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The biggest thank you goes to Esther Gillespie at the ICT Hub – so dedicated to the cause that she stuck with it even after changing her job. Thanks Esther. And to Heather, Felix and my colleagues at SCIP, who have been patient as I have beavered away in the loft.

Mark Walker

Guide to Managing ICT in the Voluntary and Community Sector

About the ICT Hub

This is one of a range of publications produced by the ICT Hub to help voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) make best use of information and communication technology (ICT). Funded by ChangeUp, the ICT Hub is a group of voluntary sector organisations that have come together to plan and deliver a coordinated framework of ICT guidance, good practice, advice and support for VCOs that is accessible at a local level. It is a partnership of 28 organisations with a steering group that includes AbilityNet, IT4Communities, London Advice Services Alliance (LASA), National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) and National Council for Voluntary Services (NCVO).

About the author

Mark Walker is a project manager at Sussex Community Internet Project (SCIP), a social enterprise based in Brighton that provides ICT services to charities and communities. Mark has worked in the sector for over 15 years, and helped to found SCIP in 1996. He manages a number of community projects, writes and delivers a variety of training courses and works as a consultant and mentor to VCOs, universities, businesses and public organisations. He is a mentor for net:gain and is currently ICT Champion for the South East region.

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Foreword

Information communication technology (ICT) offers huge benefits and opportunities for the voluntary and community sector (VCS). ICT can transform the way an organisation manages its operations, unlocking potential in the data and information that it holds, ensuring that it makes the most of this valuable asset to achieve its goals. Effective use of ICT can enable voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) to attract new audiences and deliver more efficient and effective services to their beneficiaries through the use of databases, websites, email, wikis, blogs and more.

Using our thankQ software, ESiT delivers data management and CRM solutions to support organisations within the not-for-profit, commercial and environment sectors. We firmly believe that good ICT can really help an organisation to 'do better things' and to 'do things better.' Having worked closely with a number of VCOs and consortia projects, we have developed a firm grasp of both the ICT and human challenges facing them when it comes to setting aside time and money to plan, implement and develop new ways of delivering their mission.

We also believe that the factors that prevent organisations from considering, or even making a commitment to embedding good ICT in their work – such as time, human resources and money – are often those where they have most to gain by adopting a new approach.

Our aim is to help organisations stop and focus on what it is they are trying to achieve. Only then can we help them to select the right tools for the job. Our experience of working with over one hundred not for profit organisations allows us to see things very much from each of those organisations' point of view. We realise that every organisation within the sector differs hugely and this understanding is a key part of the relationships that we build with our clients.

Our ethos has always been to help organisations get the most out of existing systems and to remember their end goal – never to simply implement ICT for its own sake. ESiT has chosen to sponsor this publication because it will help VCOs of all sizes to see and understand ICT as a process and not just as a new software package or 'off-the-peg' solution.

This is an easy to use and informative guide. It encourages organisations to think about what they need and how ICT will help them work towards achieving their mission. Good luck!

John Bird
Managing Director

esit

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Introduction

This guide is aimed at staff and volunteers from voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) who want to manage their information communication technology (ICT) better. It is intended particularly for staff and volunteers from small and medium-sized organisations and especially for those people who don't have access to 'paid for' technical advice and support.

You could be from a small community group run entirely by volunteers, or a registered charity with an income of up to £1m and a staff team of 50. Although the scale and nature of organisations may differ, the people running these groups often face similar challenges when working out how to get the most from their ICT.

You may be a manager or a project worker, a paid member of staff or a volunteer. You may have a lot of technical skills, or you may have none. You may be working in a team wondering how best to use ICT, or you may be a budget-holder with specific responsibility for planning ICT. Whatever your position, this guide is designed to help you.

Dip in, get on …

This isn't the sort of guide you need to read from beginning to end. Reading every page will give you a much better general understanding of ICT issues, but it is designed to sit on your desk as a reference when you need help.

The main sections reflect some of the key issues that VCOs face in managing ICT, from policies and procedures to keep things running; from how to produce an ICT strategy to putting realistic costs in your funding bids.

Each sub-section is free-standing, making it easy to dip in and out when you need help. They explain common ICT problems that VCOs encounter and give answers to common questions.

Case studies help to illustrate how others have taken up the challenge of ICT and there is plenty of signposting to other information, especially to useful websites.

The guide reflects the combined experiences of a wide range of people who have worked with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) for many years. They understand the goals and ambitions that people have, the sort of problems they are likely to be experiencing and which type of solution is likely to be the most suitable, according to an organisation's available resources.

Answers to common questions are given in several forms:

practical suggestions for immediate action

checklists for future reference

signposts to further help and information, especially sector-specific websites

tips to consider in your management of ICT.

All the information provided is as concise and jargon-free as possible and there is a glossary to refer to if you don't recognise a term or concept.

Of course a guide such as this can't be exhaustive, and may well be superseded in the fast-moving world of ICT. However, most of the information should remain correct for some time. References are made to established websites that will continue to be available for the foreseeable future.

I hope I've given you a useful starting point and that you find the guide useful, and I wish you luck in managing your ICT.

Mark Walker SCIP

ICT Hub Knowledgebase

This guide is a quick reference covering a lot of topics, but it is not designed to provide information in any great depth. For many of the topics covered here the ICT Hub Knowledgebase is the best place to start for more detailed information. It contains hundreds of specially written articles covering an enormous range of ICT-related topics. Many of these articles were used in compiling this guide, and many more are added all the time.

Because ICT is fast-moving I cannot recommend a better starting point for every ICT-related question you will have.

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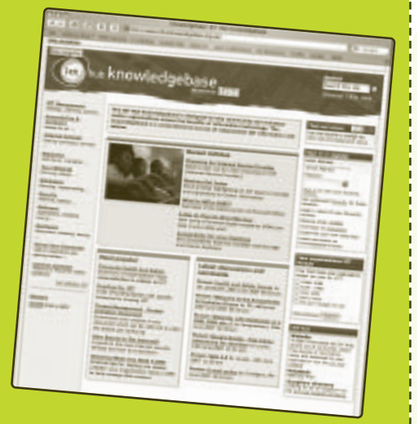
www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk



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Getting started with ICT

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Getting started with ICT

Many people in our communities benefit from the use of information communication technology (ICT) by voluntary and community organisations (VCOs). Older people in day centres use the Internet to contact relatives or order shopping online. Local people are using webpages and email to initiate support for and raise the profile of campaigns in their communities. People with disabilities connect with people from whom they would otherwise be excluded.

Email newsletters and a website are cost-effective ways for a small organisation to maintain its profile. Application forms, expert help or news about funders can be accessed through the web at any time of the day or night. Part-time and voluntary staff can use email and shared documents to work with colleagues, even if they are based in different locations.

There is no point pretending that the way we work now can be completely free of technical glitches or time-wasting hold-ups. But if you get the blend right there is plenty of evidence to show that you will get more done, do new and more effective things, spend less time on repetitive, automated tasks and have access to valuable information that was previously hidden.

But where do you start if you want things to work better? How can computers and the Internet really make a difference? What evidence is there that it isn't easier to stick to pen, paper and the Royal Mail? What are the simple things that make a difference?

The key is to remember that technology is a tool. With good planning and careful implementation you will choose the right tools, learn how to get the most from them and have the support to keep things running smoothly.

Is ICT really helping?

Whatever you do with your ICT, keep your eye on the real reason why you're doing it. Make sure you're clear about the overall goals of your organisation and that they are guiding the decisions and choices you're making. When you decide what to do with ICT you must be able to answer:

"Does this help us achieve our goals? How? If not, why are we doing it?"

"Does it save us time or money if we do this? How? If not, why are we doing it?"

"Does it help us do new and more valuable things? How? If not, why are we doing it?"

Why should I write an ICT plan?

Whether you're thinking about getting your very first computer, networking the office, setting up a corporate email system or producing a community video, you'll need a plan. Many people think they need detailed technical knowledge before making decisions about ICT, or are confused about what it can do because they're not familiar with it. Working on an ICT plan helps overcome that problem.

Preparing an ICT plan is a collaborative process that everyone can help with – irrespective of their technical skills. It's about working with others to decide where you want to go and how ICT can help get you there.

Planning helps you focus on your administration, information, communication and management needs, rather than the technology for its own sake. The plan that emerges can be as long or as short as you like. It's up to you to decide which bits are relevant or useful and to discard or adapt things as you go along.

You should be clear about priorities and have some idea of the scale of resources you need, but you may find you have unanswered questions and issues that need further investigation.

At any point you may ask for expert help, to make sure you're on course or to focus on specific issues, but remember that the planning process is a management issue. Ideally it will be led by a manager or senior decision-maker, rather than being handed over to a 'techie'. This helps make sure it is focused addressing on wider organisational issues, rather than being simply a technology shopping list.

Where do you want to be

Remember that your ICT plan is not just about hardware and software – it must explain how investment in ICT will help you achieve the goals laid out in your latest business plan or funding bid. Once you agree where you want to be, ICT planning is a way of deciding how computers, the Internet and other technologies will help you get there, as well as the skills and support you'll need to use them.

Your overriding goal is a tangible improvement in the way your organisation works and what it can achieve.

How to cost and fund ICT

For a more detailed guide you could work through the planning worksheets in the free *How to Cost and Fund ICT* Guide, which can be ordered from the ICT Hub website at **http://www.icthub.org.uk/publications**

Ten ways in which ICT can help you work better

Here are some examples of how ICT could help you achieve your goals:

1. Better service delivery

- Make it easier for people to communicate with your organisation, using email, telephone, your website and text messaging.
- Reduce missed appointments by using text messaging to confirm times and remind clients.
- Use remote monitoring systems to ensure the safety of tenants or residents.
- Take laptops and other mobile equipment to community centres to provide computer and internet access to support community activities.
- Use text messaging to create an anonymous sexual health service for teenagers.
- Provide Internet access at your community centre for those people who don't have it at home.

2. Better access to information for managers

- Collect, manage and report performance information to help run your organisation better.
- Prepare information for monitoring and report to funders.
- Identify trends, problems and possible solutions.

3. Better financial management

- Accounting software records income and expenditure and helps take care of VAT, tax and PAYE and the requirements of the Charity Commission.
- Use spreadsheets to manage project budgets and produce reports for trustees, managers and funders.

4. Better client records

- Keep client contact information in a database on your network to support shared work inside the organisation as well as with partners, funders and other outside bodies.
- Use remote access services to enable staff to access up-to-date information when visiting clients.
- Monitoring data can be collected from the client record system rather than collated manually.

5. Better information for your community

- Computers and the Internet can help to collect, manage and publish useful information to support telephone, online or face-to-face advice services.
- Information can be provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Online information can support community campaigns, such as accessing government statistics to back your case or tracking the voting record of your local MP on a key issue.
- Using an interactive website means members of your community can check information and update it when they see mistakes.

6. Better staff development

- Encourage staff and volunteers to use the Internet to keep up to date with key issues in your field.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to share ICT skills and 'top tips' to help the organisation run more smoothly.
- Online learning courses can be a flexible, low-cost way of improving capabilities and knowledge within your networks.
- Share knowledge with peers informally through email and online forums.
- Subscribe to specialist online information resources such as magazines, or news from professional bodies.

7. Better fundraising

- Use the web and email to identify potential funders and research your bids.
- Set up a payments system on your website to make it easier for people to donate money.
- Use free checklists and professional advice from fundraising sites to improve your fundraising skills.

8. Better external communications

- Use desktop publishing to design and print leaflets, flyers, stationery, newsletters, annual reports, posters, t-shirts and postcards.
- Set up and run websites, email lists or online discussion forums to promote your cause or make links with potential partners.
- Deliver high-quality presentations using a laptop, digital projector and PowerPoint.
- Run campaigns and mobilise support using print, email and the web.
- Use video to overcome literacy barriers.
- Run a local radio station through a website.
- Tell local stories and raise awareness of local concerns through a community website, using podcasts, bulletin boards or photo-sharing.

9. Better internal communications

- Share information and work files with colleagues on a server.
- Use remote access, email, Internet telephone services and video conferencing so that staff and volunteers can be flexible and work on multiple sites.
- Make sure induction packs, internal policies and other key documents can be found easily using an intranet.
- Help trustees, volunteers, partners, funders and other stakeholders feel part of your decision-making process by using email, bulletin boards, etc.

10. Better administration

- Manage your information in a more methodical way and spend less time finding things by using a shared file server.
- Use mail merge to save time when sending out large numbers of documents – whether in the post or by email.
- Use shared calendars and email to schedule meetings.
- Save time and money by sharing resources such as printers, rather than transferring information from PC to PC.
- A web-based timesheet system enables remote staff to log time spent on projects.

Who should be involved in ICT planning?

Any planning process is a tool, a way of looking ahead to anticipate what's going to happen and how you're going to respond to it. It's a way of sharing ideas with other people; establishing, clarifying or confirming shared goals; exploring hopes and fears; and identifying what you want to achieve together.

In small organisations, all the planning and management processes may be handled by the same person – perhaps the only employee. A separate ICT plan might be a bit excessive, but ICT should at least be given its own section in your business plan.

Volunteers and trustees can use their expertise to identify technical options, or at any rate support the planning process, irrespective of their ICT skills, by making sure the focus is on achieving overall priorities. People from other organisations can offer information on their own use of ICT and what it has helped them achieve.

In any organisation good internal communications are vital so that everyone sees where ICT fits into the bigger picture:

- Managers will want to know how investment in ICT can help deliver strategic goals, so ICT staff must recognise the need to focus on effectiveness and efficiency.
- ICT staff will have technical issues to resolve before detailed plans can be made, so managers must allow reasonable time for plans to be fully costed, options assessed and timescales estimated.

Remember that you may need to review key parts of your plans more than once: look back at your key organisational goals regularly to remember why you're doing all this work and focus on priorities. This also helps people to bring different perspectives without creating conflicts that prevent progress.

It is vital that an ICT plan is not prepared in a darkened room by someone who thinks they are the ICT expert. A small working party of staff, volunteers, trustees, clients or partners can help create a sense that ICT is part of the organisational glue.

ICT planning – keep it simple

No matter how elaborate the final document, any ICT plan must be able to answer three questions:

1. Where are you now?
2. Where are you going?
3. How can ICT help you get there?

There are many different ways of planning but you know what works best for you, so take what seems to fit your needs. Whatever you choose, remember that simplicity is the key – it keeps you focused and helps people share in the processes.

Where are you now?

Start with a general overview of your current situation, then dig deeper into the issues most relevant to you.

DIY ICT health check
Carry out a short review of your current situation. Record the views of people involved in using and supporting your current ICT.

Dig a little deeper
Look for detailed information about key issues and identify what needs to happen next to solve known problems.

Calling a team meeting may be the best way to get the planning process started. You could draft something before involving others and use the meeting to get feedback and ideas. A steering group can then be identified to consider issues that you uncover and to lead the planning process.

It's not just about computers

Looking for information for your ICT plan may reveal broader problems in your organisation:

- Do you know where licences and warranties are kept? If not you have an asset management problem.
- If your team's work is held up because your friendly ICT volunteer only pops in sporadically, then you have a resource problem.
- If your ICT person holds on to important passwords and other information, you have a staff or volunteer management problem.

Even a quick review can bring these problems to the surface and you may find that many can be fixed quickly and easily.

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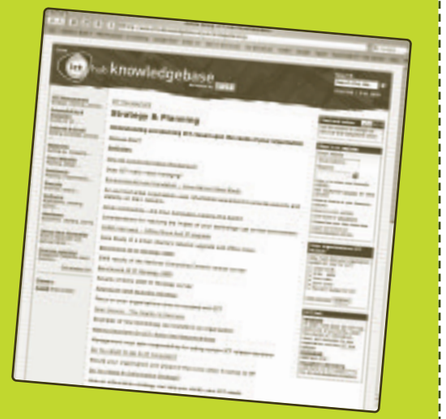
The ICT Hub Knowledgebase has an excellent range of articles about strategy and planning.

www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk



DIY ICT health check

The DIY health check offers a place to start and includes issues that you may not associate directly with your current ICT resources. Work through the questions and log your answers to get your planning started. This stage can be completed in a few hours. It's an overview, not a detailed plan, designed to get you thinking about what you've got and what it's for.

This is a good time to work out where to get help. You may want technical insights, or it may be a good chance to catch up with someone from a similar-sized organisation and see how they deal with their ICT. You may know someone you can have a chat with to ask the questions you dare not ask in meetings, or pick up some bright ideas.

Dig a little deeper

A basic ICT health check is a quick and easy way of getting your thoughts down and getting people involved in the planning process, but it could well raise as many questions as answers. No matter how large or small your organisation, you'll need to pull together more detailed information on key issues. To get a more in-depth picture of where you are, you'll need the following:

- an audit of all your ICT equipment:
  - software version number and licence numbers – which should be kept in a secure, fireproof place for insurance purposes, preferably offsite;
  - lists of passwords and permissions – kept safe and backed up off site;
  - model, make and serial numbers of PCs, screens, printers, cameras, scanners, external drives, etc; these are needed for your insurance schedule – copy and keep offsite.
- an ICT training needs survey;
- the latest ICT strategy (if there is one);
- any current business plans that include ICT in some way;
- any current project plans that relate to ICT use;
- feedback from staff, volunteers, service users, partners, suppliers and support organisations about your current ICT systems and possible improvements;
- a detailed review of your organisation's current strengths and weaknesses, especially in relation to management and support of ICT;
- a review of any new ideas and current thinking about non-profit use of ICT.

If you're already well organised, many of the items in this list will be easy to achieve. If not, then this may indicate specific areas to be addressed by your ICT plan.

One motivation for digging a little deeper is that it can uncover easily solved problems and so pay dividends straight away. It will draw in other people and gather their views on what to do next.

DIY ICT health checklist

A DIY ICT health check gives you a better understanding of your current situation, helps identify priorities and leads to more detailed information-gathering.

Prepare a simple report using these headings. Talk to colleagues to check the answers, then use the draft report to identify key issues. This initial health check is a good way of approaching staff, trustees, volunteers and ICT support workers.

Current ICT usage

- How long have you been using computers and the Internet?
- What are the three best and worst things about your current ICT set-up?
- What accessibility issues do you need to consider, e.g. working with people with disabilities or using community languages?

Computers, software and other equipment

- How many computers do you have?
- Are they connected to the Internet and do you have a network connecting the computers together?
- Do you have any specialist software? If so, what for?
- What are the three most common problems reported about your ICT?

Current skills: staff, volunteers and clients

- Who uses ICT and what for?
- What level of computer skills do the staff and volunteers have?
- What extra training do staff and volunteers need?
- Do your clients have or need specific ICT skills?

Managing ICT

- Do you have an ICT plan, or anything similar in any other plan?
- Who is responsible for the computers in the organisation?
- Who do you turn to when your computer doesn't work? When are they available?
- Do you have anyone to help buy equipment?
- Do you have arrangements for backing up, preventing viruses and keeping computers secure?
- Where do you keep key details about your ICT and are they secure, e.g. inventory, licences, passwords, instructions, etc?

Money and other resources for ICT

- How much do you think you will spend on ICT in the next 12 months, including computers, software, maintenance and training?
- Do you have a budget for this?
- Does your fundraising target include this cost?

A simple survey of staff ICT skills

Remember that people are the key to your success, so take stock of the ICT-related skills their work requires and identify where they need more help:

- Create a simple table with each of your team members.
- List the ICT skills needed in their role, e.g. word processing, mail merge, desktop publishing.
- Use a simple scale, such as Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, to decide the level needed in each role. Make a note of how they defined the level needed.
- Ask them to place themselves on the scale according to their current skills.
- Identify gaps that exist between the skills a role requires and the skills of the person in that role.
- Identify current strengths and weaknesses to be addressed in your ICT plan.
- Address individual training and support needs in your ongoing management processes.
- Identify opportunities for buddying and other ways of sharing skills within your team.

Example of a simple ICT skills survey

NAME: RICHARD PICCALILLI **ROLE:** OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

	Beg	INT	ADV	NOTE
Word processing		X O		Mailmerge + letters
Spreadsheets	O	X O		Printing Board reports
Contacts database				Updating records + helping others use it
Desktop publishing	O	X		Flyers for events
Accounts software	O X			Data entry
Email	O	X		Handling email mailings
ICT troubleshooting	O		X	Printers, word processing, contacts database, supplies
Web browsing		OX		Office supplies purchased online
Monitoring/reports	O	X		Collating data from different sources

KEY: X = Skills I think job requires O = How I see my own skills

Looking at this table, we can assume that Richard Piccalilli needs training and support with: spreadsheets, desktop publishing, email, ICT troubleshooting and monitoring skills.

net:gain: ICT planning made easy

Funded through ChangeUp and Capacity Builders, net:gain is a flexible professional development programme for chief executives, trustees and senior managers in the VCS.

It is delivered through a network of community-based centres across the country, and uses a structured approach to planning and ongoing support to VCOs to enable them to make better ICT decisions. Centres also offer ICT support and related services, often discounted for net:gain members. For more details about your nearest net:gain centre go to www.net-gain.org.uk

net:gain's ten steps to a technology plan

- **Step One: Four hats – mission to goals**
  Use four perspectives to identify key goals for fulfilling your mission: your funders; your clients; your internal processes; learning and improvement needs.
- **Step Two: Key connections**
  Look for ways in which your goals link to each other to help simplify and prioritise the next steps.
- **Step Three: Goals to initiatives**
  Identify key technology 'initiatives' that will help deliver your goals; for example, 'improve our monitoring systems'.
- **Step Four: Initiatives to key processes**
  Working with the people who will be implementing the initiatives, unpick each one to look at the how, what, where, when and why of what you're planning.
- **Step Five: Requirements for initiatives**
  List the technology that is required to deliver initiatives successfully and what you require it to do – such as new hardware, a database or improvements to your website. Look for connections between different initiatives, especially where similar technology meets a number of requirements.
- **Step Six: Merge to a plan**
  Review your initiatives on the basis of: risk, benefits, and total cost of ownership (see Chapter 2). Decide which initiatives to take forward in your plan.
- **Step Seven: Technology specifications**
  Summarise your current requirements and goals for each initiative. This information can be used to ask for technical advice, gather quotes or invite tenders.
- **Step Eight: Initial technology implementation plan**
  Produce a summary of the initiatives you have chosen, with outline costs, timescales and responsibilities.
- **Step Nine: Sources of support**
  Identify where the money will come from and what paid-for or free support is available to meet your needs.
- **Step Ten: Outline your strategic approach**
  Decide, on the basis of your experience, how and to what extent your organisation will choose to use and develop ICT in future.

