



DIGITAL BIRMINGHAM
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POW! SECOND SERIES OF DIGITAL BIRMINGHAM IT COMICS HITS THE STREETS

Hot on the heels of its hugely popular comic strips teaching kids to pass on their IT skills to other family members, enterprising Digital Birmingham has launched a second series.

The innovative 'Keeping IT in the Family' educational comic-book initiative was initially rolled out in April last year as a pilot project with Microsoft, and such has been the scheme's success it attracted an additional £38,000 funding from government agency Becta.

The vibrant new cartoon series is designed to support children in helping their parents, grandparents and older family members consolidate the basic skills they learned in the previous booklets - such as setting up an email account - and also to pick up some new educational tips. Developer Citizens Online has produced the booklet in an engaging and enjoyable format, as well as being an invaluable educational tool that illustrates the benefits of digital technology in an easy-to-understand way.

Youngsters will now be able to use the comic books as support to teach their parents and family members about social networking and how to get the most from them; access healthy and tasty recipes for family meal times; get useful information for family or friends with disabilities and, importantly, learn all about safer internet use for the whole family.

The scheme is to be rolled out to Year 7 and 8 schoolchildren in 26 city schools that are participating in the Government's Computers for Pupils initiative which is designed to promote digital inclusion for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils in disadvantaged areas.

As well as supplying guides for children to take home, Digital Birmingham is making them available through the city's libraries and for free download from the Digital Birmingham website www.digitalbirmingham.co.uk and from www.microsoft.com/uk/publicsector.

Birmingham City Council Deputy Leader Paul Tilsley, who heads up the Digital Birmingham partnership said: "Birmingham is taking a lead in ensuring that digital technology can be accessed by all members of society. The success of Keeping IT in the Family just goes to prove that children are often the ones taking the lead in their families when it comes to computers and the Internet.

"Keeping IT in the Family goes to show that we all have a part to play in helping Birmingham combat the

digital divide and promote digital inclusion, from the simple techniques of teaching granny how to text to more in depth activities of showing an uncle how to buy and sell online, so that everyone in Birmingham can benefit from getting to grips with new technologies."

Nikki Spencer, Digital Birmingham's Digital Empowerment Manager and Project Manager for Keeping IT in the Family is excited about the new comic books.

"The first comic book series has been hugely successful and we are thrilled our second series has now been produced to broaden kids IT skills even further," she said. "Whole families from grannies to toddlers have really benefited from this innovative scheme and are learning life-long skills in a really fun and exciting new way."

ENDS (494 WORDS)

Pic caption: Students from St John Wall and Prince Albert schools in Birmingham pass on their knowledge to Pearl Seger from Moseley at a recent 'Silver Surfers' event at Acocks Green Library. From L to R, back: Tarjot Janhal 13, Sherbaz Khan 13, Karisa Patel 10, Sarah Begum 10. Front: Pearl Seger, Rayhaan Niaz 9.

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Digital Birmingham is a Birmingham City Council initiative and a strategic partnership of private, voluntary and public organisations throughout the city. It aims to establish Birmingham as a leading European digital city in 2010 and ensure that the benefits of digital technologies are available to all in the city. For more information visit www.digitalbirmingham.co.uk.