digital enthusiasm in order to develop greater online confidence amongst individuals and in the wider community. They provide practical support, helping to remove barriers to personal digital development and show people how technology can be made relevant to everyone’s circumstances.

Destinations, like most Online Centres, has had to stop face to face delivery and teaching for now. They have developed this guide around using some of the technology you might usually promote to people, to actually teach and to keep in touch with learners. This has helped Destinations guide people through any problems or new online scenarios they are facing.

Making it happen

Keep the familiar: Try and proceed just as you would in your usual setting - whether you are using the phone, a video call such as Skype, Zoom or Facetime, or a messaging service. Just invite the learner to grab a cuppa, chat about general things first, and catch up on anything they have done since you last talked. As the session proceeds note successes and achievements and make sure that by the end the learner is able to take away some positive results and recognise any milestones achieved.

Making it work

1. Contact: The first step may well be a phone call to chat over what the issue is and determine how best to help. If the person’s digital skills are sufficient why not move to Skype calls or use another video calling service? If these are not suitable then emails might be the best option for your learner.

2. Screen grabs: Have a few generic screen grabs or images ready to share with people. These may be things like login screens, information and option screens or sections of an online form. Have ones that cover the basics such as the Universal Credit home page, summary and message pages, change of circumstances and the journal. You can send these via email prior to your meeting so that they have a reference to go back to later.
Similarly, if you have been engaging with the person already, have some pictures of the Learn My Way or the Make It Click sites ready to send either to jog their memory of what they were using to learn, or to guide them to their next step on the journey.

3. **Set objectives**: If you're talking to an existing learner, bring up any details you might have from previous interactions - details on progress available from the learner management sections of Learn My Way for example, or CV’s you may have worked on with them etc. If this is a new learner, ask if they can send over a copy of their CV, that way if it needs modifying you can help them, or assess if this is a further area they need support with.

Make notes on what they need and then work together to ascertain a priority for learning new digital skills that could help with future employment. This will help you decide which other resources might help, such as Learn My Way or the Make It Click website, and you can pass these details onto the learner.

4. **Follow up**: Following a session and after an appropriate length of time, drop your learner a text, email or message to see how they got on. You can try offering immediate advice if something has caused any questions to arise, or book a follow-up session.

5. **Engage with appropriate agencies**: If interventions included activities that could impact on claims, job-search activities or requirements asked of the jobcentre, ask if the learner is able to update their online journal or correspond directly with their Jobcentre Plus.

If this is not the case then seek their permission to send information on the work you have done together to their Work Coach, highlighting the problem or concerns they had, what we did to help them overcome this, and the successes of the learner. The Work Coach then has a clearer picture of how the lockdown is affecting their client, but also how they are being proactive and can act accordingly to perhaps provide additional support, or plan things for post lockdown.

6. **Keep an eye on local developments**: Remember that even if someone does not have to actively job-search for a claim at the moment, employers may still be recruiting either now or planning for when things begin to return to normal. Getting CV’s updated and creating new cover letters is an essential way to not only practice skills but also be ready to respond quickly to any vacancies.
Helpful resources

Skype Checklist - Learn My Way
‘How to use Skype’ - YouTube
Video calling course - Learn My Way
Video Calling guide - Learn My Way

Keeping in touch

Remember, if you find this employability support guide helpful, we’d really like to hear about it. You could either get in touch with your Network Specialist to give them an update, or tag @Online_Centres on Twitter if you’re posting online about your own experience.

For more information on Destinations Saltburn, please visit their official website.

If you’ve got any feedback about this guide, or have an idea you’d like us to include in the series, please get in touch by sending an email to hello@goodthingsfoundation.org.