Where are you going?

The following table provides an overview of how ICT can support an organisation as it develops It may help you see where you're going and the possible steps along the way.

Roadmap: Where are you going with ICT?

State of organisational development	Formulation	Expansion	Consolidation	Integration
Hardware	Single PCs, one printer/broadband connection per computer	Join up single PCs, share printers and connections Video/digital camera for projects	Networks for application and file-sharing Laptops and PDAs for flexibility Back-up handled in-house	Extended networks working outside physical and organisational boundaries Back-up handled off site
Software	Basic use of Word, Outlook Express, Internet Explorer Nothing licensed	Some use of Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint Microsoft Office standard	Access, Outlook, Front Page Standard desktop packages bring consistency	Lotus Notes, DreamWeaver, Quark Mixed environment – back office and front office
Skills	Sporadic, based on past knowledge	Task-oriented	Reflect role and responsibilities Training needs analysis identifies priorities	Diverse, flexible, updated regularly, linked to role but used creatively across teams
Managing ICT	Ignored	Project-based	ICT seen as part of organisational strategy	ICT investment delivers measurable benefits in efficiency and effectiveness
Resourcing ICT	Sporadic funds, no planning	Bid for hardware and software by project but don't cost in ongoing support or training Little or no support available unless volunteer is available	Hardware, software, training and support costs included in project budgets ICT Investment desired but cost/benefit not clear Buy in ICT support	All capital and implementation costs considered in all relevant budgets Staff member as lead on ICT support, buy in specialist services
Information	Everyone for themselves Internet access limited Information flows in	Internet access available to all Monitoring systems for each project Some central management information systems, especially Accounts	Shared diary and contacts for all Monitoring information systems connect to each other	Management information system makes it easy to collect, store, manage and analyse all relevant information

Roadmap: Where are you going with ICT? *continued*

State of organisational development	Formulation	Expansion	Consolidation	Integration
Communication	One to one – email, phone Face-to-face meetings Local networking	Occasional self-published newsletter Website on free system	Annual report self-published Regular newsletter Website self-published, includes some interactive parts e.g. booking forms, FAQ section, etc	Active in local, regional, national and international networks Multifaceted website driven by content management system and integrated with internal systems as well as client services and partner sites
Outcomes	Often takes longer to do things	Start identifying common ground and working together much better Still spend a lot of time sorting out small problems	Collaboration begins to pay dividends Easier to work with people outside the organisation	Organisation responsive to change, well-connected to key stakeholders, clear goals, understands how ICT can help achieve them

How does ICT link to other plans?

An ICT plan is just one part of the overall mix of plans that are under way at any time in any organisation, and your decisions about ICT must help to underpin other plans. Here are some ideas about where ICT may fit:

Business plan
ICT could help with: management information, financial information, competitor analysis, operational efficiency, cost effectiveness, service delivery, logistics, service development, internal communications, external communications, performance review, stakeholder relations.

Staff development plan
ICT could help with: assessing current skills, accessing training, e-learning, continual professional development; monitoring and appraisal.

Fundraising plan
ICT could help with: identifying sources of funds, collaborating on bids, submitting bids, monitoring and managing funds, managing donors.

Plans for individual projects
ICT could help with: project management, budgeting, delivering project outcomes, feedback and review, monitoring and reporting.

Checklist

What to include in an ICT plan

The following offers a template which can be adapted according your needs and preferences:

- ✓ Who is responsible for ICT planning and who else is involved in decision-making?
- ✓ The current overall goals and direction of your organisation
- ✓ A summary of your current use of ICT
- ✓ Key issues to be addressed
- ✓ Goals for the use of ICT in next three years
- ✓ Identify each specific ICT initiative you will undertake:
  - A brief outline of this initiative (one-paragraph version)
  - Objective for this initiative, for example:
    - *"It will save us time by …"*
    - *"It will save us money by …"*
    - *"It will improve the quality of our service by …"*
  - What you think you need:
    - *hardware, software, network, cables, etc*
    - *money, time, people.*
  - Known training and support issues
  - Likely suppliers and/or procurement process
  - Proposed budget and timescale for this initiative
- ✓ Summary of all initiatives
- ✓ Summary budget and timescale for all initiatives
- ✓ Risks associated with this plan and what you can do about them
- ✓ Overall schedule, next steps and roles for carrying out this plan
- ✓ Links between this plan and other plans

Getting help with ICT planning

Someone from outside your organisation could be a big help in preparing your plan. New input at any stage may shift your horizons, provide an extra pair of hands and introduce new ideas. Or you may want to bring in expert insight or pay for help to speed things up.

They could help identify possible technical solutions, provide ballpark figures or talk to people who have successfully addressed similar problems. You may also find it helpful for them to facilitate discussions and help resolve problems about conflicting priorities, as they could be seen as more neutral.

Help can come from various places:

- your trustees
- a volunteer (try iT4Communities)
- a paid consultant
- existing or potential ICT suppliers
- a circuit rider (see Chapter 3) or local ICT development worker
- your local net:gain centre
- another community organisation
- a funder or partner organisation.

Delivering an ICT plan

A detailed ICT plan may take a lot of time and effort to produce but can still be difficult to actually implement. There will decision-making delays, budgeting cycles and time needed to select suppliers, by which time the plan may have grown in size or lost its focus.

The big secret is to keep it simple.

At every stage produce an overview of what you're trying to achieve and help people stay in touch without wading through technical details. If they understand the direction the plan is taking they are more likely to support it, explain it to others and provide vital feedback as it is implemented.

Be sensible about timescales and remember the main purpose of any ICT plan is to agree a timetable for getting things done. If it is not yet clear what your team's ICT training needs are, your plan should show how you're going to tackle this issue in the future, rather than being delayed while you conduct a needs analysis process that could take months.

Remember these key points:

- You don't need to be an ICT expert to write an ICT plan.
- Planning helps you to work out where you want your organisation to be, before deciding what technology you need to get there.
- Focus on key goals and benefits for your clients or community and identify ICT solutions that deliver those benefits.
- Get help when you need it and make sure staff and volunteers provide their input at regular intervals.
- Keep it simple.

2

Budgeting and buying ICT

2

Budgeting and buying ICT

Getting the most from limited funding means choosing the right hardware and software at the right price, without forgetting to allow for training, upgrades, ICT support and other running costs. It's no good squeezing the budget to get the latest must-have gadgets if you can't afford to learn how to use them or there's no money to get them fixed when they go wrong.

This section shows how you can consider the total cost of ownership to draw up realistic budgets for your ICT. This approach means you will think about the cost of hardware and software, but also make realistic plans for the technical support, maintenance and training needed to get the best from your investment.

How to cost and fund ICT

This section of the guide has been developed to work alongside the free *How to Cost and Fund ICT* Guide develop by the ICT Hub. To obtain a copy or download a version of this very practical guide to detailed budgeting for ICT, please visit **http://www.icthub.org.uk/publications**

Total cost of ownership – you're not just buying a box

Budgeting for a new car means thinking about the initial purchase price, road tax, insurance, MOTs, servicing, fuel and depreciation. Buying a computer, video camera or website requires the same approach to budgeting.

This can include the purchase price or leasing costs of the computer hardware and software, plus maintenance, Internet connection, technical support, training, and time for installing and configuring new hardware and software, fixing routine problems, or managing volunteers.

More and more funders now look for bids with a realistic assessment of the costs of ICT. They want to know that the funds they're providing will deliver the benefits expected and the ICT Hub and others are working with them to encourage this approach.

How much should our ICT budget be?

Many organisations don't have an ICT budget, and if they do it's not always clear where the money will actually come from. They may rely on fundraising for new computer equipment, use under spend at the year end, or only replace equipment when it is broken, hoping the money will be there when it's needed.

It is important to see ICT as a vital part of an organisation's running costs, similar to other overheads such as rent, salaries and the photocopier. As an organisation becomes increasingly dependent on ICT, a more planned system of allocating an appropriate amount for ICT each year is needed.

The first part of the budgeting process consists of deciding what needs to be spent to get the right ICT and keep it working. Of course, the figures produced first time may be far too high, so you'll need to work with them as you would with any budget, bringing them into line with what you think you can afford. You may have grand ambitions but it is also important to be realistic about where the money will come from:

- Will ICT be a part of every funding application? It should feature in most of them.
- Can you build ICT into your core costs and other projects you prepare bids for?
- Will specific ICT developments be funded as one-off projects in their own right?
- Will your ICT initiatives save money by making operations more efficient?

It would be great if you could answer yes to all of these.

How much to spend?

The cost of all computer equipment changes quickly over time, so it's not possible to make specific suggestions about prices that won't go out of date. You have to draw up a list of what you think you need, shop around to get a range of prices, and make a choice between the basic, cheaper options and the latest, fastest choices available at a higher price.

Many organisations use round numbers such as £500 and £1,000 when including a line for ICT in their funding bids. This is a convenient way of working in the initial stages, but it needs to be refined during the budgeting process, otherwise it can easily leave budgets too small to be realistic.

Another way of considering how much to spend is to look at the value you think ICT can bring to your work. Does ICT play a marginal role in your organisation? In which case, 10 per cent of your total budget may be adequate. Or perhaps it's the bedrock of your administration, or a way of delivering innovative services that will attract new funders and partners?

A business will expect to repay its investment through increased profits, and may only decide to invest if it thinks it can be repaid within five years. A not for profit organisation needs to justify larger ICT investments by looking for savings in operational costs, increased productivity or improvements in the effectiveness of a service over the next three to five years.

Checklist
Buying ICT: where to start

- ✓ Decide what your organisation wants to do.
- ✓ Choose the software you need to enable you to do what you want.
- ✓ Choose the hardware to run the software.

When it comes to hardware you must also allow for wear and tear, upgrades and repairs. Some businesses overhaul or replace ICT systems every three years, but it is more realistic for VCOs to think in terms of a useful life of four or five years. Much ICT equipment will function beyond this point, but this is a good benchmark when looking at the initial costs of purchase and the ongoing cost of upgrades, maintenance, replacement and repairs.

ICT friendly funders

The ICT Hub has produced a list of 55 funders who are willing to fund ICT, plus other advice on how different funders approach bids that include ICT. More details at **www.icthub.org.uk/research**

Leasing

Leasing has some attraction in that it usually includes a maintenance contract and can spread the purchase cost over several years. However, even though the monthly payments made in the first two years could cover the cost of the machine, you often have to return the PC after that time, or continue paying after the lease period ends. This can make leasing more expensive in the long run.

Some PC vendors, such as Dell and others, offer a hire purchase option which allows you to spread the costs over a given period, and own the product at the end of this term. The total cost may be higher over the term of the lease, but you avoid large up-front payments.

What is the total cost of ownership of ICT?

'Total cost of ownership' is a way of accounting for all the costs likely to be associated with a given activity, which could include:

Initial capital costs
The cost of the hardware, software and specialist equipment you require.

Installation costs
You want to pay for someone to set up your new hardware and software in the right order and make sure it's all working. Or you might need equipment to be connected to a network, adding costs such as cabling and wireless networking. You will also need to consider which of your staff use laptops and who will need to access this network.

Software and upgrades
Your budget must allow for the fact that all software is updated and improved from time to time, often requiring upgrade fees.

Training
The cost of buying training your staff or volunteers, as well as an allowance for time set aside to attend courses and practise new skills.

ICT Support staff or volunteers
Budget for the salaries of ICT support staff, time needed to manage a volunteer or a proportion of the salary of your Accidental Techie (see Chapter 3).

Making donations useable
Second-hand equipment may be cheaper than new but it could also require repairs and upgrades, such as extra memory or a new screen.

Maintenance costs
Without regular maintenance, failures and repair costs are likely to increase.

Staying connected
The monthly cost of your broadband, plus any use of your mobile for Internet access when you're out of the office.

Table 2: Total cost of ownership calculator

ICT BUDGET HOW MANY USERS DO YOU HAVE? 6

Item	Cost £ (exclusive of VAT)	Number of users	Life expectancy in years	Cost per user per year
Hardware and infrastructure				
Computer and installation	800	1	4	200
Network mono laser printer	600	6	4	25
Server including installation and software	5,500	6	5	183
Router	100	6	4	4
Switch	250	6	4	10
Wireless access point	100	6	4	4
Firewall(s)	400	6	4	17
Firewall update subscription	350	6	1	58
Network cabling	1,000	6	10	17
Software				
Microsoft Office at charity price	90	1	4	23
Anti-virus subscription	500	6	1	83
Finance package	500	6	4	21
Finance package support	100	6	1	17
Case management software	500	6	4	21
Case management support	150	6	1	25
Internet				
ADSL Internet access, per year	600	6	1	100
Web hosting	100	6	1	17
Training				
One training course per user per year	200	1	1	200
Support				
External support for server, firewall, network and users	3,000	6	1	500
Internal support – salary contribution	5,000	6	1	833
Consumables				
Back-up tapes	60	6	1	10
Toner cartridges for printer	200	6	1	33
Other				
		1	1	0
		1	1	0
		6	1	0
		6	1	0
		Annual total per user		£2,401
		Organisational total per annum		£14,408
		VAT		£2,521
		Total including VAT		£16,929

The ICT Hub has provided a simple spreadsheet that will help you calculate your ICT budget. It points out key areas that the budget must include and provides a starting point that ensures you consider the total cost of owning and running your ICT.
Download a copy from **www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/calculatingtechnologybudget**

Repairs
Even well-maintained equipment can fail, so keep your paperwork to make any claims within the warranty period, but be ready to pay for repairs when necessary.

Disposal costs
New legislation may mean you have to pay a fee for proper disposal of your equipment.

Replacement costs
Hardware and software can be superseded, or new tasks may make new demands.

Choosing software

Most of us use a small range of software to carry out the day-to-day administrative tasks required to run a typical VCO. The Microsoft Windows operating system dominates the market, as does the Microsoft Office suite of tools, and the familiarity and relatively low price presents a compelling case for its integrated bundles.

There are other choices, however, including Open Source, and there are good reasons for not just sticking with what seems to be the safest choice. There is also a wide range of specialist software not produced by Microsoft, used for tasks such as keeping accounts, desktop publishing or web design.

What software do you need?

There is a standard range of software that we expect to find on a computer, reflecting the common tasks we undertake:

- word processing – producing letters and reports, simple posters, flyers and other printed materials;
- spreadsheets – managing finances and project budgets; storing and analysing monitoring information and statistics;
- email – sending and receiving emails;
- contacts – storing and retrieving addresses, phone numbers, email addresses and so on; managing mailing lists and producing labels;
- web browser – searching the Internet and viewing web pages;
- diary – calendars, reminders and planning;

Some people carry out specialist tasks and require other programs:

- desktop publishing – producing more advanced flyers, posters, newsletters;
- graphics programs – working with images;
- managing your accounts;
- designing and updating your website;
- preparing presentations;
- managing information using a database, such as client record systems, bookings, information for monitoring and reporting activity for funders, etc;
- preparing detailed budgets and schedules to manage projects or teams of people.

The Microsoft family

The average user in the average voluntary and community organisation is very likely to be using Microsoft software on their computer, including the operating system (such as Windows XP) and a version of Microsoft Office.

Microsoft Office comes in several versions, can run on both Windows and Apple Macintosh computers and is available at a discount to not-for-profit organisations. Many of the Microsoft products that make up Office have become synonymous with the tasks they support:

- Microsoft Word – word processing and design of simple print materials
- Microsoft Excel – a spreadsheet program
- Microsoft Outlook – for email, calendars, reminders and storing contacts (known as Entourage on Apple Mac)
- Microsoft Internet Explorer – for browsing web pages
- Microsoft Access – a database program (not available for Apple Mac)
- Microsoft PowerPoint – for making presentations
- Microsoft Project – for managing projects
- Microsoft Publisher – for desktop publishing and entry-level web design (not available for Apple Mac)

How to choose software

- Decide what you want to be able to do.
- List the key features you think you need and the budget.
- Ask other people what they use, or look online for suggestions.
- Compile a list of options and their specific features.
- Evaluate the answers against your list of key features.
- Select a package and try to test it before paying for it.

OpenOffice

Although Microsoft products have become the standard for most computer users, their dominance is now being challenged by OpenOffice. This is a software package which is available free of charge from **www.openoffice.org** and provides a similar range of options. Although it has some limitations it will work well for most day-to-day users of word processing, spreadsheets, presentations and much more, and is well worth a try before paying for Microsoft Office.

It is estimated that 80% of users need only 20% of the features offered by most programs, although not all of them need the same 20%.

What other options should I consider?

Deciding what you want is often a question of budget and preference – a bit like deciding which car you want. All of them can get you from A to B, but some have features you prefer or find easier to use.

When thinking about which software to use, ask to see a demo, or download one from a website. Talk to colleagues and others about what they use and consider enrolling on a training course before plumping for something which is likely to be your main working tool for the next few years, especially if it requires specialist skills, as in the case of accounting software.

Microsoft provides many of the standard packages, but there numerous other options, with a very wide range of prices:

- Hotmail, Thunderbird and Eudora are email programs.
- Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro, Gimp and Illustrator are for working with graphics.
- Quickbooks and Sage are the most popular accounting packages in small and medium-sized organisations. Microsoft now offers Office Accounting, with a free version called Office Accounting Express.
- Quark and InDesign are the professionals' choice for desktop publishing.
- Firefox and Opera are web browsers, Apple Mac users get Safari with their computers.
- Apple Mac users will be familiar with iTunes, iPhoto and iMovie, for managing music, photos and digital film editing.

Software upgrades

Software doesn't stand still. Although the original software may be perfectly reliable you may need to upgrade to access new features or improve your productivity. For example, most accounts packages, such as Sage or Quickbooks, require regular updates to allow for changes such as new tax codes. And the latest version of Microsoft Office provides a new project tool to track related documents, spreadsheets, email activity and contacts being used by different people in your team. A move from Windows 2000 to Windows XP or Vista can offer new features for your whole system.

Upgrading a piece of software may cost as much as it did to buy it in the first place – some software companies see you as a new customer, buying a new product. Most will offer a low-cost upgrade for a limited time, or only between consecutive upgrades – so you can't jump from, say, version 2 to version 4 without paying the full rate.

Remember that you may also need to upgrade your hardware to be able to work with your new software, either because it runs too slowly or because it won't run at all. This is very common with operating systems, which often evolve to match the capabilities of each new generation of computer chips.

The need for continual upgrades is seen by some as an unnecessary expense, driven by the computer companies and their need for regular doses of your money. Some will also point to the attraction of using Open Source software, which is unlikely to require payment for upgrades. Seek advice as widely as you can before setting off with any new choice of software and make sure your budgets reflect any additional costs.

Standardise your software

An easy way to reduce running costs of ICT is to standardise your software across your organisation. Having four versions of Windows in your office, or a mixture of email packages, will increase the time taken to solve a problem as well as making incompatibilities more likely.

It may be more helpful to stretch this to a 'no more than two' rule, which means you can have a Windows machine and a Mac in your network, as long as you don't have multiple versions of each (Mac OSX.1, Mac OSX.4, Windows 2000, Windows XP, etc). Or you may have Microsoft Office, kept up to date, as your first choice for your workers, but allow the use of OpenOffice for public access machines.

Software discounts for charities

Registered charities will rarely pay full price for software, but instead should make use of the substantial discounts that are available on products for charities and educational organisations. National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO) has negotiated a range of deals, and there are several commercial companies that specialise in supplying software at discounted rates for not-for-profit organisations. More details can be found on the discounted deals section of the ICT Hub website at **www.icthub.org.uk/discounted_deals/**

Microsoft donates software to charities

Since July 2006, Charity Technology Trust (CTT) has managed a programme called Charity Technology Exchange in the UK on behalf of Microsoft, as part of a wider global initiative to increase charity software donations internationally. CTT worked in partnership with TechSoup, a US-based non-governmental organisation (NGO), to develop the scheme; it is one of a number of international NGOs working with Microsoft to expand their donations programme.

This is not a 'discount scheme' but a donations programme, so is available only to registered charities. CTT charges a small handling fee, equivalent to around 4 per cent of list price, in order to cover the costs of resourcing the programme. Since it was launched in July 2006, over 1,500 organisations have applied to take part.

Full details of this offer and many other discounted deals are available on the ICT Hub website, at **www.icthub.org.uk/discounted_deals**

Open Source: A free alternative

Choosing Microsoft for standard applications is still a very easy option and the computer support world is dominated by Microsoft-accredited technicians who know Microsoft products inside out and are adept at dealing with some of the known shortcomings. There is an alternative, however, which is gaining popularity among public, private and not-for-profit organisations across the world.

Open Source software represents the fruits of a new kind of liberation movement, descended from the Free Software movement of the 1980s. Its founders wanted to continue the tradition of co-operatively developed software and so created an Open Source licence that gave two specific types of freedom: the freedom to copy and redistribute software, and the freedom to modify it.

The movement is sometimes known as Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) or Free Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS), where Libre reflects the Spanish sense of liberty and freedom. The need to save money is one reason for the growth of Open Source software, which is usually free of charge. Getting software for free means not only getting the initial program for free, but will usually mean that you get updates and improvements as they are released.

Among the best-known Open Source products are the Linux operating system, OpenOffice and the Firefox web browser.

- Linux can run on your computer instead of your current operating system, such as Windows XP or Windows 2000. Once installed it could look and act exactly like Windows and will let you work with your most common programs, such as Microsoft Office.
- OpenOffice is similar to Microsoft Office and will run on an Apple Mac, a PC or a Linux machine.
- Firefox will browse the Internet in exactly the same way that Internet Explorer does.
- Open Source software can be downloaded from the Internet, found on CDs on the front of

magazines, or can be supplied to you for the price of the CD they are burned on to.

Open Source has always been an integral part of the way the Internet works, using server software such as the Apache web server and specific applications such as Sendmail, which handles email traffic. Big companies like Boeing, Amazon and Google have already switched to Linux on their server networks. Now Open Source is becoming a viable option for desktop computers, supporting everyday tasks and reducing costs by being free to use.

Free software is a matter of liberty, not price. To understand the concept, you should think of 'free' as in 'free speech', not as in 'free beer'.

