



**PRESS RELEASE
FROM
DIGITAL UNITE
WITH
SILVER
SURFERS' DAY
2008 (SSD 08)**

April 17, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TITLE:

Virgin Media and Digital Unite help older people in sheltered housing get online

- **To celebrate SSD 08, UK's largest residential broadband provider teams up with Digital Unite to offer online access and free computers to 17 sheltered housing sites**
- **Applications are now invited from sheltered housing providers to receive a free online learning support package for older residents**
- **Closing date, SSD, 23 May 2008**

The digital world is fast paced and moving all the time. But without intervention, some sections of society could get left behind. That's why the Silver Surfers' Day Campaign, which focuses on getting older people online, is still going from strength to strength. And that's also why Digital Unite (DU) and Virgin Media have hooked up to do something extra special to stimulate older people's learning, understanding and participation in the digital world.

Helping you to help others

We believe the Internet can be a powerful tool for people in sheltered accommodation. Not only can it help them stay close to friends and family, it can help keep them connected to the wider world and give them the freedom to manage their lives without having to leave their home.

Sheltered housing providers now have a unique opportunity to help us bridge the divide and give their older customers an opportunity to explore the digital world.

Applications are now invited for a free 'get online' package for sheltered housing residents and we'll provide you with all the equipment you need to get residents online plus technical support for a year*, a 7 week training course plus free broadband.

....PTO



Digital Unite is the new name for Hairnet UK Ltd

What participating sheltered housing schemes will get

The 17 successful sites will receive the following:

All the kit they need to get started

- 2 brand new desktop computers plus a year's full support*
- Printer
- Additional 2 tracker ball mice – (specially adapted for people with mobility issues)
- 1 year's free broadband from Virgin Media, with speeds of up to 10Mb
- Set up service, with everything is tested and ready to go
- Help when they need it – just give our team a call.

* Computer support will be provided for one year, up to a maximum of £1000.

Crucially, this fabulous offer also includes a learning programme that will give older learner the skills they need to get started.

To help give older learners the skills they need to make the most of the equipment and start enjoying the net, Digital Unite will be providing a seven-week digital literacy skills course for residents, at the sheltered home and delivered by one of their specialist Tutors.

Geraldine Pack, Corporate Responsibility Manager, Virgin Media says: "The Internet offers exciting opportunities for all ages. More and more people are using their PCs for shopping, online banking, sharing photos and keeping in touch with their families. This project will allow those without the skills or resources to have access for the very first time."

Emma Solomon, MD of Digital Unite says; 'We are thrilled to be working with Virgin Media to deliver more Digital Unite Community Programmes (DUCPs) to older learners in sheltered housing. And, to be able to offer kit, connectivity, set-up and support with the training is such a bonus. Over the last four years, we have gathered so much evidence of the very powerful, meaningful impact our DUCPs have had and it is really rewarding to find a company like Virgin Media who recognise and value the difference they are making to the digital inclusion of older people. I am confident this will be a really inspirational programme and am looking forward to seeing applications come flooding in!'

Sheltered housing providers in Virgin Media broadband areas can apply for a 'get online' package, click here: <http://www.digitalunite.net/docs/vm.html>

ENQUIRIES

All enquiries about this project to Digital Unite

Contact: gill.adams@digitalunite.net / T: 0870 241 5091 / W:
www.digitalunite.net

EDITORS' NOTES:

What is Media Literacy?

'Media literacy' is the 'upgraded' version of IT/ digital literacy, and so coined because as technologies converge (and you can get email on your phone, make phone calls on the Net, get the Net on your telly, the telly on your computer) our assimilation of these possibilities and the skills required to make use of them is, actually, requiring a whole new form of literacy. ...PTO

In today's society, media literacy has become fundamentally important. It can make life easier, cheaper and more fun. It can make a huge change for the better in older people's everyday lives, their level of independence, access to people and services, and general well being and contentment.

Statistics

The good news: home Internet access is working (for some of us)!

'In 2007, 14.94 million households in Great Britain (61 per cent) could access the Internet. This is an increase of just over 1 million households (7 per cent) over the last year, and nearly 4 million households (36 per cent) since 2002.'

The bad news: there are still shockingly few older people benefiting from this rise in access

[In 2007] 'There was still a large difference between the number of young and older people accessing the Internet. Of the 16 to 24 age group, 90 per cent had accessed the Internet within the 3 months prior to interview, compared with 24 per cent of the 65+ age group. This is also supported by estimates that show there were only 4 per cent of the 16 to 24 age group who had **never** used the Internet, compared with **71 per cent of the 65+ age group who had never used the Internet.**'

The encouraging news: the potential is there amongst older people, provided they have the right encouragement

'However, the growth since 2006 in recent Internet users was largest in the 65+ age group, at 60 per cent, compared with the lowest age group growth of 1 per cent in the 25 to 44 age group.'

Source: First Release: Internet Access, Households and Individuals 2007
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/inta0807.pdf>

What constitutes the right encouragement? Learning in a safe, friendly, atmosphere

'Research suggests that the group of people who are 'digitally disengaged', if given appropriate support and assistance, can use the opportunity to overcome their concerns and fears and benefit from computer / Internet usage. Examples of support that would seem particularly welcome for this group include courses designed for and run by older people and a mentoring scheme. DU proves daily that older people can succeed with IT.

Source: : The **Ofcom Consumer Panel's survey, Consumers and the communications market: 2006**

<http://www.ofcomconsumerpanel.org.uk/information/research-policy.htm#Older>

More about Digital Unite at www.digitalunite.net

More about Virgin Media at www.virginmedia.co.uk

More about Silver Surfers' Day at www.silversurfersday.org

More about sheltered housing from ERoSH www.shelteredhousing.org

END NOTES