Cheshire West & Chester Council

Equality and Diversity Case Studies
Directorate: Regeneration and Culture
Service: Culture and Recreation

Title: Travellers IT at Winsford Library

Introduction: The Traveller's Education Service identified that there was very low online / computer awareness amongst the mid Cheshire traveller community. Libraries came in as a partner to raise awareness and usage.

Challenges: Travellers did not have a tradition of using libraries in the local area. A private space with sufficient computer access also needed to be identified.

How the challenges were overcome: The 12-machine Octagon Training Suite at Winsford Library was used, with free hire and tuition given by Libraries. The Advisory Service promoted the 6-week course to the Travellers and arranged transport if necessary.

Outcomes: Attendance varied between two to twelve over the six weeks. Longer term, Travellers became aware of the excellent free online facilities that were available in libraries e.g. driving theory courses and Facebook. Several travellers passed their driving theory at least partially due to practice at Winsford Library.

Travellers have now become a regular feature at the Library, with around twenty regular users from the Rilshaw Lane site and other areas. Two family groups now use the library computers on an almost daily basis. Literacy and typing skills have improved as travellers, often without the awareness of the users that this had taken place – these improvements were simply a by-product of the new capability that Libraries had given them. A number of books have been borrowed, including some specially reserved by the Travellers themselves.

What we could have done better:
There were, and still are, some behavioural difficulties that have yet to be ironed out. Some of the group have been permanently excluded from school and it is a challenge to ensure that their behaviour does not negatively impact on other library users. This has, despite a clear code of behaviour being given and acted upon, not always been successful.