Better use of old equipment

Older hardware and a limited ICT budget are a fact of life for many VCOs, but older hardware can be freed up by the low-tech benefits of Open Source. Some Linux operating systems are designed to run web browsers, email and office software on old hardware. This is a deliberate and very positive way of re-using old hardware and counters the trend towards ever-more powerful systems, when basic functions can be carried out on existing hardware.

Potential benefits of Open Source software

- Top of the list for most people is saving money: software is either low-cost or free, as are upgrades and other extras.
- Some Open Source software will reliably run on older computers.
- The Open Source community can offer speedy and enthusiastic support. Users and developers often participate because of personal interest in a specific application so will frequently go the extra mile to offer help.
- Open Source software can usually be customised. If you want to add a feature or change the way it works you could find someone to do it for you – or learn the programming language and make the changes yourself.
- Because of the dispersed nature of Open Source development there are lots of helpful websites about Open Source.
- You get a warm glow because you're supporting a movement that believes in building collective knowledge rather than commercial exploitation.

Potential drawbacks of Open Source software

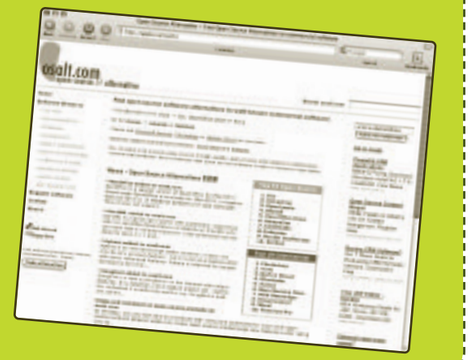
- Although the software is free you may have to pay for professional advice and support, including installation and maintenance of software, and training in its use.
- You'll probably need some help to make sense of all the choices.
- As with most technical issues, plain English has yet to establish a firm foothold. You can encounter problems with jargon and spend a lot of time trying to understand what on earth someone is talking about.
- Funders may need you to use an Access database or Excel spreadsheet that they provide. Although Open Source versions of these programs exist it is possible that features may not work or the systems will not be compatible.
- Many people active in the Open Source community are developers, not end users of the software. Documentation is often aimed at a techie audience and may not be helpful to the average person looking for basic help.
- Not all Open Source software is easy to install and set up, although it is becoming more user-friendly all the time.

An easy way to try Open Source software

Linux is an Open Source operating system, equivalent to Windows XP or Apple OSX. Some versions of Linux can run from a CD, which means you don't have to replace your existing system or reformat your hard disk to give it a try. The CD includes the new operating system plus some of the most common software applications, so this is an excellent way of trying it out. One example is a CD containing Ubuntu – a version of Linux popular in the UK voluntary sector – which also comes with Open Office and other useful programs. It is available on disk for about £5 from **www.ubuntu.com** or downloaded free from other websites.

weblink

The excellent OS Alt website provides a catalogue of software, based on well-known equivalents and gives an idea of just how much Open Source software is available. www.osalt.com



Operating systems: an Open Source alternative to Windows and Mac

Linux-based operating systems are available with many of the features familiar to users of Windows or a Mac. This is worth bearing in mind next time you're asked to pay £100 to get Vista or the new version of Apple's OSX, especially if you multiply that sum by the number of computers in your organisation.

There are many different versions of Linux, commonly known as Distributions, which have different features and look different. One of the most popular with VCOs is Ubuntu, which has been used in several recent trials within the UK voluntary and community sector and has proved to be stable and easy to learn.

Getting a copy of Ubuntu shouldn't be a problem; there are Linux magazines in most newsagents with CDs on the cover, containing operating systems and useful programmes. Or you can download it from the Internet free of charge, or buy a copy on CD for £3.50 from The Linux Shop **www.thelinuxshop.co.uk** – find it in their best seller list.

weblink

Visit **www.ubuntu.com** to learn more about this popular version of Linux

Who can help you with Open Source?

The world of Open Source can be very confusing. Even if you're keen to try this route it can be difficult to know what to do, and getting help can be a problem.

Many mainstream ICT support companies work almost exclusively with Microsoft products and can't advise on Open Source. Conversely there is certainly no shortage of Open Source zealots, whose views about the inherent value of using Open Source software mean they are less than even-handed when thinking about what is the right software for you.

Many not-for-profit organisations in the UK can offer Open Source expertise, including case studies of how it can be used and training and technical support in Open Source software.

It is seen as a way of saving money as well as a good fit with the collaborative values of the sector. Recent examples show that support is available to deal with the technical side of the changeover and users will generally adapt quickly and easily to the new software.

The ICT Hub website provides links to the National Computing Centre (NCC), which has been taking a leading role in VCS open source developments through the support of the ICT Hub. It also offers links to relevant articles on the ICT Hub Knowledgebase. Or you could look at the reports on www.foss.ciac.org.uk for realistic user feedback from a successful Open Source project in the East of England.

Case Study: Everyday stories of Linux folk

Mike Halward, Information Officer, Voluntary Action Luton (VAL)

My role covers information dissemination, the VAL newsletter, email distribution, database management and design and printing of VAL display material. I am also responsible for the internal ICT network, email and software support and training, external training on ICT subjects, event organisation, and audio-visual and ICT support at events.

We trialled an Ubuntu Open Source set-up as part of an Open Source project run by Cambridge Independent Advice Centre. In terms of hardware and software, I had no big problems and was really surprised how user-friendly it was.

It was easy to install and included stable, easy-to-use software for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, drawing, databases, graphics, project management, accounting, email, calendaring and a media player for videos. The Firefox web browser seems to work a lot faster, and it was easy to use as I'd been using it in Windows already.

I've found using Open Source software interesting, friendly, fun, useful, different and sometimes annoying, but there is no doubt in my mind that it will play a very important role in the development of voluntary and community sector ICT. Most people who are shown Linux and the range of software can't believe it can all be obtained freely, legally and installed so easily.

I feel we now need key organisations to take up the challenge and switch some or all of their system so that we can see how this could benefit us all. We also need a pool of knowledge in the sector to call on, along with support and training, particularly when starting up. Maybe this is an area that circuit riders (see Chapter 3) and other community sector ICT workers could be encouraged to support?

More information on the Cambridge Independent Advice Centre (CIAC) project, and feedback from others in the trial project, at **www.foss.ciac.org.uk**

Buying hardware

The ideal way to create an ICT budget is to start with what you want to do, identify the software you need and get the hardware that will comfortably run the software. Then add in any extras such as printers, digital cameras and a budget for training, support and insurance.

In reality, ICT budgeting becomes a series of compromises. You'll often have existing hardware and software, and restricted funds. You may not be able to afford all the software you want or the number or quality of computers.

Despite the advantage of trying to standardise, most VCOs will buy their computers one or two at a time, and end up with a range of different models. This should not be a problem, because most PCs are very standard and will work in the same way, but it is important to think about maintenance, repairs and reliability – as well as savings made when buying supplies such as ink.

Although PCs will go on working for many years, they will often be overtaken by software upgrades and your own rising expectations of how your computers should perform. A good basis is to work on the basis of a four- or five-year lifespan for your hardware.

In a larger organisation this means budgeting to replace about one-quarter of existing equipment each year, in addition to any new computers you might buy for new members of staff or for new projects. Smaller VCOs will probably work on a more ad hoc basis, with funds set aside for replacement when needed.

Keep your records up to date

It is important to keep a detailed record of each machine, including the manuals, and details of the components such as hard disks, network cards and CD drives that came with it. This information could be vital if the machine breaks down or needs upgrading. You will usually find the most detailed description of your equipment on the invoice or specification you received from the supplier at the time of purchase.

You should also record serial numbers of all hardware and software and keep them in a safe place off-site, in case of theft or fire.

Bust that jargon

Don't know what RAM you need? Not sure what a CPU is? Can't tell your ADSL from your elbow? There are few times where jargon is more of a barrier than when trying to buy a computer, but there are some excellent resources to help explain things in plain English (or other languages):

- The glossary at the end of this guide explains many of the most common terms.
- The ICT Hub Knowledgebase has a comprehensive A-Z Glossary and a buyer's guide at **www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk**
- **www.wikipedia.com** is an excellent online encyclopaedia that provides excellent descriptions on a wide range of topics.
- Use Google or a similar search engine to look for useful websites, including sites such as Amazon, which include user reviews of similar products.

Where to buy new equipment

Anyone who only buys ICT equipment every year or so can be left bemused by just how fast the price and specifications of ICT equipment can change. Given the fierce competition for your business and the seemingly endless range of choices it is also easy to get caught up in an endless round of checking specifications, comparing prices and waiting for a specific feature to fall into your price range.

For most of us our needs are generally standard, so the best answer is usually the one which fits your budget, is delivered on time, installed quickly and runs without a hitch from the moment you turn it on. It may not be the cheapest but it will cause the least hassle.

Anyone who supplies computers, printers, laptops or other equipment should be more than happy to talk through your requirements and suggest the best solution. The best place is somewhere you feel is reliable, and you can return to for further help and advice once you've made your purchase.

Personal recommendations are the best source of reliable suppliers, but the ICT Hub directory of suppliers lists businesses that supply hardware, including some not-for-profit organisations.

Shops such as PC World and Dixons have long dominated the high street, and can offer a real bargain when they're clearing out old stock. They may be good for one computer at a time but specialist suppliers will probably be better placed to help if you want a quote for a full range of equipment, including a price for installation and ongoing support.

Whoever you use, be sure to ask about warranties and their policy regarding returns. Faulty goods are covered by standard consumer legislation, but because shops and other ICT suppliers operate with low margins, some insist that you deal directly with the manufacturers if you have to return a faulty piece of equipment. This can be annoying and time-consuming, so before you buy, ask what the position will be if things go wrong.

Choosing a printer

Printers now cost much less than they used to: colour laser printers may be £200 or less, while many ink jet printers cost well below £50.

The total cost of any printer will reflect the price of replacing ink and toners, so keep track of your current usage and costs, decide what you really want and compare costs. Inkjet printers tend to be cheaper to purchase initially, but are more expensive in the long run if they're used a lot. Inkjets also tend to be slower than lasers, so aren't practical for churning out hundreds of copies of a newsletter or everyday use in a busy office.

Computer magazines and websites often review printers, showing vital statistics to help you choose between them. Printers that include other functions, such as scanning, photocopying and faxing, may be ideal for a small organisation with one or two staff. But cheap multifunction printers often sacrifice quality to accommodate other functions, so only go for them if you know you need them.

More expensive multifunction printers offer high-quality photocopier functions and are designed for high-volume office use across a network.

Make sure the printer is robust enough by estimating the number of pages you want to print in an average week or month and reading reviews to make sure your printer will be up to the job.

Some printers can print both sides automatically, i.e. without needing to put the paper back in. This is useful for short print run materials, such as newsletters, and can also cut the amount of paper used.

Green computing: are your computers costing the earth?

Current estimates are that ICT waste contributes at least 39 per cent of the 1 million tonnes of electronic waste generated in the UK each year. There are many different green issues that relate to ICT and they are fast moving into mainstream thinking. These include:

- reuse and repair of ICT equipment
- safe disposal and recycling of ICT equipment
- using less energy and less paper
- choices when purchasing new equipment.

Minimise impact

Research by the United Nations University concluded that by far the best way to minimise impact on the environment from a personal computer is to extend its useful life. Much of the energy required to manufacture a personal computer is used to make high-tech components like semiconductors which are destroyed in the recycling process.

Do you need a new computer?

The pressure to upgrade hardware and software drives the multibillion-pound ICT industry but there are cost savings as well as environmental benefits to breathing new life into an ageing computer before buying a new one.

Unless it is broken, the computer system on your desk may well do the majority of tasks asked of it perfectly adequately. Word processing, email, web browsing and spreadsheets are not high-end applications and require no more computing power than the average system was delivering several years ago. New computers are more powerful but you may make bigger gains from better time management than from marginally faster software.

- Upgrade the memory (RAM) or hard disk space as much a possible.
- Networks can be used to share applications, so the computer on your desk doesn't need as much computing power.
- Open Source software such as Ubuntu may deliver the same features as the latest version of Windows, but perform faster because it uses less processing power.
- If you want wi-fi, try using a USB wireless stick that plugs into a USB port to provide fast internet access.
- Don't use valuable space or processor memory on programmes and files you don't use.
- If Microsoft Office slows to a crawl, try Open Office, the Open Source alternative, at www.openoffice.org.
- Keep your computer 'well tuned' – keep system software up to date, keep files and folder tidy, use anti-virus and anti-spam software and so on. You're more likely to want to keep a computer longer if it runs better.

Of course this advice is very general – specific solutions depend entirely on what computer you have and what you're trying to do with it. Ask for advice from local environmental or recycling projects before deciding to dump your computer and get another.

Buying green computers

To make a green or ethical choice you may want to think about the environmental impact of the manufacturing process, any specific energy-saving features and the ease with which the computer can be recycled when you've finished with it. It's also good to know that the company you are buying from is concerned about the environment and human rights.

There are a number of standards to look for, such as the eco-label, an EU initiative which sets standards for different product groups and is promoted to manufacturers as a marketing advantage. It promotes reduced energy consumption during use and stand-by, limited use of substances harmful to the environment and health, easy upgrades and reduced solid waste production.

Ethical Consumer Magazine website at www.ethicalconsumer.org includes environmental best buys and corporate social responsibility best buys.

Buying refurbished or reconditioned equipment

A brand new PC may be too expensive for you, or you may want to see whether you can save money and resources by getting a refurbished system. There are plenty of charities selling reconditioned equipment and most large businesses dispose of PCs in large quantities, so may have reasonable good-quality machines to pass on.

- Waste Online lists computer recyclers and refurbishers: www.wasteonline.org.uk
- ICT for Charities lists computer recyclers and refurbishers: www.itforcharities.co.uk
- Oxfam receives donations from the sale of new and refurbished systems by its partner 1st 4 Recycled Computers: www.1st4recycledcomputers.com
- www.donateapc.org.uk provides a matching service between people with computers to give away and good causes looking for a second hand PC, printer or other equipment.

Checklist

Accepting a donated or refurbished computer

- ✓ If you're tempted by the offer of a free or low-cost second-hand computer ask yourself a few questions:
- ✓ Can it do what you want? Can it run your current operating systems or the specific software you use? Check Microsoft Windows or Apple Mac websites for minimum requirements.
- ✓ Does it come with a monitor, keyboard and mouse? Does it work with any hardware or software you already have? Does it have a network card to enable you to join your network?
- ✓ Has any refurbishment been carried out to acceptable quality and safety standards?
- ✓ Can you choose the software, memory, hard drive or operating system it comes with?
- ✓ Refurbished computers may come with a warranty for parts but a donated machine probably won't.
- ✓ If it's a laptop, has it been dropped? Make sure you see it working.
- ✓ Does it come with a licensed version of the operating system – such as Windows XP? Microsoft licensing is not straightforward and you will be liable to prosecution if you're found using an unlicensed copy of Windows, Office or any other software.

Disposing of ICT equipment

Recycling computers

Equipment that is beyond its useful life for one organisation may be of use to someone else. Computers can be refurbished and passed on to schools, other charities or individuals, both in the UK and abroad.

Some organisations that recycle computers have a minimum specification that they will pass on and some will only collect a minimum number of units. Some will ask for a donation or charge a fee and others only accept equipment that is working, as they have to pay to dispose of anything that can't be used.

Ask in your local networks to see whether there is a community-based recycling project in your area. Ask your local council, or have a look on websites such as **www.donateapc.org.uk**, **www.wasteonline.org.uk** (information sheets), or **www.envocare.co.uk/computers.htm** for contacts and advice.

Throwing it away

In the end, hardware will fail. Screens become difficult to use and cause eye strain, busy printers or CD drives begin to fail and parts may be difficult to repair.

It's time to throw it away, but most ICT equipment contains harmful or toxic elements and is not safe to be thrown into a skip. The European Union's WEEE Directive is changing the face of recycling by enforcing the safe disposal of waste electrical and electronic equipment.

This is creating incentives to reuse and repair equipment as well as creating a market for disposal companies: a Google search for 'ICT disposal UK' reveals hundreds of businesses offering ICT disposal services, most referring to the WEEE Directive. Use your existing networks to find out who can safely dispose of ICT waste in your area, or look online. Your local council may provide advice or accept individual PCs at its own facilities. Any local environmental and recycling projects should be aware of the WEEE Directive and be able to advise – they may even have their own disposal service.

Green Computing Charter

You can commit yourself to some basic standards by signing up to the Green Computing campaign on the Computing Magazine website:

- Ensure unused equipment is turned off when it is not being used.
- Educate staff about the benefits of saving energy and recycling.
- Establish a code of practice designed to minimise unnecessary printing.
- Identify ICT management practices that reduce power consumption.
- When purchasing new ICT equipment, choose energy-saving devices that have been manufactured in an environmentally conscious fashion.
- Dispose of old hardware responsibly; send old PCs to be reconditioned and recycled.
- Find out how much energy your ICT systems use and monitor ongoing consumption levels.

Computing Magazine at **www.computing.co.uk**

Visit **www.weeeman.org** to learn about the environmental impact of disposing of waste electronic and electrical equipment. You can also calculate your own current carbon footprint and find out how to minimise its impact.

Websites

The worldwide web has created a whole new way of communicating, reaching out to people around the globe as well as around the corner. The web is an incredibly rich source of information, a powerful tool for sharing knowledge.

Email and the Internet support day-to-day communication activities and many organisations also have their own website. These range from simple directory entries giving contact details to sophisticated sites which drive high-profile fundraising campaigns such as Red Nose Day.

However, large numbers of websites have also fallen into disuse, after promising features that were 'coming soon' in 1999 or offering news pages with one item that is three years old. Whatever your intention in creating a website you need to be realistic about how you will manage it: they don't manage themselves and can quickly become out of date.

The costs and potential benefits of having a website must be weighed up as carefully as anything else that uses your resources. There are plenty of ways to get a website, and lots of things it can do once it's there, but you must manage the process carefully and be clear about the ongoing commitment required.

Types of website

There are four types of website:

1. **Basic promotional sites**
   This is who we are, this is what we do, this is how to get in touch
2. **Directories and online information resources**
   Specialist information, stored in a directory so you can read it online, or available to download as fact sheets
3. **e-commerce and fundraising sites**
   Buy something from us or donate money because you support our cause
4. **Networks, forums and other collaborative spaces**
   Join in with what we do and feel part of our community – share in discussions on our email lists, read our bulletin board, post your opinions about what we do or comment on my blog.

As with any ICT, getting the right website depends on laying the groundwork: decide what you want your website to do before getting into too much detail about how it's going to do it. Be clear about the potential benefits, and don't ignore the total cost of ownership.

A new medium may mean new users

The Samaritans discovered that moving their services on to the Internet was a good way of reaching young men, who don't traditionally use the phone to ask for help but will use email to share their emotional problems. See their site at **www.samaritans.org.uk**

Working with a web designer

Whether paid for or not, a web designer will be responsible for:

- listening to what you say you need;
- advising on the best solution from a range of choices;
- preparing a site map of page structure and functions;
- creating the site using agreed templates, logos, colours and typefaces;
- adding any content that you supply, such as words and pictures;
- keeping the work within budget and on time, and delivering what has been agreed;
- providing regular progress reports;
- making it accessible to all web users;
- making it search engine-friendly;
- managing ongoing hosting arrangements.

As their client you are responsible for:

- being clear what the site is for and how it will meet your needs;
- setting a budget and timescale and monitoring these;
- listening to advice and acting on it, i.e. not necessarily agreeing with it, but not just ignoring it;
- getting the right people involved from your team;
- identifying design and related elements that must be incorporated;
- producing content such as words and pictures;
- checking progress and feeding back when asked;
- keeping the site up to date when it has been launched;
- asking for any help you need after the site is launched.

Checklist
Ten things a website can do for you

You can use a website to:

1. publicise services and campaigns, tell people what services you provide, why you do it, who they're for and how to access them;
2. provide information to support activists and mobilise support, such as online petitions;
3. share information with your community and other networks any time of day. Information can be updated every month, every week or every ten minutes;
4. publish up-to-date information and save on print and postage bills;
5. improve services, because it is easier for people to make bookings, ask questions or submit payments;
6. create interactive features such as bulletin boards and email forums that enable people to connect with each other, and encourage feedback about your services;
7. enable people with special needs to access information online, ask questions and join in discussions via email and bulletin boards. Visually and hearing impaired people may join in online discussions more easily than in other forums;
8. make new contacts, connect into new networks; become better known in your field;
9. create and support local, national or global networks of people with common interests or needs;
10. raise your profile and reach new audiences.

Writing a brief for your website

Whether you work with a web design company or build your own site, there are many issues you must consider. It is best to start by producing a briefing document to summarise what you think you need. You could work on it with a volunteer, or use it in a tendering process. Keep it simple and aim for three or four pages of A4.

Summary
Two or three sentences saying what you think you want, with timescale and budget.

Aims and objectives
Your organisation's goals and how you think a website will meet them. Targets such as numbers of visitors per week or documents downloaded.

Audiences
The main audiences for your website and how a website will help them.

Design requirements
A list of websites you like plus house style requirements such as images, logos, colours, etc.

Site map
The main pages you think you need.
Updating and managing the site
Who will update the site, respond to enquiries and report statistics?

Functionality
What do you want your site visitors to do, such as download a document, search within your site, access members-only area for private information, etc.

Search engine optimisation
Identify what your designer can do to make sure your site is found when people use Google and other search engines.

User testing and usability
Try to show your site to at least three potential site users before it goes live.

Deliverables
The website itself, documentation on how to manage the website, hosting details, usernames and passwords and a statement that the website has passed accessibility requirements.

A simple website

A basic website acts like an extended advertisement, offering basic information to anyone who reads it. For many organisations this is a minimum requirement:

- About us
  - Why we exist and brief history
  - Names of trustees, staff, volunteers, maybe photos
- Our services and how to access them
  - What we offer
  - Opening times, referral system, etc
- Who we work with
  - Define your clients, identify the neighbourhood, etc
- Contact details
  - Telephone, email, postal address + map

Domain name
Write down what you know about these arrangements, such as who provides the hosting and how long you've had it. If you don't know anything, or don't have a website, don't worry, this is easily solved by your web designer.

Budget
Including fees, domain names, hosting, training and new software or hardware.

Timescale
Key dates or specific milestones that affect the project, such as an annual general meeting (AGM) or public event that could be used to launch the site.

