

## Collective Effort

*'...give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.'*

Easton Community Centre sees itself not as a passive 'provider' of services and facilities but as an active enabler, facilitator and 'broker' of resources and opportunities for individuals and communities in partnership with other organisations and businesses in the local and wider areas. In this context the Centre is committed to community capacity building through collective effort in the provision of facilities, advice, and the development of social and personal skills and confidence in order for people to learn through experience in the following ways:

- In providing free and normally (subject to demand) untimed access to facilities and infrastructure that are hard to access, expensive or limited in availability elsewhere in the public or private domains. These include the IT facilities (six fixed computers and printing by arrangement with staff) plus free wifi access throughout the building from 0900-1800 daily on weekdays.
- In combining this provision with appropriate assistance on both technical and other matters by Centre staff and other more skilled users, and through combined programmes with appropriate skill providers such as the University of the West of England which have run programmes in computer literacy and internet use targeted at older users. In this way we aim to promote active self-skilling on IT facilities and the internet rather than just the passive use of them which is a common trend, especially among younger people.
- By developing a new and integrated communications strategy for Centre users and staff in partnership with local training institutions and IT businesses to enable users to understand and be confident with computers, the internet and, especially new social media platforms such as Facebook in order for them to forge stronger links with their communities and relevant interest groups in the area, the country and, in many cases, with family and friends overseas.

The Centre is also committed to the principles and practice of capacity building and collective effort in following the principles of 'knowledge transfer' rather than simply providing advice or information for passive reception. This is the case in both face to face individual advice and consultation sessions on benefits, debts, careers and migrant advice, and housing issues, and in various group activities such as ESOL, dance, exercise and craft classes,

ethnically and religiously-based organisations and festivals, and child and family-focussed groups and activities. The structure and organisation of the Centre is also conducive to a combination of organised activities in dedicated rooms and a central mixed atrium space and friendly ambience with adjacent café and courtyard area to encourage social mixing and word of mouth exchanges between participants in different activities before and after their dedicated sessions.

The Centre has long been host to historically well-established BME communities and groups from South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and in recent years has also been a focus for new migrants from Albania, Bulgaria, Iran, Iraq, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Somalia, all of whom are frequent users of the Centre's facilities, especially its IT resources. Centre staff currently speak three languages other than English (Punjabi, Somali, Spanish) and the Centre Board and Management are currently working on ways of harnessing this cultural and linguistic diversity through capacity building and skills development towards 'productive diversity' for individual and community development in Easton and beyond.

In these ways, and many more, the Centre combines encouragement and facilitation with practical assistance to the extent possible within current resources and helps members of the community to help themselves in developing both their own skills and a productive skill base in the community.

Easton Community Centre therefore sees itself as actively contributing through collective effort to the development of local *human capital* (individual and group skills and capacity), *social capital* (networks of trust and reciprocity), and *cultural and creative capital* (interactive communications capacity, intercultural dialogue, and innovative capacity).