Subject:	**Wiltshire Online's digital literacy project**
Officer Contact Details:	Jenny Wilcockson – Digital Literacy Coordinator Jenny.wilcockson@wiltshire.gov.uk 01225 793349 / 07827993733
Weblink:	www.wiltshireonline.org
Further details available:	Please see our website or contact Jenny Wilcockson for more information

Summary of announcement:

Wiltshire Council recognises that access to online services is becoming increasingly essential to residents, businesses and organisations from the third sector. The importance of good, reliable connectivity and the ability to use online services with confidence are central themes to the Wiltshire Online programme.

The benefits of being online are well documented. Not only is the internet an effective tool in helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness, people can save up to £560 per year by using price comparison websites and shopping online (Price Waterhouse Cooper 2009). Digital skills are also vitally important for job seekers, with the majority of roles advertised today requiring some experience of computers. Plus, having a good web presence is crucial to success for private and third sector organisations. Social media is a useful means of communicating with clients and growing a customer base, as well as networking with peers. Anyone who is not online is definitely missing out on a wealth of opportunity.

To ensure that people across Wiltshire have the opportunity to learn the skills and access the technology they need to get online, Wiltshire Online is rolling out a programme of free computer support.

Over the next twelve months, a team of digital champion volunteers will be recruited in every community area. These volunteers will be given access to the resources and training required to help them support people in their local communities to learn the basics of computers and the internet. Digital champions can offer one-to-one or group support in a variety of different venues, including libraries, WiFi enabled cafes or community halls or even someone's own home. Subjects covered include mouse and keyboard skills, setting up a computer desktop, searching the web, using email, Skype, Facebook, online shopping and more. Wiltshire Online will also be encouraging businesses to engage with the programme to support their corporate social responsibility agendas.

This free support is available to all adults in Wiltshire, although particular emphasis is placed on reaching older people, people with disabilities and families on low income. To help support this delivery, Wiltshire Online is working with a number of partners, including the Wiltshire Library Service, Age UK, IT Can Help, Community First, Citizen's Advice Wiltshire and The Learning Curve.

This digital literacy initiative is already well underway in the Melksham community area. To date, a team of 12 digital champions have helped support nearly 30 people either get online for the first time or increase their confidence with computers and the web. Wiltshire Online is now launching its digital literacy programme in the Chippenham and Salisbury community areas, with plans to roll the initiative out across the county by March 2013.

For details about how to get involved, please visit www.wiltshireonline.org or contact Jenny Wilcockson, Digital Literacy Coordinator on 01225 793349 or jenny.wilcockson@wiltshire.gov.uk