Ownership
Be clear about what rights you have over future use of the content and images and the html and other computer code used in the website. Resolving this at the outset reduces the potential for conflict later.

Terms and conditions

- Will the web designer work on- or off-site?
- Will payments be made in phases, in advance or on completion?
- What reports and updates are expected between the web designer and the client organisation.
- What is the process for resolving conflict or disagreement – even if you are using a volunteer.

Don't make me think!

Whether building it yourself, working with a volunteer or paying a web designer *Don't Make Me Think!* by Steve Krug offers an entertaining non-techie view of good and bad web design. It steers you clear of the biggest errors and focuses your thoughts on the needs of the people using the site. Read a chapter for free at www.sensible.com/chapter.html, browse it in a book shop or buy it online.

Building your own website

If you can't afford a web design company it is possible to get what you want by building your own website, but consider the options carefully. You may well save money, but be realistic about the skills needed to get started and the time needed to set it up and keep it running.

Your options

The options for building your own site include:

- **Build it from scratch**
  Learn the skills of a professional web designer, using a programme such as DreamWeaver, become familiar with html, set up domain names, transfer files to the website, build each part of the site 'by hand' or upload components and link them together. It's like learning how to produce a newsletter using a desktop publishing (DTP) programme such as Microsoft Publisher.
- **Use an online site builder**
  Systems such as Blogger, Wordpress and Google Pages let you build a site using a system accessed through a website. Many are free, some ask for a monthly fee. Follow instructions and build pages using the menus and templates provided; insert your own words and upload images using a browser, such as Internet Explorer. This is similar to creating a newsletter using the templates built into Microsoft Publisher.
- **Use a website template**
  Use Open Source tools such as Drupal, Joomla or Wordpress to set up a website using a template, into which you insert the graphics and learn to manage the site and keep it up to date. It's similar to having someone design a newsletter template which you then update for each edition.

Involve colleagues and users

Get staff, volunteers and users to help design your site:

- Identify someone to lead the website project and produce the brief.
- Build a list of who will use the site and what they will want to know.
- Build a list of sites that people do or don't like, with comments about why.
- Identify key resources that need to be available on the site.
- Discuss who will update the site and what help they'll need.
- Consider setting up a small working group.

Staff or volunteer?

The best person to learn website design is someone who wants to do it, has the time to do it and already has most of the skills needed. It could be the person who produces your newsletter or annual report – ideally someone who knows a lot about your organisation, is a confident communicator and is familiar with the Internet.

If you're using a volunteer, give them space to bring in their own ideas but remember that the end result must match the expectations of the organisation. Manage the process as carefully as you can, set realistic timescales and stick to them.

Working with any volunteer requires you to be clear about what you want them to do and realistic about how you manage their work. The same is true about web design. Make sure you see some of their work before proceeding too far – do they know what they're doing, or are you going to be their guinea pig?

ICT Hub partner iT4Communities can help find an ICT professional for a voluntary web design project; or see the ICT Hub Knowledgebase website for practical tips about using volunteers for web design projects.

Training

There are web design courses at many local colleges or community training centres, covering the basic ingredients of professional web design, e.g.:

- a web design package, such as DreamWeaver or Microsoft Front Page
- graphic programmes, such as Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro
- web design processes, from initial consultation to testing and launch of a site.

These courses can vary in length from short tasters to year-long accredited courses. Whoever is taking on the DIY task will have to factor in this time, as well as the time needed to practise new skills.

What help do you need?

Ideally you'll have access to technical advice and a patient web designer to review what you're doing. In the absence of this, use the Internet for tips, get an up-to-date web design book for reference and try to cultivate a friendly techie to explain terms you don't understand.

Produce a brief

Treat the process the same as if you were paying someone. Use the same guidance outlined on previous pages to produce a brief (see Chapter 2) and use the process of producing the brief to get others involved as the work progresses.

Producing your own website is not much more difficult than learning how to use DTP to design and publish a newsletter. Just like DTP it can take just a few hours to publish your first site, but much longer to build a well-designed site and keep it up to date. The best newsletters rely on editorial as well as design and technical skills.

Free DIY websites

There are places on the Internet where you can publish sites even if you have little technical expertise. You sign up on the website, choose a template and start adding your words and pictures. Some are free, others charge.

Here are some free ones:

- **www.pages.google.com** – part of Google
- **www.officelive.co.uk** – part of Microsoft
- **www.communigate.co.uk** – owned by Newsquest local newspapers
- **www.geocities.com** – part of Yahoo!

There are also people who will offer to host or build websites free of charge, such as **www.usablewebsites.org** and **www.freecharity.org.uk**. These are run by charitably minded individuals who will build you a site which you can then manage.

Ask in your local area for any other sources of free help, such as local web design companies or web design students.

Stick to what you know?

If your fundraising skills are better than your web design, why not make a compelling funding application instead of building your own site – and get what you really want by paying for it. Find a volunteer to create a simple site, so you have a much better idea of your needs, and ask for funds to incorporate features

Blog it

One popular way of getting a website is to set up a blog – short for weblog. Designed to be updated regularly, like a diary or journal, you can add links, share content and allow visitors to add their own comments and links. Blogs are commonly used by individuals but can be a good way for organisations to build a website and become an active part of online networks.

A great example a site built around a blog is the award-winning Merseyside Funding Information Portal run by Sefton CVS – take a look at **www.mfip.org.uk**

There are many sites that will enable you to set up a blog for free, such as:

- **www.blogger.com** – owned by Google
- **www.wordpress.com** – also available as a standalone package

weblink

Merseyside Funding Information Portal
www.mfip.org.uk

Keeping your website running

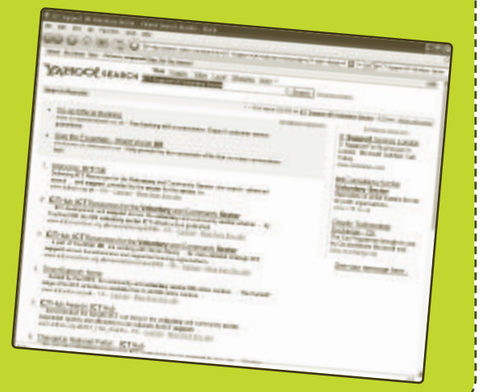
Whoever builds your website it is important to see it as an ongoing commitment. Make sure you're realistic about who will keep the site up to date and how much extra work this will create.

Are you clear about the arrangements for hosting or domain name renewal? Did you make sure your volunteer set up a site that you can support once they've gone? These may be technical issues but you must make sure there is someone in your organisation who understands their importance and what to do about them.

Websites are not static and should form part of your ongoing communications budget. If you bid for funding for a website, think about including funding for the second or third year of its life. By this time you may well have a better idea of what actually works for you and want to either tweak a few things or pay for a complete overhaul.

weblink

Good design has helped the ICT Hub get to the top of the results page when searching for 'ICT support UK voluntary sector'



Checklist
DIY seach engine optimisation

- ✓ Making it to the top of the list of results produced by a search engine, such as Google or Yahoo, is not a straightforward process but there are some basic points that will help:
- ✓ A simple site that clearly explains its purpose and delivers what is required by its audience is more valuable than fancy tricks to fool search engines.
- ✓ Make sure each page clearly introduces what it contains and repeat appropriate key words in ways that are relevant. These are the main food for a search engine, providing the strongest hint as to the content of the site.
- ✓ Think what key words people will use to find you and use them prominently on your home page. Will people use jargon when they think of your services? If so, make sure you use that jargon as well, even if you explain it for people who don't know what it means.
- ✓ The design of your site will be an important ingredient. Keeping the content as simple and clear as possible means there is less 'clutter' for search engines to extract key information from.
- ✓ Links into your site are also a key source of ranking. Compile a list of websites you would like to link to your website, contact them and ask if they will do it, perhaps on a reciprocal basis.
- ✓ Test your site using your key words by plugging them into Google. Look at the sites above yours and try to see why they're scoring more highly.
- ✓ Update and adjust your site regularly, according to how well it is ranking in Google for the terms that are important to you.

Databases

VCOs of all types and sizes are already using a database, and a well-planned information system is a key part of a well-run organisation. Staff, volunteers and trustees are able to produce relevant information to support their day-to-day work, quickly gather contact details when needed and generate reports for funders and other partners about the quality and value of what it is being delivered.

Some databases will be purpose-built, with easy-to-use forms, a variety of reports for funders, management or trustees, and training for staff and volunteers to help them get the most from the system.

Others will have been built by an enthusiastic volunteer, with no guidance from senior staff in the organisation. Little thought went into how information would be managed or maintained, it doesn't capture all the relevant information and little is done with the information it does hold.

Some organisations still have little in the way of computerised systems. For many organisations this means that contact details are kept on papers and evaluation forms from clients end up stored in a filing cabinet. The administrator may have a quarterly session to manually count up key statistics and transfer them to the funders' monitoring form, which is then photocopied for the next trustees' report.

Don't expect databases to solve every problem. Whatever system is being used, a database can be either a key asset or a millstone: it can either make everyone's work easier or become a constant thorn in their side. Perhaps this is because the way a database works will usually reflect how an organisation is run, how clearly it is focused on key goals, how well the work of different parts of the whole fits together, and the quality of the organisation's administrative processes. Weaknesses in the way you do things are unlikely to be solved by having a database – in fact they may well exaggerate them.

First things first

Each VCO often has a unique mix of data that needs to be gathered, managed and reported, generally driven by the needs of multiple funders or specific to its area of work. This creates complex requirements and can lead to confusion among both users and suppliers of database systems. A step by step approach often works best, so try to focus on what is achievable and required right now, rather than chasing everything that appears to be possible or that you think ought to be included.

Build it or buy it?

There are three main choices facing someone who wants a database:

- **Buy a database off-the-shelf**
  There are as many as 100 off-the-shelf products aimed specifically at VCOs and most should be flexible enough to match most of your requirements. Tweaking an existing product, rather than funding the whole development process, could save a lot of time and money.

  Ask in your networks to see who is using which system. Talk to the people who sell the systems, and review demo versions. Consider the total cost of ownership, such as running costs and training, as well as the initial purchase price. Being familiar with what's available already is a good place to start to, even if you then decide you need your own solution.

- **Have one built for you**
  If existing products don't meet your needs, you could pay a database consultant or programmer to build a system that does. A good database consultant will review your requirements and design, build, test and deliver your new database. They will work with staff and volunteers to identify needs, design screens, test the system with a range of users and provide training and

ongoing support. They may also offer regular reviews to adapt your system as your needs change.

A bespoke solution may be a good way of meeting very specific requirements, and building something that can continue to grow with your organisation. However, developing a database is usually a major undertaking and you need to make sure you have the money and other resources to support it.

- **Build one yourself**
  Most people with a version of Microsoft Office on a Windows computer could open their copy of Access and use the wizards to set up a new database.

  Once under way they could learn more from a guide in the 'for Dummies' series, or get help from a friendly expert. If they're well versed in the work of the organisation they can anticipate reporting needs and think about the needs of the people entering data and keeping it up to date. It may be a very simple tool for a specific purpose, or grow to be an 'all-singing, all-dancing' management information system.

  Although this may be considered the cheapest option, it may lead to endless rounds of building and re-building, diverting time from more valuable work and relying too heavily on enthusiasm instead of appropriate knowledge or experience.

Check what's on the shelf

Before taking on a major database development project in-house, make sure you fully review existing products to see if there is anything that could meet your needs. All databases will have limitations, whether off-the-shelf products or built from scratch – getting a database specially built for you doesn't necessarily mean you will get exactly what you need, because you may not have the funds, time or expertise for this. Be realistic about your expectations and evaluate all the options before deciding before deciding which course to take.

weblink

The ICT Hub Knowledgebase has an excellent range of database-related articles at www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/databases

Case Study: Single Parent Action Network (SPAN)

SPAN is an umbrella organisation representing the diversity of one-parent families across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It gives a voice to one-parent families living in poverty and isolation and supports the setting up, development and training of single parent self-help groups. It also works with organisations and decision-making bodies in the UK and Europe to improve policies that affect one-parent families.

SPAN runs numerous projects and works in partnership with a number of public agencies and voluntary and community organisations. Staff wanted an ICT system that could incorporate projects into a central database, to help improve information-sharing and dialogue within their partnerships.

In particular, SPAN wanted a system that could monitor and retrieve information on their events and course bookings, track clients' progress and hold information on non-member organisations. The team visited another organisation to see how their database had benefited them and, once funding was secured, all the staff helped draw up a list of their requirements.

It's not all been plain sailing. Staff felt the database was too complex at first and that a simpler, user-friendly solution was needed. Creating an 'all-singing, all-dancing' solution inevitably made it more difficult for some team members to learn, especially those not using it on a daily basis.

A key lesson is that the planning and design stage is crucial. Time is needed to think through the implications of different options, especially the pros and cons of different software options.

The timing could also have been better. Some project funding ended during the implementation, and new work started after the initial design stage, which meant additional changes and costs. The whole process was very time-consuming, since it was necessary to consult and advise staff, check each trial version and liaise with the consultant.

The design and implementation of the system has taken much longer than planned, but the system has now delivered a number of benefits:

- improved communication within SPAN
- improved information kept on organisations
- a more effective and professional service can be delivered
- information is more accurate
- better monitoring information
- more efficient ways of working
- information is more secure

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The ICT Hub Knowledgebase has an excellent range of database-related articles at www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/databases

Planning your database

A good place to start the design of a database is at the end, by being clear what questions it is designed to answer. Ask yourself what you're trying to find out. What do you think your database can tell you? How will it help your work?

- Managing the contact details of people who use our service will help us create mailing labels for our annual report.
- We will use a list of people who have donated money as the basis for a list of people who might donate money in the future.
- Reports showing the age, gender, ethnicity, income and postcode of people we have helped in the past year will indicate possible areas for future work.
- Gathering information about what users think of our service will help us identify their needs and deliver a more valuable service.

Budgeting your time

Whether it is a member of staff, volunteer or consultant leading the project, the amount of time taken for planning is often underestimated. Before you get to the technical details you need to think through the commitment you're making and be sure you have the budget and support you need.
Be realistic about the time needed to co-ordinate the initial planning process and collect information about the needs of those who will be using the database. This includes:

- staff time to develop the database plan
- the cost of buying or building the database
- staff time to test the database
- training staff to use the database
- time to manage, maintain and use the database.

How much to spend?

Start by identifying the problem that needs to be solved and the benefits the database will bring, such as saving staff time, improving the quality of service or delivering monitoring information to funders. The value of these potential benefits will help set an initial budget, which can then be modified as you talk to suppliers and contractors. Speak to people from other organisations to see whether you have got the figure about right.

The process of agreeing the budget is the opportunity to make sure you have the clear support and involvement of senior management and trustees. Developing a new database can't be seen as simply a technical issue – it is likely to affect the whole organisation and it needs senior-level support. This top-level focus will be vital once the development process becomes more technically driven.

What to include in your database plan

A database plan is the starting point for building your own DIY database, or will be used as the brief when approaching a database developer or supplier. Its main purpose it to summarise what you require, and it should be written in plain language and either avoid or explain any technical jargon.

Spending time on the planning process ensures that you have a clear idea of the type of database your organisation needs, can afford and is able to support. A simple plan would include:

Current position
Your organisation's overall objectives, a review of what you already have, the benefits a new database will offer.

Information flow
What data you need to collect and who collects it – including partners. Who requires reports and what reports they need.

Timescale/budget
Your initial estimate of timescale and budget will become more and more accurate as the planning process continues.

Who is involved?
Who is leading the project? Who will use the database? Who will maintain it? What skills do they have? Includes staff, volunteers, partners, other suppliers, etc.

Hardware and software requirements
Any limits created by your current set-up, such as the age of the computers, or whether they are PCs or Macs, and whether they have Windows or Linux installed? Do you have a network, or any remote workers? Is there a budget for upgrades?

Training
Which staff will need training in the use of the system? How will it be delivered?

Checklist
Good project management

Being thoroughly prepared and adopting a step-by-step approach to the process of database development should help you end up with a database that meets your needs:

- ✓ **Preparation**
  Decide what you want, prepare a business case for funders and your management committee, agree indicative budget, outline timetable and the scope of the project.
- ✓ **Selection**
  Write an initial project plan, as a brief for the tender process, and use interviews to select a contractor.
- ✓ **Contractual discussion**
  Agree what will be delivered when, payment schedule, project management arrangements, roles and responsibilities, and dispute processes.
- ✓ **Development**
  Functional specification is agreed and signed off, stage-by-stage development, progress reports, testing, debugging.
- ✓ **Implementation**
  Installation, training and ongoing support.
- ✓ **Review**
  Lessons learned and plans for the next version.

Support
May include installing upgrades, adding new features or troubleshooting. Suppliers or developers may offer telephone support, but charge extra for on-site help. If you are building your own system, who will be available for ongoing support?

Ten steps to choosing a database supplier

There are many different database suppliers, from sole traders to large companies. There are pros and cons to each so it is impossible to give any hard and fast rules about which type to go for, so treat the process of finding a developer like that for recruiting staff:

1. See whether someone from outside your organisation can help you run the process, such as a project manager from the local council who has delivered database-related projects.
2. Start by writing the clearest database plan you can – a bit like a job description. Keep it simple but focused on what you require.
3. Use the ICT Hub directory of suppliers and feedback from contacts to draw up a list of possible suppliers. Advertise the main details through email lists and on your website and invite people to email you if they are interested.
4. Send your current database plan to potential developers and suppliers and ask for a written response to how they will meet your needs. Set a deadline and indicate interview dates. Invite informal contact beforehand, if you think you will have time to deal with it.
5. Compile a shortlist in the same way that you would to fill a staff post. Identify the ones you think fit the budget and your needs, and then interview them. Two or three should be enough, although seeing more may help clarify your requirements.
6. Involve a small but diverse group in the interview process, including someone who will be putting data into the system as well as someone who will be using the reports.
7. Use the interview to decide whether they understand your needs and have the project management skills, technical solutions and experience to meet them. See the note on 'What to look for in a database supplier'.
8. Remember that you don't have to make a final decision at the interview. You can follow up specific questions with each supplier, or ask them to resubmit their bid to reflect any changes you now realise that you need to make. You may ask for a further presentation, or bring the panel together again informally to review any follow-up information submitted.
9. Even if the interview goes well, always check with referees about how happy they are with what they got for their money.
10. Once you've selected someone, draw up an agreement about how the project will proceed, in the form of a letter of agreement or written contract. An initial project plan will show key phases and milestones for completion, as well as a payment schedule, and may be included in the submission for the tender. This may be used to reach final agreement, but never start work until it has been fully updated and agreed by both parties.

Key questions for any database developer include: Have they done this before? Do they understand what you want? Can they deliver what you need? Can they support the database when it's finished? How much will they charge? Can you work with them?

What to look for in a database supplier

It is important that you review the work of anyone who is selling you a database, whether they are building something from scratch or adapting an off the shelf solution. Although some of your requirements may be technical, such as whether it requires a server, or whether your existing computers will support it, the review is an opportunity to look at other issues:

- Can you see work they have done for other VCOs?
- Do the screens seem easy to navigate?
- Are reports easy to set up and then print or export? Can they be adapted by the user? Ask to see how easy it is to change the reports, or have a go yourself if you can.
- Who picks up the bill if deadlines are missed?
- Do they use a language you understand, or overwhelm you with technical jargon?
- How will they manage the project? How will progress be monitored?
- Do they have time to fit in your work? If they're offering a discount, will you be a lower priority?
- What user manuals or training will you get for your money?
- What is their hourly rate for any work outside the scope of this project?

Once you've chosen your solution

Deciding what you want and who will deliver it is just the start of the process.

The next stage is for the developer to produce a functional specification, listing the key tasks that drive the system and details of what is required on each data entry form and report. It may also include sample screens. Only when the functional specification is agreed will the developer start the detailed development work.

Don't take a quick look and think 'Oh, we can sort that out later', because this specification will be the blueprint for the whole system. Allow time to involve the people who will be using the system and check details thoroughly.

Database development is a complex and dynamic process so new ideas may come up during the project. All changes need to be agreed in detail and could take extra time, and therefore money. You and the developer need to be pragmatic about what can be achieved within your budget.

Clearly identify key people involved in decision-making and make sure they get regular progress reports about how things are going. Identify risks as early as possible, consider contingencies and be prepared to change track to ensure the best use of resources.

Above all, don't avoid problems if they arise. You should expect some difficult choices to be made, where conflicting needs cannot be reconciled. Use the objectives in your database plan to guide priorities: which option will deliver the most important benefits?

Once built, testing is crucial and must involve the people who will use the database. Ask them to carry out the tasks in the specification, and allow plenty of time to deal with bugs. Errors that you ignore now will be embedded in your organisation's work until further development can take place.

Once you agree that everything works the way you planned you can complete the implementation process. This includes installation, training, ongoing technical support, fault logging and a review. And then you can start planning the next version.

3

Keep things running smoothly

3

Keep things running smoothly

Most computer systems need fixing from time to time, and most organisations grind to a halt when their computers go wrong. Whether you work from home on a single computer connected to a printer and the Internet, or rely on a large network of computers running shared systems in multiple sites, it is important to think about the support you need to keep things running smoothly.

You must also think about how to prevent problems before they arise. What are the basic steps to take to protect your computer and the data you use?

Getting the most from your investment in ICT requires you to have the skills to make the most of the tools you have. Training is a vital part of your total cost of ownership of ICT – there's no point having the latest hardware or software if it is never used.

You may choose structured, formal learning activities, focused on specific tasks. These could be long or short courses, delivered by private, public or community training providers. Others will prefer informal learning, especially by accessing support and advice from colleagues or peers. Email and the web provide access to enormous networks of people around the globe, although the answer may be the person sitting in the same room as you.

Supporting your ICT

Good-quality ICT support is trustworthy, appropriate to your needs, available when you need it at a price you can afford – but where do you find it and how do you know whether it's any good?

- Who can you turn to for help when you need it?
- Who knows what software you're using and can suggest how to fix it?
- Who understands error messages and what to do about them?
- Who knows whether your computers will cope with new demands, such as having a database installed?
- Who do you ask for a price when you need something new?
- Who do you check with to make sure you're not being ripped off?

In many cases the answer may lie in a combination of arrangements, reflecting your needs and the resources available to you. Options will include:

- fingers crossed
- volunteer support
- 'accidental techies'
- circuit riders/ICT development workers
- ICT support contract
- in-house staff
- consultants

Each option is explained in this section.

