PRESS RELEASE

16th February 2022

Citizens Advice Connect! Project is here to help people across Oxfordshire struggling with digital muddles

Up to 40,000 of people across Oxfordshire struggle with using phones, tablets or laptops to access goods, services and social contact online. In an increasingly digital world, this is truly isolating and what seem like simple tasks to many people are impossible for others. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and the curtailment of socialising and shopping, some people can go days without seeing anyone.

Connect! is a new Citizens Advice project [established in April 2021] where trained Volunteers visit clients to help them make the most of their digital devices for FREE.

Connect! volunteers can help with any digital need: from how to make video calls or learning to use social media to help people keep in touch with their families and friends, to shopping safely online. The charity's volunteers will help at the pace of the client and can visit more than once if further sessions are required.

Connect! helped one client buy a mobile phone…
The client returned to the shop on her own for mobile phone advice but found the staff rude and belittling. She left the shop in tears and vowed never to use the phone again for anything other than phone calls. She lost her confidence and felt that she could not be helped. Connect! volunteers supported her until she felt confident to use the phone for all her needs.

Phillipa Read, Connect Project Lead said:
"This is an exciting and valuable project that we would like as many people as possible to benefit from. Our Volunteers are here to help and they really put themselves out giving 1:2:1 advice, sometimes even going to the shops with the client to collect orders they have made online together and assisting our clients in purchasing devices. Connect! is such a valuable service that is so appreciated by our clients."

Pat Coombe-Wood, Chief Officer at Citizen Advice North Oxfordshire said:
"We are delighted to be involved in such a vital project for our community. The project was a great success in Cherwell and we are now rolling it out throughout Oxfordshire. It is tragic to see how in our increasingly digitised world some of the most vulnerable people in our community are increasingly isolated. We are here to help them."

Do you know someone who could benefit from this service or someone with spare time who would like to help others? Contact Connect! for more information:

Website: https://www.canosn.org.uk/connect
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/BridgingtheDigitalDivideOxon
Email: connect.info@cano.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 004 0401

Ends.

Notes to Editors

We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem.

- The four Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, Oxford, North Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire and South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse all exist to provide free, confidential, independent advice in Oxfordshire and they are all members of Citizens Advice, the national charity
- For Citizens Advice general local free telephone advice, visit www.caox.org.co.uk.
- Citizens Advice Free phone Adviceline 0800 144 8848 and Textphone: 0800 144 8884
- Citizens Advice in Oxfordshire are supported by more than 670 trained volunteers and 52 paid staff working across 14 advice centres. In the last year, we helped 27,000 people across Oxfordshire with 78,000 issues.
- Citizens Advice is made up of the national charity Citizens Advice; the network of independent local Citizens Advice charities across England and Wales; the Citizens Advice consumer service; and the Witness Service.
- Citizens Advice helped 2.7 million people face to face, over the phone, by email and web chat in 20-21. We had 3.5 million visits to our national website. For full service statistics see Citizens Advice monthly publication Advice Trends.