

Free Tech Boost for Guildford's Homeless, as SocialBox.Biz Team up with University of Surrey

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Other organisations urged to donate kit destined for the tip

Guildford's homeless and other vulnerable local people will be the beneficiaries of a new partnership between SocialBox.Biz and the University of Surrey, which will see laptops and desktops no longer of use to the University upgraded and recycled to aid a campaign to reduce digital exclusion.

Other organisations are now being urged to join SocialBox.Biz's successful Laptops for the Homeless Initiative. Laptops that have been replaced by newer models or have otherwise become surplus to requirement can be donated, when they will be upgraded with open source software. The local Real Change Guildford initiative, for whom the University of Surrey are also Ambassadors, will take the lead in matching the refreshed laptops with people who need them, and who will be able to use them to help with finding jobs, accessing education, and keeping in touch with friends and family.

Seventy desktops and laptops have been donated by the University of Surrey and spruced up ready for use again. But the partners in the project says more are always needed and appreciated, given the pervasive nature of digital exclusion in the world today. The need is particularly acute in the Covid-19 era, as lockdowns, social distancing and a wholesale move towards video-conferencing platforms as a means of doing business, conducting recruitment processes and offering services have widened the digital exclusion gap.

Peter Paduh, chair of SocialBox.Biz said:

"We're grateful for this generous support from the University of Surrey in our mission to eliminate the digital exclusion divide. Access to a working computer and the internet is increasingly essential to access the job hunting, support and other services we all now take for granted. Without digital access, people already in need can be locked out of modern society. We're now looking for more local partners to help us upgrade and reuse old kit and direct it to the people who really need it."

Amanda Masters, chair of the Core Group for Real Change Guildford, said:

"We work tirelessly to support local people who are homeless or have otherwise fallen on hard times. Time and again we see what an enormous barrier digital exclusion is, so we know what a difference each of these laptops will make to the individuals or families we are able to donate them to".

Kevin Braim, Director of IT at the University of Surrey, said:

"We are delighted to partner with SocialBox.Biz and Real Change Guildford. They tell a powerful story of the impact of digital exclusion felt by so many in our local community. Laptops that are no longer able to keep pace with the cutting-edge software our academics and other colleagues use can have many years of life left in them once tidied up with free, open-source software. We'd urge any other organisations who think they might have computers that have become surplus to requirements to get in touch with SocialBox.Biz or Real Change Guildford to find out what a difference they can make."

Businesses who would like to make a donation can contact SocialBox.Biz Community Interest Company on 0843 289 5722

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