Be clear about your needs

Getting the right support means thinking about your needs before crisis strikes. You need to budget for paying for the help you need, or recruit volunteers to cover regular tasks before things go wrong. You will need to think about:

- **short-term, immediate needs**
  - someone to help when problems happen;
  - day-to-day troubleshooting, quick fixes, short cuts, reminders about how to do something, contact with external suppliers or volunteers.
- **medium-term, routine needs**
  - someone to keep your ICT ticking over;
  - advice and help with routine tasks, such as back-up, security, software updates, routine maintenance, anti-virus and anti-spam solutions, passwords, user accounts, file management, updating inventory and software licences, dealing with insurance issues, recording problems as they arise and maintaining a troubleshooting guide.
- **Long-term, strategic needs**
  - someone to look at your needs over time;
  - ICT planning, budgeting, mentoring, project management, data protection requirements, being aware of relevant trends and new ideas;
  - someone to lead projects: defining requirements, finding, choosing and managing suppliers on projects such as software and hardware purchase, website design, database development, training, and network installation.
- **What is their hourly rate for any work outside the scope of this project?**

Fingers crossed

You've just spent £3,000 setting up three workstations and a network. You have broadband and a shared colour printer, a file-sharing server and nice new flat screens, the network is up and running and everyone has a legal copy of the software they need. You brought the installation in on time and just a few quid over budget.

But what happens when something goes wrong?

Any new equipment will have a warranty or guarantee that covers things if they go wrong. If a monitor is flickering, call the people who sold it you. If the printer won't print, you can get the person who sold it to you to come in and make sure it does – or replace it. When the Internet isn't working, call the people who sold it to you to see if it's a fault at their end.

The liability of the person who sold you the equipment will cover the fact that it should work properly when they install it. They will refer to manufacturers' warranties and send things back if they break within the warranty period, but they may not do much else.

If you contracted them to set up the system they may have no responsibility for what happens when you start using it. It depends on what you've agreed.

They are likely to charge for sorting things out if you don't keep the anti-virus software up to date and a virus infects everything. They can set up a back-up system for you but they probably aren't liable if you don't use it regularly, and they may well charge to come in and put things right if you ever need to retrieve any data.

So you can leave it all to luck. Computer systems do sometimes run smoothly with almost no help or maintenance, and problems can be solved by keeping your warranties and making sure your suppliers do their job when things go wrong. Staff will learn how to deal with niggles and problems when they happen and you'll save money. But is it worth the risk? And is it the best way to get value from the investment you've made?

Volunteer support

Many small organisations rely on friends and relatives to step in when things go wrong. This is often a great way of getting people involved in community activities and can be the most realistic way for small organisations to start managing their ICT, but it must be managed carefully.

Volunteers with ICT skills are the same as any volunteer – they can be the lifeblood of an organisation and a key factor in the success of an organisation, or they can dominate other people's time, deliver poorly conceived pieces of work and end up costing more than if you'd paid someone to do it.

As your ICT set up grows it is vital that any volunteer-based ICT support is included in your organisation's planning process and managed as carefully as if it were being paid for. This not only helps avoid problems but is an important way of showing how much you value the volunteer's time.

Make sure you understand what your ICT volunteer is doing for you. Meet regularly with them to talk about their role and their availability. Work closely with them on the overall management of your ICT resources and give them the time they need to plan things with you.

- Define your needs as carefully as possible.
- Choose the right volunteer – don't just take the first person who turns up.
- Agree goals that you can understand rather than listing technical tasks, and monitor progress.
- Try not to rely on a volunteer for something that is mission-critical, such as a main database or your server.
- Support the volunteer as you would any volunteer – don't treat them differently just because they have technical skills.
- Be realistic about the risks of working with a volunteer and consider contingencies.

iT4Communities

iT4Communities provides a specialist brokering service to help VCOs find a volunteer ICT professional. It has almost 4,000 ICT professional volunteers and more than 1,600 charities registered on its database.

The iT4C team translates an organisation's ICT needs into a set of requirements and then matches them with the skills of a volunteer. Recent projects include simple websites, installation of software and helping to run a tendering process to select a supplier for a new database.

More details at www.it4communities.org.uk, on the ICT Hub website at **www.icthub.org.uk.**

Where to find a volunteer with ICT skills

There are a number of places to look for volunteers with ICT skills.

- Your local volunteer centre should be able to place an ad for you and help recruit the right person.
- IT4Communities is an ICT Hub partner that brokers voluntary projects for ICT professionals.
- Pro Help and other schemes provide access to professional advice free of charge.
- Students at a local university or college may be looking for projects or placements, and some student unions have volunteer schemes.
- You could approach the local newspaper to publish a story appealing for help.

Are you an accidental techie?

If you are an accidental techie, or know someone who may be, then The Accidental Techie by Sue Bennett is an excellent, very accessible book which is ideal for anyone responsible for supporting and managing technology in a not-for-profit organisation. It goes beyond basic questions and explains, for example, server set-ups, networks and other technology, using a friendly, down-to-earth style.

The book is produced in the United States and can be difficult to track down, but there is also a really good set of useful links on the publisher's website – try searching for 'accidental techie' in Google, or look for the book on Amazon.com.

Otherwise, the ICT Hub Knowledgebase is an ideal reference point for further information.

Spending all your budget on boxes, wires and software is like buying a car and a map for your organisation but not budgeting for petrol, regular servicing or insurance. Use the How to Cost and Fund Guide from the ICT Hub to work through your budget and get the best from your resources – available from the ICT Hub website at http://www.icthub.org.uk/publications

'Accidental techies'

In small VCOs everyone is asked to squeeze extra roles into their job description. Some people help write a budget and end up being responsible for finances. Others draft a letter asking for money and end up being responsible for fundraising. A small organisation is likely to rely on an 'accidental techie' – a person who knows how to set up a mail merge but ends up dealing with the quirks and foibles of the whole ICT system.

An accidental techie may be asked to help with basic problems, such as lost passwords, or clearing the printer. Or they may be involved in troubleshooting that requires a level of technical knowledge and an understanding of possible solutions. This can include 'Why isn't my email working?', 'I've just deleted something – how do I get it back?' or 'How do I install the printer on this machine?'

Whatever level of support they are providing the first step is to acknowledge their role and work with them to clarify their needs, such as training or external technical support. You'll need to look at their job description and decide how much of what they offer informally can be included in their role.

They don't need to be an expert in every single piece of software, or be able to strip down and mend every printer, computer and monitor, but they may feel more confident if they're given time to study a basic ICT course such as ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence). It can also useful for them to carry out a DIY ICT health check (see Section 1 on ICT planning), help draft policies and procedures and keep tabs on frequently asked questions and the most useful answers.

It is also useful for the accidental techie to carry out a DIY ICT health check, to review the current situation and identify possible improvements (see Section 1 on ICT planning). They may also want to draft policies and procedures, and keep tabs on frequently asked questions and the most useful answers.

Your accidental techie will probably be popular with external ICT support companies, who will usually prefer to deal with the same person as much as possible. Indeed they may also provide informal training, based on the most common problems they deal with, and suggest what to try before calling for support.

Paying for external ICT support

Whatever the skills of your staff or volunteers there comes a time when it is worth picking up the phone and buying in specialist support. Routine problems may be dealt with easily but issues such as servers and networks require specialist skills that are only needed occasionally. Technology changes quickly and is best dealt with by people handling similar problems every day.

If you have in-house expertise you may want an arrangement where anything that can't be fixed in-house is referred to a support company. Or you may hand over the whole problem and have all staff calling a help desk run by an external company. Either way you can usually buy support hours upfront, pay a fixed charge per computer per month or year, or have a pay-as-you-go arrangement. Paying a fixed rate often leads to a discount and can help keep budgets predictable and some people see it like paying for insurance i.e. you don't necessarily use everything you pay for each month but it's nice to have it when you need it.

To select a support company, start by working out your requirements. Use a DIY ICT health check – as explained in Section 1 on ICT planning – to gather basic information and consider specific support issues:

- How often do you have problems you can't solve, and what are they?
- Do you want a regular monthly visit to take care of maintenance or do you only need help when things go wrong?
- Do you want someone who can help over the phone or by remote access, or is it essential that they work on-site?
- Is there someone in-house who handles common problems and who could be the main contact?
- Do you use any specialist software?
- What do you expect the contract to cover, e.g. specific response times for answering calls and visits.

Some of these points will only become relevant when you start getting quotes and can see what you can afford. You may set high standards but remember you may need to compromise because of cost – this will become clear during the selection process.

Talk my language

Don't let consultants and techies baffle you with jargon and technical wizardry. Try asking "How much does it cost?" or "What benefit will my organisation get from it?" Try not to ask "How does it work?" (unless you really want to know).

Make sure your needs are at the top of the agenda. You want ICT to deliver greater efficiency and to improve your effectiveness. You have specific things you're trying to achieve and you expect tangible results for your money.

If you call a technical support number, be assertive about getting explanations you understand. If a support person uses a lot of jargon ask them to explain more simply. Stop them if there is something you don't understand. In a worst-case scenario call back again.

If you have a volunteer with ICT skills don't treat them differently from other volunteers. You need them to communicate as clearly as possible about problems and possible solutions. Get them involved in team activities and make sure there are regular opportunities to clarify where ICT fits into the wider role of the organisation.

Regular question and answer sessions at team meetings can help share ICT knowledge, as well as the workload. Use them to compile notes for volunteer and staff induction, listing common questions and answers about ICT.

The ICT Hub Suppliers Directory at www.directory.icthub.org.uk lists ICT companies that have worked with charity and voluntary sector clients; otherwise, ask your local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) or other networks for recommendations.

Selecting an ICT support company

If you have time, try to get three companies to pitch for the work – you'll learn a lot about what's available even if none is suitable. Give them a call and explain what you think you need; ask about a specific problem and see how they react. Do they seem professional in their approach? Are they patient if you get stuck on technical details? Do they understand the constraints on your budget or have experience of working with VCOs?

If they're interested, ask them to visit so they can see what they'll be dealing with and check any technical details. Make sure they meet any other team members involved in the decision, especially if they're likely to be contacting them.

When they submit a quote see how accurately it reflects your needs and check any conditions they suggest. Make sure you understand their charges and do some calculations based on average use over a year to see how each compares. Remember that cheapest may not be best. Think about who you feel will be best for your organisation and remember you may be able to haggle over certain costs.

Always ask for references and check them out, ideally by contacting organisations of a similar size or type to yours.

Once you choose your contractor it is best to have a maintenance contract or service-level agreement, which they should be able to supply. If the contractor is to have access to your data, directly or remotely, then you could include a confidentiality agreement to protect yourselves. Try to find someone else to check the contract before signing it, and make sure you keep a copy.

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The ICT Hub Suppliers Directory provides lists of people in your local area with experience of working with not-for-profit organisations, including community-based services as well as private companies. It is available through the ICT Hub website at **www.directory.icthub.org.uk**

Getting technical support over the internet

The widespread take-up of broadband has made it a lot easier for ICT support to be provided remotely. This means that someone can use the Internet to connect to your computer and use it as if they were sitting at your desk. The person providing the support doesn't need a permanent connection to your network; they usually set up a temporary connection which is closed once you've logged off.

Seeing the mouse move around the screen on its own can be slightly unnerving at first but this method allows many problems to be solved more quickly, and therefore more cheaply. Keeping costs down in this way is one way in which smaller organisations can afford the level of support more commonly enjoyed by larger organisations.

Working with an ICT support company

Don't just hand over responsibility to the contractors: make sure you manage the arrangement and know whether it is delivering what you need.

Have one person in your team who is the main contact with the support company and agree a procedure so that staff and volunteers know what to do when they have a problem. Do they contact the responsible staff member or call the support company direct? You can be flexible, but agreeing on a single system makes it easier to manage.

Your contractor should keep records of their time spent on each job and have a system so that you can sign off to say that a problem is fixed. They may also offer you a way of logging problems through a website and tracking the solutions. If not, ask your team to keep a log of problems as they arise:

- date and time they called the support company;
- the problem they reported;
- what was done to resolve the problem – who did what and how long it took;
- any further comments, especially whether the problem happened again.

A log helps identify common problems and helps you plan for future support arrangements. It can also help identify solutions before calling for support, so money can be saved and knowledge shared within the team.

The contract with the support company may identify actions you need to take to prevent problems, especially if you're trying to keep costs to a minimum. This could include:

- making sure your anti-virus and other security software is up to date;
- keeping back-ups;
- agreements about acceptable use, such as preventing staff from downloading their own software (see Chapter 4 on acceptable use policies);
- keeping your inventory up to date.

Even when things are going well, make sure you have regular reviews with the contractor. A quarterly meeting or phone call with the contractor will help identify issues and possible solutions. Having a regular slot in team meetings to discuss ICT support will mean you can include feedback from staff and volunteers.

Local community sector ICT support services

There is a growing number of community-based providers of ICT support, combining technical knowledge and professional ICT services with an understanding of the sector's needs. Some are social enterprises, which charge for services but use any profits for community benefit. They may have a sliding scale of charges for businesses, public and community organisations, or a range of specialist services, training and other support at affordable rates.

Some community-based ICT support workers may be housed in a CVS or other infrastructure organisation, and may be grant-funded to subsidise services for specific people, networks or organisations in the local community. Some will provide a certain level of free advice and offer signposts to other services and support, but may charge for ICT support services.

Your primary concern when looking for ICT support is the quality of the service you will get and its cost. If you have a range of choices you may find that a community-sector service offers the best combination of quality, familiarity with the sector and reasonable pricing. It is also good if you know that you share their values and are supporting a community-owned resource. Most will be listed at **www.icthub.org.uk/suppliers_directory**

Circuit riders/ICT development workers

A new but increasingly popular type of support is offered by a 'circuit rider' or an ICT development worker. They are typically a mobile worker providing ICT support and development to a caseload of small VCOs. Part-trainer, part-management consultant, part-computer expert, they collaborate with other circuit riders to help the organisations they support and have the values of the sector at heart.

Like other voluntary sector development workers, circuit riders have an ongoing involvement with the organisations with which they work: they don't just visit an organisation when there's a problem but try to encourage its long-term development. They generally work with small organisations that cannot afford their own ICT staff and have a support network of individuals from other organisations, including other voluntary sector development workers, who they collaborate with or refer on to.

The term 'circuit rider' originated in the USA in the late 1700s, referring to someone who travelled around a sparsely populated area dispensing law, medicine or religion. In the early 1990s it was adopted by ICT workers working with a range of not-for-profit organisations in a particular area and has now been taken up in the UK as an umbrella term for ICT professionals who work mainly with VCOs.

Technology is a fast-moving field and no one person can keep up to date with everything. Circuit riders use their support networks to share ideas, suggestions and recommendations between each other. This enables them to learn from the experience of different organisations as well as giving them a collective voice among stakeholders such as funders, policy-makers, suppliers and voluntary sector networks.

Depending upon their specialism and the needs of the organisation they are working with, a circuit rider might:

- repair and fix hardware
- install and configure software
- train and support staff
- manage existing ICT resources more effectively
- advise project managers on ICT development and implementation
- help draw up an ICT strategy.

The benefits that circuit riders bring include:

- They understand and share the ethos of the sector and are committed to seeing it thrive and grow.
- They can offer independent advice about ICT suppliers and companies.
- They have a network of individuals from other organisations, including other voluntary sector development workers, who they can collaborate with or refer on to.
- They share the voluntary sector's commitment to equal opportunities and diversity; in particular they are aware of accessibility issues and the need to make sure that any technology work they implement is as accessible as possible to all staff and clients.

For more information go to:
www.icthub.org.uk/circuitriders
www.ukriders.info – includes a map of circuit riders in the UK.

Think you might be a circuit rider?

Providing ICT support the voluntary sector can be a lonely and unappreciated task. If you think you're already doing circuit rider work, then the ICT Hub is keen to support you.

- Subscribe to the UK Riders email list to get news, support, ideas, recommendations and peer support;.
- Attend a regional meeting or annual conference.
- Put yourself on the circuit rider map so that other circuit riders and potential clients can find you.
- Find out more at www.icthub.org.uk

In-house ICT support staff

Once your staff numbers more than 10 or 15 it may be time to think about having your own in-house ICT worker. At this point you could have at least 10 to 15 computers, set up in a network, with shared printers and Internet connections.

Assuming you already have a budget for regular ICT support, it should be fairly easy to look at your annual spend and see whether it makes sense financially to appoint someone. Don't just include the capital you spend on buying equipment, look at what you're paying for support, training and advice.

A part-time position is the most likely starting point, or you could look at sharing a worker with another organisation, perhaps based in the same building or with an existing partner.

Having in-house ICT expertise means more than just having someone on call to fix problems. It can ensure much greater knowledge of your needs, based on day-to-day contact with staff and volunteers, and a better understanding of the direction the organisation is taking and how ICT can support it.

You could get more from your current systems as well as making more informed decisions about next steps. You may even ask the ICT person to help with fundraising to cover the cost of new systems.

You may still need specialist advice from external suppliers but your worker should quickly get up to speed on the system you have, and they will have access to various support networks – such as the UK Riders email list for circuit riders – to keep their knowledge up to date.

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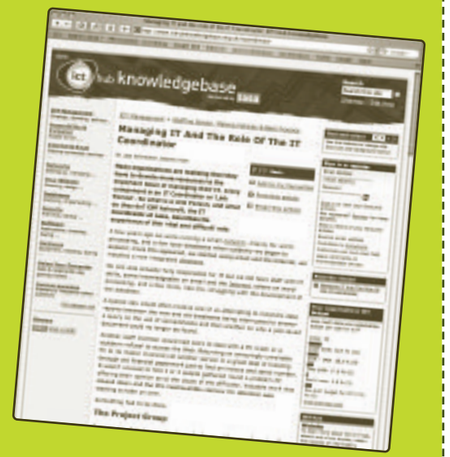
If you're thinking about having an in-house ICT worker the ICT Hub Knowledgebase has articles about the role of an in-house ICT co-ordinator and a suggested job description for an ICT administrator.
www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/itadminjobdescription



Working with ICT consultants

Consultants can help run projects, provide expert insight or help with development activities to enhance your mainstream work. They may help you with your ICT strategy, advise on database development or prepare a strategy for online fundraising. They may work on a chargeable basis, sometimes at a charitable rate, or they could be available at no charge through volunteer schemes.

Finding a consultant you will have a good working relationship with is crucial. Ask in your networks about who is available, what they cost and whether they were useful. There are ICT support companies and independent consultants in most local areas and a local circuit rider or community ICT support company may offer consultancy services.

An interview is the best way to find out whether the consultant is someone you want to work with. Prepare a briefing document and ask for a response:

- Does the consultant's technical experience match your needs?
- Does the consultant understand how VCOs work?
- Do they explain things in a way you can understand?
- Are they trying to push one specific product?
- How busy are they? Do they have enough time for your project?
- Can they provide an outline plan of proposed work?
- What fee structure do they use? Can you afford it?

Technical experts may miss important organisational issues, or if they don't know about the voluntary and community sector they may not understand the constraints on your resources. Make sure that the expertise on offer matches your needs.

Always take up references. Ask organisations that have used a particular consultant what specific benefit can be attributed to their work and whether it was worth paying for.

Before agreeing to start the project ask for a work plan as part of the final contract. This is a crucial time for checking what you'll get for your money and sets the tone for your work together. Don't just give it a quick glance and assume it all makes sense. If it's full of jargon ask for an explanation (and think again about your decision). Check that timescales are realistic and try to get at least one other person to give it a reality check.

Once the work is under way you need the consultant to report regularly and you must raise problems when they arise, so that plans can be adapted. Don't be afraid of changing a plan, but don't let it drift, and always make sure that you are clear about costs.

Managing a consultant is about making sure you're always clear about progress. They must report regularly and you must raise problems when they arise, so that plans can be adapted accordingly.

Case Study: Better communications and less administration

Down's Syndrome Association

The Down's Syndrome Association has been helping people with Down's syndrome to live full and rewarding lives for the past 35 years. It has over 20,000 members, a national office in Middlesex, offices in Northern Ireland and Wales and a regional development team.

Despite this geographic spread the organisation has only 38 staff – many of them part-time – and a network of about 100 regional volunteer-led support groups. This team relies on email to communicate, and enquiries from the public have increased recently thanks to an Eastenders storyline featuring a Down's Syndrome baby.

IT Manager Stuart Honeysett has managed the development of a new email system to meet these communication challenges.

"I have a technical background more than strategy, so we brought in a consultancy company to help. They suggested a hosted solution to reduce in-house IT administration, which we saw as a key benefit. We compared quotes from several suppliers and chose a solution that gives all the features we need:

Shared calendars – much better than our previous inadequate website calendar;

Up-to-date software – rather than our messy old systems;

Webmail – email access via a web page means people on the road can keep in touch;

Corporate identity – without remote access our remote workers would end up using Hotmail or Yahoo, which doesn't look great.

"Everything we did came out of an initial ICT strategy review. People were asked how they do their jobs on a day-to-day basis – without any IT slant. I then worked with the consultants to look for ways in which ICT could help people work better and identified key projects to help the organisation move forward.

"I would highly recommend that any organisation looking to upgrade or sort out current systems takes the time to do an overall ICT strategy, with the help of consultants or knowledgeable volunteers to create a framework for all future work."

Down's Syndrome Association
www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

weblink

The ICT Hub Suppliers Directory provides lists of people in your local area with experience of working with not-for-profit organisations, including community-based services as well as private companies. It is available through the ICT Hub website at **www.directory.icthub.org.uk**

PC self-defence: keeping your PCs safe and data secure

Unfortunately, most computer systems suffer problems from time to time, whether through hardware or software failure, viruses and other nasty infections. This usually causes an inconvenience rather than a catastrophe, but it can be a long and tortuous path back to full operations, costing time and money.

Prevention is better than cure
It is useful for all staff and volunteers to know how to prevent problems by learning about viruses and other malicious software.

Risk assessment
Assess the impact that problems with technology would have on your work and do what you can to manage those risks.

What is a virus?

Malware (MALicious softWARE) is the current catch-all term covering a range of different software which you need to defend yourself against, including computer viruses, worms, Trojan horses, spyware, adware, rootkits and other malicious and unwanted software.

The name given may relate to how the infection is spread, or how it behaves once activated. Many of these terms are used interchangeably and the difference between a worm and a virus is more or less irrelevant to the person under attack.

You could be plagued by irritating pop-up adverts or spam email, or be downloading files hidden inside something seemingly innocent, known as Trojan horses. These could be tracking your surfing behaviour to create a marketing profile that will be sold to advertising companies, or stealing the passwords to your bank account.

Many virus-writers want recognition for inventing clever ways of causing problems, or take pleasure from causing as much harm or panic as possible. Others are in it for the money. They may try to steal your identity to get access to your bank account, run auto-diallers to connect you to £1.50-a-minute X-rated lines, or set up fake banking websites trying to steal account details.

Even if you can't see anything going wrong, you may be infected, so it pays to play safe.

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Sites such as The Register keep tabs on the big stories about viruses and other malware. They are generally designed for a techie audience, rather than the average user, but can be useful for checking something suspicious that's just landed in your in-tray. **www.register.co.uk**

Ten tips to protect yourself

Please note: while some of the detailed information given here is for computers using Windows, much of it is also relevant to users of Apple Mac or Linux-based computers.

1. Back-up, back-up, back-up!

- If you lose a week's work you've done on a funding bid you will be very, very pleased if you have a recent copy and don't need to start again from scratch.
- Having a back-up means keeping a copy of important files separately from your computer so that if your computer dies or becomes infected you have a copy you can use.
- A secure back-up policy is vital, otherwise you risk being hit by problems that could bring your work to a standstill for several days. It's not just viruses but computer failure, theft or even fire in an office, so make sure your policy includes keeping data and inventory details off-site.
- Find more detail about backing up in Chapter 4 on policies and procedures.

Backing up

It often takes a change in your work pattern to start making regular back-ups, but one experience of losing your data will be more than enough to persuade you to do it. Even better, do it before things go wrong.

Once you get used to a way of keeping reliable back-up copies you will find it simple to do – and if anything does happen you will not have lost everything.

Double trouble

If you already have anti-virus software on your computer you should NOT install a new programme before you uninstall the old one. Rather than doubling your protection, the one is very likely to treat the other as hostile and start fighting.

2. Install anti-virus software and keep it up to date

- It is the job of your anti-virus software to keep track of the latest security problems and shield you from their effects. It should detect known viruses on your computer and eliminate them. In some cases it will also stop viruses getting on to your machine.
- There are many well respected anti-virus software packages available, such as Norton, AVG, MacAfee and Clamwin. Some are free, some you need to pay for, and they all have slightly different strengths and weaknesses. Look at reviews and ask for up-to-date expert advice from people with ICT knowledge.
- Many charities use AVG, which comes free for home use and at a 50 per cent discount for charity use – download it from **http://free.grisoft.com/freeweb.php/doc/2/**

Clamwin is a free virus killer which can be used at home or in the office free of charge. Download it from: http://sourceforge.net/projects/clamwin

3. Keep your system software up to date

- If your computer is connected to the Internet and your Windows system software is not updated regularly it will become infected. That is a certainty. Anti-virus software will not prevent this, so you must make sure you keep everything up to date.
- If you have Windows XP and a broadband connection you can check whether you need updates by using the Windows Update link in the Start Menu. Click on **Start > Windows Update**. You will be connected to the Microsoft site and can follow the on-screen instructions.
- Once you've carried out an update it is possible to set the computer to check for updates regularly. Click on **Start > Settings > Control Panel > Automatic Updates** and set it to check at a time when you know the computer is on, or use the option to automatically download updates and tell you when they need installing.
- This should also apply to versions of Windows back to Windows 2000.
- Apple Macs have a similar system for updating software, often to address security issues. Click on the blue Apple in the top left corner, select **Software Update** and download and install any files it suggests are needed. You can set how frequently it checks for updates by clicking on the blue Apple in the top left of the screen, opening **System Preferences** and clicking on **Software Update**. This will present options for when to check for new software.

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If you use Windows XP with a broadband connection, visit the Windows Update website to check whether your software is up to date. Having examined your hard disk it will identify what you need to update, including Windows and any other Microsoft programs you have installed. A few clicks later it will be downloading the files and installing updates. After a restart it will have completed the updates. Access this from the **Start menu > Windows Update**.

4. Install Spybot and Ad-Aware

- You can tackle almost all malware by installing specialist software on your computer, much of which is free and relatively easy to install and keep up to date.
- For example, a piece of software called Spybot – Search & Destroy can detect and remove malware of different kinds from your computer. An alternative is Ad-Aware, that provides advanced protection from known data-mining, aggressive advertising, and other forms of malware.
- Find Spybot at www.safer-networking.org/en/spybotsd and Ad-Aware at www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware
- Alternatives to Spybot include Windows Defender, which is part of Windows Vista and can be used on Windows XP, and AVG Anti Spyware, which is part of the AVG suite of programmes. Both are free, although AVG Anti Spyware goes into a limited mode after the trial period expires. Makers of popular anti-virus software such as MacAfee and Symantec also have anti-spyware products which you can pay for.
- Visit www.download.com to get either of these free programs, or any of the alternatives. Search for the software and then follow instructions to download it and install in your computer.

NOTE: Always back-up your data before installing anything new; these sites are safe but it is a good policy to adopt.

For more on security issues see the Knowledgebase article 'Safe and sound – keeping your computers and data secure', available on www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk

5. Block pop-ups when surfing the Internet

- When using a browser such as Internet Explorer to access the Internet you may notice that lots of small windows 'pop up' over the page you're visiting – containing anything from promotional material to obscene material. These may be distracting, confusing or offensive, but if you click on them they can also download hidden malware such as viruses and spyware.
- Pop-up blockers block these extra browser windows and the latest version of most browsers now contain one, including Microsoft Internet Explorer, Apple's Safari and Firefox. Google also offers a reliable pop-up blocker that is easy to install and use. It adds a toolbar to the top of your browser window and comes with access to other Google tools such as a newsreader.

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The Google toolbar runs on a Mac, PC or Linux in a variety of web browsers. It includes lots of useful features, including a pop-up blocker, and can be downloaded free of charge from **http://toolbar.google.com**

6. Keep a clean PC, remove temp files and defragment your hard drive

- A tidy computer is a happy computer. All computers collect lots of unwanted files or parts of files over time that slow the PC down and are of no use. A hard disk that has become fragmented is very slow to access and can cause the computer to crash or refuse to boot. Windows computers and Apple Macs include a number of tools that allow you to keep things tidy. On a Windows computer:
- **Disk Cleanup**: this removes temp files that have been left after using the Internet and cutting and pasting, etc. To find Disk Cleanup use **Start Menu > Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Cleanup** and follow instructions.

Disk Defragmenter: this reorganises the way your hard drive stores files so that they are quicker to find. To find Disk Defragmenter use **Start Menu > Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Defragmenter** and follow instructions.

Both systems run themselves. Allow some time to complete the updates, say overnight or during a lunchtime (you do not need to watch them do it).

On an Apple Mac:

Look in the **Applications Folder** for a folder called **Utilities**, which contains a programme called **Disk Utility**. Opening this will give you a list of hard disks – click on your hard disk, then the **First Aid** option and tell it to **Repair Disk Permissions**, which gives the disk a spring clean.

- Be aware that any defragmenting process requires a certain amount of free hard disk space before it will work, so you may need to delete or archive files and folders onto a hard disk or USB stick before running the defragmentation tools.

Help! My computer is running slow

These steps should help speed up the computer, or help determine why the computer is running slowly.

Not enough hard disk space
All computers need a certain amount of free space on the hard disk to operate properly, typically a minimum of 200MB but ideally at least 500MB. Windows users can check this by opening the My Computer folder from the desktop. Click on the main Hard Drive Disk (probably called C: Drive) and its Details will appear next to it. Mac users can open on the Hard Drive image from their desktop and details will appear in the bottom of the window.

Your computer will usually warn you when you are close to being full, but performance can be affected before this happens.

If it is too full then remove files and folders that aren't in use. Either delete them completely or archive them by copying them to an external hard drive or a USB stick, CD or DVD

Fragmentation
Over time the computer files stored on the hard drive may become mixed up, or fragmented. Use built in software to defragment the Hard Disk, which gives it a spring clean. See step 6 of Self Defence tips for more details.

Too many programmes running
Windows users can press the Control, Alt and Delete keys at the same time to pull up a window showing a variety of system information. The Applications Tab shows everything currently running and you can close any you don't need from that window. You can also click on the Processes tab to see how much of the computer processor is being used. Anything over 80% will be a sign of problems, indicating the need to close programmes, and possibly mean you will need to ask for help cleaning up the computer.

Not enough RAM
Many computers do not have enough RAM memory – this is the memory that the computer uses to run the programmes, as opposed to the hard disk which stores files and programmes. In Windows XP you can see how much RAM you have by opening the System control panel. Click on Start menu then Settings then Control Panel. On a Mac click on the Apple logo in the top left corner, then About this Mac. A minimum for most modern operating systems is 256MB, although it is best to have at least 500MB available. If you think RAM is a problem you will probably need more expert help to replace what you have.

More help
If none of the above helps you may well need expert advice. Possible problems can include broken or dirty fans causing overheating, failure of specific components, or fundamental software problems that need specialist programs to resolve. You can also try searching on the internet for 'my computer is running slow'.

7. Be very careful about which free software you download

- The Internet is full of games, videos, music and other software; any of it can contain malware. The safest option is to make it a policy that computer users must not install software without consent. This should include screensavers, as these are one of the most common sources of infection, although your green computing policy should have banned them anyway.

8. Make sure your firewall is doing its job

- A firewall creates a security barrier between your computer and the Internet, using a set of rules to decide which files to let though from one side to the other – in either direction. In larger networks it can be a separate piece of hardware, although current versions of Windows and Mac OSX already have firewall software installed.
- The average computer user should rarely, if ever, have to do anything with a firewall. If it's working you'll be surfing the Internet as usual, unaware of the protection it is offering. When it goes wrong you'll find certain legitimate sites blocked, or applications and viruses working their way in through gaps in your set-up.
- This is an area where it is definitely best to call in someone who knows what they're doing, whether a volunteer or a paid-for ICT support person. It is possible to adjust firewall settings using the control panel or system preferences, but it is also possible to leave yourself more vulnerable rather than safer.

9. Don't panic – get some help

- Once you start using a broadband Internet connection the chances of problems multiply incrementally, but it isn't a reason to avoid it. If your anti-virus software finds a virus it will usually deal with it. If your pop-up blocker keeps nagging you about the number that it has found, it's doing its job well.
- It is possible to set up a completely secure network and maintain it yourself, but this is a time-consuming task and can still leave you vulnerable if you're just a well-informed amateur. For the best protection try to budget for regular maintenance, including software updates and anti-virus licences, and someone to install everything and look after it. Make keeping you safe their problem rather than yours.

10. Educate staff, volunteers and trustees about the risks

- Take this issue seriously and include it in induction and regular team meetings or bulletins. Make sure everyone knows about basic rules to keep your computers safe, such as not opening email attachments unless they are expected. If necessary, phone the sender to confirm that they really did send you the message and the attachment. Spammers can make it appear that someone else has sent a message and viruses can infect someone's mailbox and send out malicious messages using their address.
- You could monitor incidents with suspected viruses and other malware, as part of your overall logging of faults and problems with your systems. This may highlight the fact that one person in particular is having problems with protecting their computer, which may indicate possible software or training issues.

Managing ICT risks

You may already consider risks in terms of financial management, health and safety or employment issues, but many risks relate to your ICT systems. Even minor problems can affect word processing documents, accounts, budgets, reports and confidential personnel records. Even minor problems can stop an organisation in its tracks.

As well as taking action to prevent security problems it is wise to assess the risks of failure to your ICT systems and prepare plans to deal with it, if or when it happens.

Technology that doesn't work
Hardware or software could fail to meet the organisation's operational needs. A newly implemented network, database or finance package may not be up to the job, or equipment proves to be unreliable.

You can manage these risks through good purchasing processes: drawing up appropriate requirements, carefully assessing suppliers, and properly managing implementation processes. You should also ensure that you have adequate and appropriate technical support for your technology. A volunteer may be fine for a small community group, but a team of ten people using a small network of computers may need help on a range of issues – no good if your volunteer is only available in the evenings.

Secure your assets
Think about the physical security of equipment and protecting the data held on computer systems. Risks include computer system failures such as a network going down, or loss of data owing to a flood or fire damage. Computers and hard drives can be stolen. Or someone could get unauthorised access to information, either via the Internet or equipment left unsupervised in an office.

Make sure you have an inventory of all your ICT equipment and keep it off-site in case of a fire. Get adequate insurance cover and secure your PCs and laptops physically. Use security marking and carefully manage who has permission to access documents or directories on a computer network.

Policies and procedures
Look at your current policies and procedures and make sure they include protective measures to prevent problems and protect personal and/or confidential information on your organisation's computers.

Remember that having the procedures and policies in place is not enough. They need to be managed by a named individual, enforced, and regularly reviewed with the whole team.

Dealing with risks

Risk assessment helps you think about how to deal with problems before they happen:

- **Identify the risk**
  What can go wrong? e.g. accounting software crashes
- **Evaluate the risk**
  How likely it is to occur? e.g. high, medium or low likelihood
- **Analyse the risk**
  What would be the consequences? e.g. unable to manage finances
- **Manage the risk**
  What systems, policies and procedures will minimise the effects of the risk should it occur? e.g. daily back-ups

Stay safe and legal

Consider the relevant laws and regulations that apply to you and the risks that could arise from your use of technology, in the form of penalties and/or prosecution for lack of compliance. For example:

- Data Protection Act: e.g. failing to adequately protect personally identifiable information, or inappropriate marketing using personal information
- Charities Law and Companies Act: e.g. financial reporting requirements not met because of computer systems going down and failure to do adequate back-ups of financial information
- Disability Discrimination Act: e.g. failure to provide suitable computer equipment to disabled employees, failure to make reasonable adjustments to your website to make it accessible
- Health and Safety Act: e.g. failure to provide suitable display screen equipment or working arrangements that allow computer users to take adequate breaks
- Software licensing and copyright regulations: e.g. using unlicensed software, employees downloading music on to work machines, using copyrighted material on your organisation's website without the permission of the copyright owner, etc
- Breach of libel laws: e.g. inappropriate use of Internet/email by staff such as libellous or defamatory material sent by email or posted to Internet sites

More information can be found in Section 4 on policies and procedures.

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Visit Microsoft's Business site to help keep track of security issues:
www.bcentral.co.uk/business-technology/it-security/

Training: get the ICT skills you need

The section on ICT planning showed how a basic ICT skills analysis can help identify gaps in the skills of your team.

The next stage is to prepare a plan for acquiring those skills, and keeping them up to date.

Getting the most from ICT means being confident about using your skills, as that confidence forms the basis for learning new skills. You may not know much about technical issues, but if you're a regular user of a word processor, spreadsheet or the Internet then you have a lot of knowledge and skills to build on, and you just need the confidence to use them.

Confidence is bred by familiarity and confirmation that you know what you're doing. Formal training courses provide an excellent bedrock for this, but informal learning is also a key part of your training plan: look for opportunities to share skills, swap tips and help solve problems as they arise.

Who provides training?

Education for adults varies across the country and ICT training can be provided by a variety of organisations:

- **Local community organisations**
  Your local CVS or other infrastructure bodies may provide an ongoing programme of training specially for staff and volunteers from the local voluntary and community sector. Even if they don't, they may well have a list of local providers that they have used or know that others have recommended.
- **National and regional organisations**
  The ICT Hub, NCVO, Directory of Social Change, AbilityNet and a wide range of other not-for-profit national and regional bodies provide a range of specialist ICT-related courses.
- **UK Online Centres**
  The Government's UK online campaign in the late 90s promoted wider access to ICT and there is now a large network of UK Online Centres across the country, many based in community centres, libraries or other community-friendly settings. They offer structured ICT training courses, such as those leading to European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) or Information Technology Qualification (ITQ) and are often a good first port of call when seeking local training and support.

  Many UK Online centres are working with net:gain to deliver workshops in how to prepare an ICT strategy, as well as associated training.
- **Further education and adult education colleges**
  Most large towns and cities will have a range of ICT courses available through further and adult education providers. Some of these colleges may even be able to offer access to ICT training through the local university. They probably produce a prospectus and offer a combination of daytime, evening, part-time and full-time courses.
- **Commercial providers**
  ICT training is a big business and there are many providers of classroom and online learning that target the voluntary and community sector. One example is Happy Computing, which has built links with organisations such as AbilityNet.

More details of training providers can be found on the ICT Hub Suppliers Directory:
www.directory.icthub.org.uk

What skills do I need?

General ICT skills
Almost every working day now starts by pressing the power button on our PC. Whether we're checking emails, writing letters or searching websites we often take for granted some of the general ICT skills we're using, which include:

- knowing what a computer is for and what it can do
- handling a mouse, using the keyboard and screen
- literacy, numeracy and language skills
- how to set up accessibility and usability options
- file management: working with documents and folders
- working on a network
- printing documents
- DIY troubleshooting
- routine maintenance

Specialist skills
The computer is a tool and we need to learn how to make it do what we want. We all do different jobs and develop a unique set of skills to deliver them. The exact requirements will depend on the sorts of tasks we're doing, who we're doing it with and how frequently we're likely to be doing it. For example:

- desktop publishing
- budgets and spreadsheets
- producing reports
- web design
- working with images
- accessible and assistive technologies
- ICT training
- computer maintenance

ICT strategy and planning
It is increasingly important that ICT is seen as an issue to be addressed by managers of voluntary and community organisations, as well as by technical staff. Building an ICT plan or strategy needs some degree of confidence about ICT, but not detailed technical skills. It is more about ability to lead the planning process, focus on key issues for the organisation and identify ICT solutions to address those issues.

Funded by ChangeUp and Capacity Builders, net:gain is a programme of professional training and support for chief officers and other managers in the sector, to enable them to harness ICT within their organisation. This encompasses or touches upon a variety of topics which are relevant to ICT but can also be addressed through other training programmes on, for example:

- strategic planning, setting a vision, identifying clear goals
- project management, implementation and delivery
- managing people and resources

Formal training

Training and learning comes in all shapes and sizes, to reflect the variety of styles preferred by learners. Much still takes place in a classroom environment, with groups of people following a similar series of steps to learn more or less the same thing, using varying degrees of formality.

Short courses
There is a very wide range of training available in short sessions lasting from a few hours to a couple of days. These are provided by a range of local education establishments, community organisations and businesses, at varying prices and with different quality assurance and accreditation schemes. As well as local options many national bodies, such as NCVO and Directory of Social Change, provide sector-specific training programmes that include ICT training.

Short courses are ideal for bite-sized options that focus on specific tasks and key skills such as:

- budgeting using Excel
- how to do a Mail Merge
- Web accessibility.

Talk to local training providers and other organisations to find out what's available in your area.

Longer courses
As with any education for adults, the exact range of courses available depends on your local education providers, including adult education colleges, community organisations and private training providers. However, in most areas there is likely to be access to longer courses, such as web design or computer technicians' courses.

Longer courses usually allow for more time to develop and practise specialist skills, building a portfolio of projects and becoming more proficient. They may be able to link into existing work responsibilities, so that course work can form the basis of work needed in the workplace. The courses may range from a term to a whole year, and all should provide certification on completion, such as the ECDL or an NVQ. They may be available in the daytime or evening and there may be a reduction in fees for volunteers or others who are not working.

Informal learning

We all acquire skills and knowledge in different ways and many people describe their ICT skills as self-taught. The classroom may be important for some of the more complex tasks we need to get to grips with, but most of us rely on informal learning to fill gaps as and when we need help.

Help from people around you
The first place to turn is the person sitting next to you, the people in your team, your network of volunteers, friends, family or colleagues from other organisations. You're looking for someone who has been in the same situation before and knows how to get out of it, or knows where to go for help.

This can be helpful when you're using standard packages, such as a word processor or spreadsheet, which are familiar to lots of different people. People in a busy office will be used to hearing regular questions such as "How do I save this file on the server?" or "How do I insert a new table?"

Remember that there is a limit to how much time colleagues, friends or family can offer and that it is important to find other solutions before reaching that limit. At this point you may require more structured training options or one-to-one support from a trained trainer.

At some point the questions being asked could be formalised into a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) which could be included in induction materials and reviewed every six months or so.

It is also helpful to use team meetings to review recent problems, raise general issues and seek solutions. Or you could arrange structured team-based training, to tackle problems that relate to the way things are managed, or address responsibilities that aren't clear.

European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)

A highly popular option for computer training is the ECDL, which is taught by a wide range of providers, including online training options. Providers charge varying amounts for the teaching, materials and exam fees. Courses leading to the ECDL represent a general introduction to a wide range of ICT concepts and skills, delivered in seven modules:

- Basic Concepts of Information Technology (IT)
- Using the Computer and Managing Files
- Word Processing
- Spreadsheets
- Databases
- Presentations
- The Internet, Web Searching and E-mail

Email lists and online forums
Access to ad hoc advice and support can be enhanced greatly by ICT, especially through the use of email discussion lists, bulletin boards and other online forums.

Email provides a very convenient way of asking for help, whether directly to another individual or to a wider network of people who have signed up to an email list or other kind of online forum. An email discussion list can be focused on specific technology issues, such as digital video, or be a general support network for people working in the same environment, such as VCANet, which links people working in local infrastructure bodies in the voluntary sector.

The first stage to using an email discussion list is to sign up as a member. There are many lists already set up, such as VCANet, which you could hear about from colleagues or contacts in your area. Some will be very local, others may be national or international in their scope.

The important feature of this kind of email forum is that it is a two-way discussion; it is not the same as having a long list of email addresses on your own computer and sending out a message to everyone you know. Everyone signed up to the list receives every message sent to the list, and everyone can see any replies posted back to the list. This means that knowledge quickly spreads beyond the people engaged in the conversation, and that others can contribute their own part of the discussion.

Some lists generate a lot of messages, especially those populated by people who use the Internet in their work. These people will probably be confident email users and could generate as many as 100 email messages a day on a discussion list.

Luckily, a discussion list shared by everyday computer users is not likely to have more than five to ten messages a day. You can choose whether or not to read these messages and dip in and out without having to contribute to the discussion. You can also sign up to a digest, that delivers all the messages from a given period in one message, making it easy to review them all in one go.

Examples of email lists

- **Charity Web Forum**
  Over 600 members, mainly staff and volunteers involved in building websites for not for profit organisations
  http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/charitywebforum/
- **UK Circuit Riders**
  Email-based network of over 360 people providing ICT support to the voluntary and community sector (more about circuit riders in Chapter 3). Mainly technical discussion but the members happily answer basic queries
  http://lists.lasa.org.uk/lists/info/ukriders

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National Association for Community and Voluntary Action [NACVA] runs an email discussion list for people working in CVS and other local infrastructure organisations. It is used to ask and answer questions on a variety of technical and legal questions, including ICT and could be useful for any voluntary and community organisation.
http://www.navca.org.uk/services/networking/networks/vcanet/

Books, guides and magazines

A book offers a convenient way of packaging information and knowledge, is highly portable and easily shared. There are many books on ICT topics, including:

- ***Dummies* guides, *Missing Manuals* and similar series**
  - These popular reference books cover specific software packages and provide an alternative to manuals published by the people producing the software.
  - You may find people willing to donate old copies when they upgrade their software.
- **Specialist titles**
  - NCVO, Directory of Social Change (DSC), London Advice Service Alliance (LASA) and other sector-specific organisations publish titles that tackle specialist areas.
  - One example is *Information Management for Voluntary and Community Organisations*, by Paul Ticher, which is published by DSC and provides a guide to the use of ICT in addressing information issues.
  - Another example is *The Accidental Techie: Supporting, Managing and Maximizing Your Nonprofit's Technology*. It covers a wide range of subjects from networks to email management and budgeting.
  - Find more information on the NCVO and DSC websites, through Google, or by looking on the bookshelf of your local CVS.
- **LASA guides**
  - LASA has produced a series of simple but very thorough guides covering a range of ICT-related topics: *Buying IT, Networks, The Internet, Data Protection, Project Management, Circuit Riding and Security*.
    Some cost £5, some are available for download. More information at
    http://www.lasa.org.uk/computanews/guides.shtml
  - Much of this information is also found on the excellent ICT Hub Knowledgebase.

Magazines and newsletters

- There are several computer titles aimed at beginners, of which *ComputerActive* magazine is perhaps the best-known example. It offers reviews and news and tutorials on a range of tasks, without ever getting too techie.
- More technical titles such as *PC World, PC News* and *Macworld* are aimed at the more technically capable computer user.
- The ICT Hub newsletter and *LASA Computanews* provide an excellent round-up of sector-specific news related to ICT. Subscribe for free to the ICT Hub newsletter through the ICT Hub website. *LASA Computanews* costs £20 a year.

Useful websites
The web is a great repository for help and advice, especially on ICT matters. Here are a few sector-specific resources, many of which also include links to email discussion lists, bulletin boards and other interactive forums.

- **ICT Hub website**
  - The ICT Hub website provides links to the ICT Hub Knowledgebase and the Supplier Directory, as well as offering news and information about the activities of the Hub and its partners: www.icthub.org.uk
- **ICT Hub Knowledgebase**
  - This is a key resource for the sector. It features hundreds of articles written specifically for staff and volunteers with little or no technical knowledge and covering the wide range of issues they typically face: www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk
- **Techsoup.org**
  - A US-based site that is like a mirror to the ICT Hub Knowledgebase, covering a similar range of topics with a similar focus on jargon-free advice and useful pointers to other online

resources: www.techsoup.org

- **Google, Ask or your favourite search engine**
  - Good answers depends on good questions. Be direct – "How do I draw graphs in Excel?" – or paste in error messages to find out what they mean.

How much does training cost?

Free training
Depending on where you are you may find free courses on offer through a local training organisation, possibly funded by the latest capacity-building programme such as Neighbourhood Renewal or ChangeUp.

Getting help from friends, colleagues and contacts is usually a two-way street: if you ask for help you're expected to offer something back when they need it.

Very few email discussions lists or community websites charge for their use and they are generally open to anyone to join.

Paying for training
Budgeting for training must recognise the need to invest in people as well as technology.

You could aim to spend a proportion of your budget on training. A commitment to spend, say, 3 per cent of your income demonstrates the value of training to your staff and volunteers. Or you could take a piecemeal approach and allocate funds on the basis of specific needs.

Costs will vary greatly, depending on what you want to learn, who's teaching it and how flexible you can be about timing. Few providers will charge less than £20 or £30 per head for a day's training, especially if it includes the use of a suite of computers so that everyone has hands-on use of a PC.

Working in small groups, for example having a maximum of six or seven people in the classroom, will generally be more expensive, although it's likely to mean a more personalised approach. Prices for one-day sessions start at about £100 a day, whether delivered by private or community-based training providers.

Longer courses, of 12 weeks or more, may be available at subsidised rates but usually cost upwards of £60, depending on the number and length of sessions

Books, magazines and other publications vary in cost. Books such as the Dummies guides typically retail at around £20–25 – less if you shop around.

4

Policies and procedures

4

Policies and procedures

Any organisation needs rules and procedures to help it manage its day-to-day activities, such as recruitment, equal opportunities or child protection. In many cases such policies are required by funders and other stakeholders before they will support an organisation.

The following provides a framework for common policies and procedures and guidelines to help VCOs think about their own situation:

- accessibility and ICT
- back-up policy and procedures
- acceptable use policy
- data protection policy
- health and safety policies.

Accessibility, ICT and you

Accessibility in this guide focuses on the use of assistive technologies and adjustments to hardware and software that make it easier for people with a range of abilities and disabilities to participate as staff, volunteers or clients.

All organisations are required by law to think about how they can make their services and workplaces accessible to people with disabilities. But accessibility in terms of ICT is about far more than legal requirements; it is a way of considering best practice for a wide range of users of computers, websites and associated technology. Whether it is for your staff, volunteers or clients, ICT can be made to work in ways that improve the quality of your organisation's work and extend what it can achieve.

This is not a one-size-fits-all sort of problem. Different needs require different solutions and not all solutions work for every person. Take time to work with people, to understand their needs and try different solutions.

Get the essential guides

The information in this guide is based on two guides produced for the ICT Hub by AbilityNet:

Easy Free and Quick Accessibility Pack
This explains why accessibility is vital to your work, clarifies your legal obligation, and tells you how easy it is to make simple practical improvements to your accessibility. A CD that accompanies the guide helps you put simple improvements into practice and has a wealth of case studies. Most of the ideas in this booklet are free or cost less than £100.

Web Accessibility Pack for Voluntary and Community Organisations
This booklet and CD is a practical introduction to web accessibility. It will give you the knowledge to make your site accessible at no or little additional cost. The pack explains what web accessibility is, the benefits and what the law says, as well as giving guidance for web managers/commissioners, editors, designers and developers.

Use these links above to download a copy of these guides:

http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/docs/ict_hub_accessguide.pdf

http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/docs/ict_hub_webguide.pdf

Or request a hard copy by visiting the Publications section of the ICT Hub website at **www.icthub.org.uk/publications** (subject to availability).

About AbilityNet

AbilityNet is a partner in the ICT Hub and a registered national charity with over 20 years' experience of helping people adapt and adjust their information and communications technology. The experience of its staff, and their understanding of the available technology, helps ensure that people of every age, health condition, disability or situation can find the right way to adapt or adjust their ICT to make it easier to use.

They always point out the low-cost and free solutions first and their advice is totally impartial. VCOs can tap into a huge bank of knowledge for whatever they need: staff training, advice and information, help with selecting equipment, web accessibility services or direct one-to-one assessment of need.

Why think about accessibility?

It's the law
The Disability Discrimination Act makes it illegal to discriminate against people with a disability. This means:

- not treating a disabled person less favourably for a reason related to their disability;
- not making reasonable adjustments to avoid placing a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with someone who is not disabled.

It makes sense for your organisation
With approximately 8.9 million disabled people in Britain, addressing accessibility issues can improve your chances of recruiting staff, volunteers, clients and supporters. At the same time, it makes your services more usable for everyone.

For example, an accessible website is one where the user's needs have been central to the design process, and that means that any unnecessary information has been removed and there is a sharper focus on the purpose and function of the site. The same principle will apply whenever you consider accessibility issues. A few simple changes to your computers, such as increasing menu sizes, can be popular with everyone, making the computer easier to use and increasing productivity.

Funders and partners ask for it
Most funders expect bids to explain how their funds will benefit everyone in the community. Being aware of ICT-related accessibility issues will therefore help create more effective proposals. Regular updates of your accessibility policy underpins and demonstrates a commitment to equal opportunities.

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The ICT Hub Knowledgebase website offers a range of articles about accessibility, including issues such as language and digital inclusion not covered in this guide. Click on the Accessibility and Inclusion link in the left hand menu at **www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk**

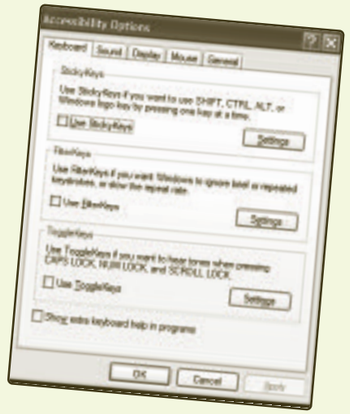
Do the right thing
Accessibility issues go to the heart of the values of the voluntary and community sector. Disabled and older people may be especially marginalised by the lack of access to ICT resources, and this is one of the areas where they can benefit from community action and voluntary services.

weblink

The AbilityNet website at **www.abilitynet.org.uk** provides the ideal starting point for all issues of ICT and accessibility. Further information can also be found on the ICT Hub website at **www.icthub.org.uk**

Built in accessibility options

PC users will find a host of accessibility options. Go to **Start > Control Panel > Accessibility Options** to see the choices. Mac users have similar choices in the System Preferences.



Having accessible ICT and thinking about how ICT can make all of your work more accessible demonstrates social responsibility.
It does not necessarily need difficult or expensive changes to be made, but it will reflect a shift in attitude that will bring benefits across your work.

Ten quick, easy and free ways to improve the accessibility of your computers

These are all simple adjustments that can be made to your computers and will cost nothing, many of them using Windows Accessibility Options or Apple's Universal Access settings. The AbilityNet website and Accessibility Guides provide more details on these suggestions, as well as a host of other easy ways of improving accessibility.

1. Change the combinations of background and text colour to improve readability for those who have visual impairment, or learning difficulties, or are simply getting older.
2. Increase the text size on menus.
3. Choose a more readable font for menus.
4. Use the Accessibility Options to tune the keyboard to ignore keys hit twice, slow down the repeat rate or ignore keys hit in error.
5. Change the mouse settings to slow down the cursor, decrease the double-click speed, make the pointer bigger, or work for a left-handed user.
6. Use the keyboard as a mouse.
7. Use the mouse as a keyboard.
8. Install a free text reader such as www.readplease.com
9. Use free magnification and screen-reader software.
10. Install free word prediction software, similar to the software used on mobile phones.

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My Web My Way, an Abilitynet free guide created for the BBC gives advice and information on how to adapt your PC, Mac and Linux computers to suit your needs.
www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility/

Common software and hardware adaptations for accessibility

Special equipment may be the best way to adapt a computer to meet the needs of different users, but not all adaptations will be relevant to every disabled user, so always start by reviewing the needs of each individual. Remember that they may have their own relevant knowledge and experience and have a preferred solution to their needs.

1. **Scanner and optical character recognition software**
   Scanners take a picture of a page of text, which Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software will then convert to text. This can then be read aloud by a text reader. Reasonably good-quality OCR software may well be bundled free with a scanner,

2. **Keyboard stickers**
   Adding high-visibility stickers to a keyboard is a cheap and effective way of making it easier to use for people with a visual impairment.

3. **Compact keyboards**
   Small keyboards are more convenient for wheelchair users and are often suited to one-handed users. The keypad is built into the main set of keys, making it narrower than a standard desktop option. The Cherry Compact Keyboard costs about £45 and is very sturdy.

4. **Mice**
   A standard mouse assumes a world full of people with the same-sized hands, but you can buy smaller and larger mice, choose the number of buttons it has and decide how they are programmed. Or you can plug two mice into one computer, so that one is always available for a left-handed person. Costs vary enormously, from £10 up to several hundred pounds for highly specialised pointers.

5. **A trackball**
   Trackballs are a sort of upside-down mouse and are great for people who find the movement of the mouse difficult to control. Moving the ball moves the cursor, while the base stays still. Buttons around the ball can be set for standard click functions or to trigger specific actions, such as opening a particular application. Trackballs are more expensive than a mouse but can make life much easier for lots of people.

6. **Speakers or headsets**
   Headphones combined with a microphone help when using speech recognition software. A decent headset can now cost as little as £10.

7. **Text readers**
   A piece of software reads what is on the screen, including options for the use of menus. Although there are free text readers available, it often pays to buy software with specific functions, such as being able to work in particular applications. Most will offer a free version to try before you buy.

8. **Voice recognition software**
   Voice recognition software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking is now commonplace and enhances the use of computers by people with a wide range of needs, from physical difficulties to dyslexia and visual impairment. Although it can be found for free, paying for voice recognition software brings additional features such as being able to read menus.

   It is worth remembering that setting up voice recognition software requires the software to learn a voice and recognise the commands. It may not be practical to expect someone to sit down and start commanding their PC without allowing time for some training.

9. **Wordbar**
   Wordbar helps speed up writing by presenting choices of words and phrases in a bar along the bottom of the screen. It's based around themes and topics and enables the user to select words to insert into a document without having to type the whole word.

Make your website accessible to visually impaired people

The world-wide web has made a wealth of new information available to people with serious sight problems. With the help of synthesised speech and Braille display technology, even completely blind people can use the Internet. However, inappropriate web design can render a site unreadable, so web designers must make their sites accessible.

To cater for everyone, websites should enable the individual to adjust the text and colour settings to suit their needs. Most people with sight problems have some useful vision and read online text in exactly the same way as fully sighted people: with their eyes. Some may require large text, others can only read smaller letters. Many need a highly contrasting colour scheme to make text readable, while some can only read yellow text on a black background.

In contrast, people with very little or no vision read web pages with the help of accessibility tools. Synthesised speech software reads the content of web pages aloud through a speaker, while Braille software outputs to a special display, so that the website can be read by touch.

People with vision impairments have many problems with inaccessible websites, but people with other impairments such as mobility, hearing, cognitive and learning disabilities can also have problems. Web designers and their clients need to think through these issues when designing their site.

You can explore the options with AbilityNet before you make your decision by talking to the Advice and Information Team on 0800 269545. They can make suggestions and help source the right solution for you. AbilityNet can also help if you require a more complex solution such as setting up a complete system with training and lifetime technical support.

There are international standards for accessibility, most of which can be checked through online services. Even so, asking people with accessibility needs to test the site at the design stage is the best way of checking whether it is up to scratch.

Free site checks

AbilityNet offers a site-checking service that takes account of accessibility issues.
Call the ICT Hub Helpdesk on 0800 652 4737, or call Abilitynet direct on 01926 312847 (minicom-accessible).

Back-up policy and procedures

Back-up needs to be appropriate for the way you work, and ideally you want a system that allows you to take the back-up data off-site for storage, in case your office is burgled or has a fire.

How to back-up

You could copy new files on to a floppy disk at the end of every day and take them home with you, although floppy disks are considered fairly unreliable and prone to breaking, which means you may need a back-up of your back-up.

If you have a CD writer you could burn your files on to a CD. Even better is using a rewritable CD, which you can use many times to keep the expense down.

If you do not have a CD writer then consider buying a USB key. They come in different data storage sizes and work like a reliable floppy disk. A 2Gb memory stick can cost as little as £11 and is a great way storing copies of a large number of folders and documents.

If you are lucky enough to work in an organisation that has a network and a network administrator, you may find that back-up is sorted out for you, so it is always worth asking and being clear about your role in this.

You may also think about using an online back-up service, which can use your broadband connection to automatically send valuable information off to another location on the net. This is still a relatively expensive option and probably of more use to larger organisations with bigger budgets. In the future, however, this is likely to become an increasingly common way to safeguard information.

What to back-up?

Backing up everything on your computers means that if your computer crashes you can go back to your last back-up and reinstall the operating system, your applications, each user's preferences, passwords, individual settings and the documents in the folders.

What back-up is built in?

Windows XP has a back-up utility which can be used in different ways to save the information on the disk to a choice of places.
Use the **Start Menu > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Back-up**

Back-up tools are not built into a Mac. You must either pay about £50 to get a .Mac account for the official Apple back-up software or use one of the cheap back-up programs available for about £20 – try **www.download.com** for current options. Back-up is built into the next version of Mac OSX, which was due out in 2007.

There are various Open Source back-up tools available and the version of Linux you are running – such as Ubuntu – will dictate your options.

Or you could back-up only the files that you have created, such as your database records, word processing and spreadsheet files, or your email. This can save time when backing up but it means that if you have a problem you may need to completely reinstall your operating system and applications from the CDs they came on.

When to back-up?

Several factors will influence how frequently you want to run a back-up:

- The type of back-up you're using: burning your files to a new CD every day will take too long to be practical but backing up over a network may be quick enough to be able to run every night.
- The amount of information you want to back-up: one or two people producing letters and updating spreadsheets can afford to run back-up once a week. A team of 30 will probably produce enough new information every day to make it worth backing up daily.
- Using an automated service: all back-up software should let you automate the backing-up process, so you decide when it will back up, what it will back up and where to. This reduces the administration, so you can do it more frequently.
- Costs: if you decide to pay for back-up services you usually pay according to the amount of data you back up, or how frequently.
- You may run a full system back-up less frequently than backing up the documents you're working on; for example, staff could copy their current work files to a USB stick at the end of every day and take them home.

Who is responsible for back-ups?

Whoever is responsible for the back-up policy must communicate with the rest of the team, making sure everyone knows their responsibilities and any procedures they must follow to prevent problems. Ideally they will have the ICT skills to support individual users when they have problems; this certainly helps when you need a rapid response. In large organisations this may be an in-house ICT support person, or an external company providing ICT support. Small organisations may rely on an 'accidental techie' or a volunteer, which makes it even more important that back-up policy is discussed at management level and that help is found to implement the best solution.

It is difficult to over-emphasise how important it is to back up properly – something that really only becomes clear when disaster strikes. Computers can break very easily, or you can lose information by deleting files by mistake. Backing up is the best way to protect yourself and the quickest way to get you up and running after a problem. Whatever solution works for you, make sure you have something in place, and make sure you use it!

Protect your back-ups

After you've backed up your important personal files and information, make sure it's safe:

- Make more than one copy and keep all back-ups away from your computer, preferably off-site. If you use a safety deposit box to protect valuable paper documents, consider keeping back-up CDs or DVDs there too. But be warned that a fire safe for paper documents won't save a CD or memory key from a fire – they will melt.
- Delete old files and use compression software so that information takes up less space and stays tidy.
- Protect your back-up files with a password, especially if backing up personal or sensitive information. Write down your password and keep it in a secure location, such as a safety deposit box, along with your other personal documents.
- Make sure any software you've purchased on CD, together with its product key, is in a safe, retrievable place. If your hard disk drive should ever fail, you'll need the disks to reinstall the software.

Data recovery

People often accidentally delete files or other information and then realise they need them. Whether you have a back-up or not you can use a data recovery program to 'undelete' files. Some are free, others you have to pay for. Some need to be installed before problems strike, others can be used after the event. Examples include r-undelete and Winundelete; have a look on www.download.com for more free or low-cost examples.

The key thing to remember with undeleting files is the need to act quickly, and for the best results it is always better to get expert help straight away. If you carry on using your computer it can start to write information over the top of deleted files, making it impossible to recover them, so if you have a problem stop working and get some help immediately.

Less common but equally disastrous is the failure of a hard drive. A sorry clunking sound from inside the computer usually heralds the death of a disk, making it impossible to access the information on it.

Depending on the problem, a specialist data service could expect to recover data from a dead disk in 80–90 per cent of cases, but it is a specialist service and you will usually pay according to the amount of data recovered – perhaps hundreds of pounds for a large hard drive. Ask for help from someone in the IT business locally; good data recovery services are usually well known.

Undeleting files and paying for large-scale data recovery is much less of a problem if you have a decent back-up policy in place.

ICT Hub Knowledgebase

ICT Hub Knowledgebase has several very good articles on back-up and data recovery, as well as links to other online resources. Take a look at: **www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/disasterpreparationrecovery**

Test your back-ups

Don't just assume your back-ups are working. Run a test case every now and then to make sure you can recover your work. You may have added new folders which aren't being picked up in the back-up routine, or you may be relying on a file that has been corrupted in the back-up process. Monthly checks are good; quarterly tests should be a minimum for even a small network of users.

Acceptable use policy

An acceptable use policy (AUP) describes the rights and responsibilities of anyone using resources, such as computers, the Internet, video cameras and so on. It explains the procedures they are expected to follow and makes clear what is considered acceptable behaviour when using it.

You may ask staff, volunteers, clients, trustees and partners to sign your AUP before they are allowed to use your equipment. It should certainly be part of your induction documentation and available on request. If you provide public access it should also be put on paper and posted in prominent places.

What is covered will be dictated by the nature of your equipment, the people using it and your views on what is acceptable. Some examples are:

Introduction
Who the AUP applies to, what it covers, how it is communicated to users.

Disciplinary procedure
What will happen if policy is not followed, how it fits with other disciplinary procedures.

General computer use
Health and safety issues, safekeeping of hardware, security, food and drink around PCs, attitude to personal use, installing software, copying software, reporting faults, response times expected.

File management
How to store documents on local and server drives, good housekeeping, limits on data stored, security issues, who has permission to access what, how long documents need to be kept for.

Use of email
Which software to use, expected work-related usage, house styles – e.g. html or text, monitoring by organisation, email etiquette expectations. Acceptable personal use, if any, use of personal web mail addresses, sending and receiving attachments, anti-social or unacceptable usage, e.g. passing on chain mail, jokes, links to websites, spam, animations, hoax virus warnings, etc.

How to avoid spam, use of out-of-office notifications, archiving messages, membership of mailing/discussion lists.

Signature files
Format and content, e.g. name, job title, organisation, address, email and web addresses, company and charity numbers.

Web and other online usage
Which staff have web access, expected work-related usage, use of site-filtering software or services, downloading files, large files, streaming audio, acceptable personal use, if any.

Offensive material
Define the expectations of the organisation as much as you can, refer to other policies, such as equal opportunities and disciplinary procedures, make it clear what the process is and who decides what is offensive.

Messaging/chat
Use of chat programmes like MSN within the organisation, acceptable personal usage, if any.

Purchasing procedures
Budget approval procedures, established sources, quotations required.

Online purchasing
Current use of online purchasing, care when purchasing online, procedure for using accounts or credit cards.

Security
Physical security of building, what is in the inventory, how to report changes and mark equipment, what is and isn't covered by insurance policies.

Data protection
Requirements applicable to the organisation under Data Protection Act 1998 – see Chapter 4 on data protection policy.

Passwords
List of logins required for working, procedures for logging in and out of systems, advice on how to create secure passwords (see box).

Back-ups
Who, when, how, and responsibilities of system users. Disaster recovery plans and requirements.

Anti-virus
Which software is used and update procedures, how to avoid viruses and what to do if you think you have one.

Your network
Who is responsible for what, e.g. backing up data, server administration, reviewing users, licence tracking, equipment auditing troubleshooting, etc.

File management
Where users store documents (e.g. on fileserver or on local machine in My Documents).

Training
Induction details, e.g. introduction to the systems, file management, specialist software, AUP, identifying training needs, link to other procedures such as supervision and appraisals, what training can reasonably be expected.

How to create a safe password

- The best passwords are of at least eight characters, with upper and lower case, at least two numbers and, if possible, special characters such as $ or * (although not all sites accept them).
- Don't use the names of your family or whole words in English.
- Don't use the same password for different purposes.
- You could pick a simple word and use numbers to replace specific letters, so that Banana becomes B4n4n4, or Ba6a6a. You can add couple of characters to make it up to eight: %Ba6a6a%.
- You can create patterns on your keyboard, such as Cft6&8ik<.
- You can create passwords from phrases:
  - 'I Struggle To Remember My Password' becomes ISTRMP
  - Make a sandwich from a number that you will remember. If your birthday is on the 27th it becomes 2ISTRMP7.
  - Make the middle letters lower case: 2IStrMP7.
  - Put a star at the end for luck: 2IStrMP7*.
- Don't be afraid to write passwords down but do make sure they're secure, rather than stuck to your computer screen.
- Even better is to write down a hint, not the password, such as 'Why I need a password birthday star'.
- Your web browser or operating system may remember passwords for you, but don't use this option if others can easily log into your computer or you share it with others.
- Seek inspiration by searching in a search engine for 'better password hints'.

Data protection policy

Having a data protection policy is important because it shows that you have thought about:

- complying with the law
- following good practice
- protecting clients, staff and other individuals
- protecting the organisation.

The 1998 Data Protection Act is the key legislation governing how data may be held and used. When organisations become aware of their responsibilities they often ask whether there is a standard or model policy they can adopt, but unfortunately there isn't.

Data protection is not about following a fixed set of rules, which are the same for everyone; it's about complying with some general principles. Your data protection policy must cover the decisions your organisation has taken to comply with the Act and it must identify individual responsibilities.

It is vital that the process of preparing a policy is owned and managed at a senior level: it is not an ICT issue but a significant legal consideration which reflects the culture and practices of the whole organisation. It is also good practice for the policy to be approved by trustees, as they have legal responsibilities.

Data Controller

The Data Controller is the legal 'person' responsible for complying with the Data Protection Act, but it will almost always be the organisation, not an individual staff member or volunteer. Separate organisations (for example a charity and its trading company) are separate Data Controllers. Where organisations work in close partnership it may not be easy to identify the Data Controller. If in doubt, seek guidance from the Information Commissioner at www.ico.gov.uk.

Notification

Having identified your Data Controller you must consider whether your organisation is exempt from Notification. Guidance is available on the Information Commission website, or you can ask for their help. Everyone covered by the Act must pay a fee each year (currently £35) and complete a Notification form for the Information Commissioner covering:

- the purposes for which personal data is held (from a standard list)
- the types of Data Subjects about whom data is held
- the types of information that are held
- the types of disclosure that are made
- any transfers abroad

The Notification entry has to be reviewed each year to reflect any significant changes.

Subject access

Individuals have a right to know what information is being held about them. In response to a valid request (including a fee, if required), the Data Controller must provide a copy of all personal data about that Data Subject held at the time the application was made.

The Data Controller may negotiate with the Data Subject to provide a more limited range of data or may choose to provide more. Certain data may be withheld, including Third Party material, especially if any duty of confidentiality is owed to the Third Party – in this case Third Party means either that the data is about someone else, or that someone else is the source.

Data protection is important not because it is about protecting data, but because it is about protecting people. People can be harmed if their data is misused or falls into the wrong hands, or if inaccurate or insufficient data is used to make decisions that affect them.

Table 3: Issues to be considered in a data protection policy

Topic	Issues to consider
Confidentiality	Limits to confidentiality, communication with Data Subjects, communication with staff, authorisation for disclosures
Security	Setting security levels, security measures, specific risks, personal safety
Direct marketing and fundraising	Opting-out procedures, sharing lists, electronic contact
Data recording and storage	Data accuracy and updating policies, storage issues, retention periods, archiving
Subject access	Responsibility for ensuring subject access requests are handled within the legal time limit of 40 days, procedure for making requests, provision for verifying identity, charging policy, procedure for granting access
Transparency	Purpose for which data is being processed, types of disclosure likely, how to exercise rights
Consent	Forms of consent, opting-out opportunities, withdrawing consent.
Staff training acceptance of responsibilities	Fit with other related policies: Induction, continuing training, procedure for staff signifying acceptance of policy
Policy review	Responsibility for policy review, procedure, timing
WARNING	This is an edited version of an excellent draft policy. Go to **www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk/legalissues** to find the full article: 'Data Protection Policies'.

Adapted from an article by Paul Ticher for the ICT Hub Knowledgebase. Full text can be found at: **www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk**

Health and safety policies

Computer equipment can be used in ways which can be a hazard to the health and safety of staff, volunteers and other users. The law requires you to minimise risks relating to computer health and safety and your health and safety policy should include guidance on avoiding problems.

The number of computers in the workplace has increased rapidly over the last few years and it is now quite normal for most staff in VCOs to be exposed to computer usage. The Health and Safety at Work Act outlines legal standards for computer equipment and requires employers to take steps to minimise risks for all workers. Workers have received substantial damages for injuries caused through use of computers where the employer could have foreseen the risk but did nothing about it.

What are the health risks?

With the increase in computer use, a number of health and safety concerns related to vision and body aches and pains have arisen. Most problems related to computer use are completely preventable and many are temporary and can be resolved by adopting simple corrective action.

The main risks associated with using computers include musculoskeletal problems and eye problems. These can range from general aches and pains to more serious problems and include repetitive strain injury (RSI), tenosynovitis, back and neck pain and discomfort, tension stress headaches and related ailments, and carpal tunnel syndrome – which is by far the most important as it can quickly lead to permanent incapacity.

Symptoms related to vision include visual fatigue, blurred or double vision, burning and watering eyes, headaches and frequent changes in prescription glasses. These are usually the result of visual fatigue, glare and reflections from bright windows or strong light sources, or poor display screen contrast. Computer work hasn't been proved to cause permanent eye damage, but the temporary discomfort can reduce productivity and reduce job satisfaction.

Reducing health and safety risks

- **Understand the law**
  - Make sure someone in your organisation has a health and safety brief covering all areas, not just computers.
- **Be aware of the health risks**
  - The government officially recognises some of the risks although there are some grey areas you'll need to make up your own mind about.
- **Assess the risks – using procedures set out in the law**
  - Be systematic and get help if you need it.
  - Get a health and safety audit done by a competent organisation if necessary.
- **Take steps to minimise the risks**
  - It may only involve simple steps.
- **Train all users to recognise risks**
  - If people aren't aware of the dangers they can't take adequate precautions to protect their health.
- **Take the views of users seriously**
  - If someone feels there is something wrong there often is.

Simple precautions
Several relatively straightforward precautions can be taken by computer users to avoid problems:

- Take regular breaks from working at your computer – a few minutes at least once an hour.
- Alternate work tasks.
- Do regular stretching to relax your body.
- Use equipment such as foot rests, wrist rests and document holders if you need to.
- Keep your mouse and keyboard at the same level.
- Avoid gripping your mouse too tightly – hold the mouse lightly and click gently.
- Familiarise yourself with keyboard shortcuts for applications you regularly use, to avoid overusing the mouse.

Prolonged use of laptops can present particular problems due to small screens, keyboards or touch pads. If you use a laptop as a main computer it is advisable to use it with a docking station, or a large screen and separate keyboard and mouse.

More help

This article is an edited version of an excellent resource on the ICT Hub Knowledgebase at www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk

Setting up your workstation

It is important to have your workstation set up correctly. Your workstation includes monitor, keyboard, mouse, seating, desk and, where appropriate, foot rest (to enable you to put your feet flat if they would otherwise not reach the floor), wrist rest, and document holder.

- **Monitors should:**
  swivel, tilt and elevate – if not, use an adjustable stand, books or blocks adjust the height; be positioned so the top line of the monitor is no higher than your eyes or no lower than 20° below the horizon of your eyes or field of vision; be at the same level and beside the document holder if you use one; be between 50 – 60cm away from your face.

- **Keyboards should:**
  be detachable and adjustable, with legs to adjust angle; allow your forearms to be parallel with the floor without raising your elbows and your wrists to be in line with your forearms; have enough space to rest your wrists or should include a padded detachable wrist rest; be placed directly in front of the monitor and at the same height as the mouse, track ball or touch pad.

- **Chairs should:**
  support the back and have a vertically adjustable independent back rest that returns to its original position and has tilt adjustment to support the lower back; allow the height to be adjusted from a sitting position; be adjusted so the back crease of the knee is slightly higher than the pan of the chair – use a suitable footrest where necessary; be supported by a five-prong castor base; have removable and adjustable arm rests; have a contoured seat with breathable fabric and rounded edges to distribute the weight; be adjustable to allow the seat pan to tilt forward or back.

- **Tables and desks should:**
  provide sufficient leg room and preferably be height-adjustable; have enough room to support the computer equipment and space for documents; have rounded corners and edges..

Glossary

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Protects your computer by checking files that are added to your computer against a database of known viruses that is updated periodically via the web.

ASSISTIVE/ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY Computer hardware and software that is designed to make computers easier to use, especially by people with special needs. Could include screen readers and magnifiers or a trackball to replace a mouse.

ATTACHMENT A picture, video, word processing document, spreadsheet or any other form of computer file sent with an email. Caution is needed when receiving attachments as they can be a way of spreading a virus.

BACK-UP The routine process of making a copy of all your current files on to another computer disk, ideally one which is not in the same room as your current computer, in case your building burns down or everything is stolen in one go. Single most important security measure to protect against theft, fire and accidental loss.

BANDWIDTH How much data you can send through an Internet connection, usually measured in kilobits or megabits per second.

BLOG A website, usually maintained by an individual in the form of a personal journal. Blogs are a way of sharing ideas and opinions and using the Internet to network with people with similar interests. Can be used to create a website for an organisation.

BLUETOOTH Wireless way to connect and exchange information between devices such as mobile phones, laptops, PCs, printers, digital cameras, video game console, headsets, keyboards and mice. Uses low-power radio so only works over short distances.

BOOKMARK A link to a web page that you save in your browser to be able to quickly get back to it later. Also known as a Favourite (or Favorite)

BROADBAND Generic term for fast Internet connections. Most offices and homes in the UK can get a broadband connection and over 50 per cent of the population have regular access to broadband.

BROWSER Program for looking at websites, pictures, videos, PDF documents and other content on the Internet. Common browsers are Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari.

BUG Something wrong with a piece of software that means it doesn't work properly.

BULLETIN BOARD Online forum. You leave messages on a website and come back later to read responses from other people visiting, or browse previous questions and answers.

CHAT ROOM A website where people communicate in real time by typing in their words and getting direct feedback.

CONNECTIVITY Usually refers to the availability and quality of an Internet connection. Also used to indicate the barriers some people face in connecting to social networks, such as the 'digital divide' and social and economic exclusion.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS) A way of creating a website that makes it easy for someone without web design skills to update, including changing text, and adding or removing pages, images and documents. They range from small simple sites with a few pages to large sites with many sections, where people are given permission to access and alter only certain parts of the site, depending on their role.

COOKIE Piece of information stored on your computer when you visit a website. Used when you return to that site to recognise you and remember your preferences. Generally safe but some people worry about what they may be recording without permission. Most browsers let you block cookies if you are worried.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) The database used to store details about the people you work with. This may be a relatively simple system for sharing names and addresses of contacts within a team, or a more sophisticated tool, designed specifically for your needs, which can track every interaction with a person or organisation by everyone in your organisation.

DESKTOP A desktop computer, as opposed to servers and laptops. Or the image on a computer screen that sits behind all the documents you have open when you're using your computer. Has icons for quick access to common items and is a metaphor for the top of an actual desk, which may have a clock, folders full of files, access to things you need, etc.

DIAL-UP How most people connect to the Internet if they're not using broadband, using a modem and a standard telephone line. Provides slower access than broadband but usually cheaper. Still used by lots of people.

DIGITAL DIVIDE The gap between regular users of the Internet (and other technologies) and those without the money, skills, motivation or access to technology to become regular users. Not just a question of access to computers, but connected to many facets of social and economic exclusion and community development.

DIRECTORY The way your computer organises your files like a filing cabinet where you store folders containing your files.

DOMAIN NAME A unique name that identifies a website; it usually starts with 'www.' and ends with '.co.uk', '.com', '.org.uk' or '.net' and so on.

DOWNLOAD When you copy a computer file from somewhere on the Internet on to your computer.

E-COMMERCE Commercial transactions carried out over the Internet especially buying and selling goods and services through a website. Important part of fundraising activities for a growing number of large and small voluntary and community organisations.

EMAIL ADDRESS Unique address for an email mailbox, where messages can be delivered and then read. Comes in the form of 'An individual name @ (at) a domain name'.

EMAIL LISTS A way of joining in discussions and sharing information with people who share an interest. You subscribe your email address to a list, usually through a web page, and then receive all messages sent to that list, as will everyone subscribed. Replying to the list sends your reply to everyone on the list. For many it is a valuable way of connecting with networks outside their local community. Others find that it builds and strengthens bonds within their geographic area and gives them somewhere to ask for help.

EXTRANET Provides access via the Internet to certain parts of an organisation's office internal network. Often used to enable clients or partners to access and share information resources.

FILTERING Used to block emails, especially spam, before they arrive in your in tray, or to prevent certain websites from appearing on a computer.

FIREWALL Software in the box that sits between you and Internet, protecting you from unauthorised access to your computer by hackers and viruses.

FREEWARE A software program given away free of charge by the person who made it and usually available to download from the Internet. Includes lots of handy pieces of software and generally reflects the fluffy co-operative side of the Internet.

FTP File transfer protocol is the way computer files are sent between a computer and a server on the Internet, especially when creating web pages.

HACKER A person who tries get into a computer system without permission, usually for the purpose of stealing or corrupting data.

HOTSPOTS Places where you can access the Internet using a wireless connection. Cafes, pubs and growing numbers of community buildings now offer hotspots, some free, some paid for.

HYPERLINK A hyperlink is the text or a picture on a web page that moves you around the web. When you click the link it takes you to another place within the same web page, or to a page on another website.

HYPERTEXT Pages of text with hyperlinks in it, i.e. a web page.

ICT Information and communication technology refers to the tools we use to enhance access to information and the way we communicate. Includes computers, the Internet, telephones, faxes, mobile phones, web sites and other forms of telecommunications.

INSTANT MESSAGE Useful way of sending text messages in 'real time' to another person over the Internet. Increasingly popular within office-based teams and among remote workers.

INTERNET World-wide network of computers that is used to post and read web pages, send and receive emails, make telephone calls and numerous other applications.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER Your ISP is the company that sells you an account so that you can access the Internet.

INTRANET An internal network that uses web pages to let people share information that can't be seen by people outside the organisation.

LAPTOP A portable computer. Laptops have become increasingly powerful and more affordable.

LINUX Rival operating system to Microsoft Windows or Apple Macintosh. More details in the Open Source section of this guide.

LURKER Many email lists will have only a handful of people posting messages, with a silent majority lurking on the sideline, preferring to read messages rather than post their own. Not considered anti-social.

MALWARE Generic term short for malicious software, covering viruses, worms, Trojans and other forms of unpleasant programs designed to cause havoc and/or rip you off. See Chapter 3 for how to deal with malware.

MEGABYTE How you measure a quantity of computer. One megabyte equals 1 million characters of text, or about as much as you need for a fat paperback book.

MODEM A device that enables computers to talk to one another, used to connect your computer to the Internet, whether through dial-up or broadband.

NETWORK Two or more computers connected to each other so they can share resources.

OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE Software that is free to use. Usually licensed in a way that anyone can modify it to make it work better for them. Opposite of proprietary software. See Chapter 2 for information on Open Source software.

OPERATING SYSTEM Every computer has an operating system that runs from when you switch the computer on until you switch off and defines how you use the computer. Widely used operating systems are Microsoft Windows, Apple OSX and Linux.

PDF Using portable document format to save a document retains the way it looks when other people open it on their computer, Popular way of making documents for download on the Internet.

PHISHING An email scam. Criminals send out official-looking emails, often pretending to be from banks, designed to trick consumers into divulging their account numbers, passwords and other sensitive data. Use anti-virus software and common sense to tackle it.

PLUG-IN Small piece of software that adds features to another computer application. Often free and downloaded from the Internet, e.g. Real Player Plug In adds sound and video capabilities to your web browser.

PODCASTS Term used to describe sound and/or video files saved on the Internet so that people can download them, to put them on their iPods or listen/watch when they decide. Used to package up information for a variety of purposes, including news, opinion pieces, or training materials. They are generally not produced to a high quality so are very accessible as a medium for sharing information with others.

POP-UP A window that will pop up in the middle of your screen to display a message when viewing a web page. Can be annoying, confusing or a very helpful part of the site's design – use anti-virus software to stop them.

PORTAL Website that provides a starting point for accessing a range of information from different sources, such as a home page for a town or other geographic area or covering a particular topic.

SEARCH ENGINE A special tool that lets you find information on the Internet. The most popular ones are Google, Yahoo! and MSN. Search engines are now where the vast majority of people start when surfing the Internet.

SERVER Computer linked to all the other computers in a network. Can store files and provide access to shared services such as a printer or Internet access. Usually more powerful than other computers on the network because it has more work to do.

SHAREWARE Software that is available free of charge but the author requests a small fee if you like the program and use it regularly.

SPAM Unsolicited or junk email which you receive. Can be controlled by a spam filter.

SPYWARE An application that covertly gathers user information about your use of your computer. Runs in the background and reports back using your Internet connection, usually for advertising or criminal purposes. Can be detected and removed by anti-virus software.

UPS/Uninterruptible Power Supply
Highly recommended back-up system for dealing with a power failure. Won't last long but will give enough time for data to be saved to disk and computers to shut down properly.

URL/Uniform Resource Locator
The address of a web page. Typically starts with www.

USB/Universal Serial Bus Type of plug on a computer used for attaching a mouse, keyboard, printer, etc. All modern computers will now use it as standard.

VIDEO CONFERENCING Uses the Internet to enable people to talk one another on live video, including group discussions. Some specialist hardware and software may be needed but it can also be done with a cheap webcam, a modern computer and a standard broadband connection.

VIRUS A computer program designed to infect your computer and cause some kind of trouble. Mainly distributed via the Internet, attached to emails or hidden inside other apparently innocent programs, viruses are a continual and growing threat. Install and maintain anti-virus software to protect yourself.

VOIP/Voice Over IP Software that lets you use a broadband internet connection to make free or low cost telephone calls anywhere in the world. Made popular by Skype although many other services are available.

WEBSITE A collection of web pages made available on the Internet.

WEBSERVER a computer that holds material from the world-wide web and can transfer it to another computer when requested. When you view a website, it has come from a webserver.

WI-FI Uses wireless radio signals as a flexible, cost-effective way of linking computers into a network. Especially popular in mobile devices to avoid using wires.

WIKI Website that can be edited through the web browser. May be open to anyone to edit or protected for certain users. Great for collaboration on projects and shared documents.

WORM A type of computer virus.

References

Websites

- **ICT Hub** www.icthub.org.uk
  Access a wide range of information, news and support from the ICT Hub and its partners. Key sections include:
  - Directory of sector-friendly suppliers
  - Working with volunteers
  - Discounted deals
  - Research, factsheets and other background reading
- **ICT Hub Knowledgebase**
  www.icthubknowledgebase.org.uk
  A library of articles covering ICT-related subjects written specially for the voluntary sector
- **TechSoup** www.techsoup.org
  Excellent US-based one-stop resource for technology needs for non-profit organisations, providing free information, resources, and support

Publications

ICT Hub publications:
Easy Free and Quick ICT Accessibility Pack *(booklet and CD)*
Explains why accessibility is vital to your work, clarifies your legal obligation, and tells you how to make simple practical improvements to your accessibility. Most ideas are free or cost less than £100.

Web Accessibility Pack for Voluntary and Community Organisations *(booklet and CD)*
Practical introduction to web accessibility, the benefits and what the law says. Guidance for web managers/commissioners, editors, designers and developers.

ICT tools to support collaborative working
Identifies what works and what doesn't, and is illustrated with case studies.

Collaborative working to make more effective use of ICT
Explores how you could collaborate with others to support your ICT.

How to Cost and Fund ICT
Identify and budget for total cost of ownership of ICT, an invaluable resource when funding your ICT.

ICT Signposting Guide for Small Voluntary and Community Organisations
This is a signposting guide for small voluntary and community to help get better use out of their ICT and to support its effective management.

Other publications:
The Accidental Techie: Supporting, Managing and Maximising Your Nonprofit's Technology, by Sue Bennett. Published by Fieldstone Alliance
Wired for Good: Strategic Technology Planning for Nonprofits, by Joni Podolsky. Published by Jossey-Bass, 2003

Information Management for Voluntary and Community Organisations, by Paul Ticher and Mike Powell. Published by Directory of Social Change 2000

Coming soon:

Good Governance for ICT (online publication)
An essential publication for trustees to provide them with an understanding of their responsibilities in relation to ICT.

Other resources

ICT Hub Newsletter – monthly updates, subscribe by email at **www.icthub.org.uk**

UK Riders email list – an email list for circuit riders and ICT development workers in the UK (and further afield). Join at **http://lists.lasa.org.uk/lists/info/ukriders**

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