

PRESS RELEASE

FROM: Fiona Bruce MP for Congleton Constituency

DATE: 1st November 2010



Fiona Bruce helps create a Bloomin' Marvellous Spring in Middlewich

As part of Get Online Week, Fiona Bruce MP, attended the Congleton Learning Centre in a bid to highlight the support available for constituents to get to grips with computers and the internet. This Learning Centre serves as a base for people from across Cheshire including, Congleton, Holmes Chapel, Middlewich and Sandbach to learn how to connect.

One in five adults don't use computers and the internet, and Get online week aimed to inspire 80,000 of them to give it a go this Autumn, and join the online masses! Staff were on hand at the Congleton Learning Centre to help visitors try out the Get online week game and find out more about how to make technology work for them.

Also taking part in the event was local MP, Fiona Bruce, who came along to see for herself how computers and the internet could people save time, hassle and money if everyday life. She chatted to some of the centres existing learners, and some of the new visitors arriving for Get online week.

She said: "It was a real pleasure to meet people at the Congleton Learning Centre Get online week event, and I was impressed by how friendly and dedicated the staff were and how easy they made it for people to take their first steps online. It was obvious computers and the internet really can make a big difference to people's lives, opening up whole new worlds of opportunity and interest.

I was really interested to meet the range of individuals using the Centre. Not only were there retired people like Janet and Arthur Rowe learning to use a computer for the first time but individuals like Sarah Cunningham – who currently has a job working with horses, but is looking to gain IT qualifications, to open up new career opportunities. All of them told me how helpful the staff are at the Learning Centre and how easy it was for them to use the technology.

Computer skills are so important for the community, the local economy, and the social and economic health of the UK as a whole – helping people connect with work, online government and council services, and with each other. The Learning Centre is a great

resource for Congleton, and a great way for people to get into technology and get started online.”

One of the people Fiona met was first time Get online week visitor Janet Rowe, who said: “I was a bit nervous about coming along at first because I didn’t know what to expect. But when I got here I got a really friendly welcome and everyone made it really easy just to have a go on the computers and find out a bit more about them.

Everywhere you look these days everyone wants you to go to the internet for something, and you can feel like you’re left behind if you can’t do it. Now I’m not exactly up to speed but it all feels much less complicated than it did before! I’m really pleased I finally made the effort and popped in, and I’d recommend anyone else to do the same. Trust me, if they can help me, they can help anyone!”

Centre Manager Adele Fletcher added: “We’re delighted with how our Get online week went, and looking forward to welcoming back some of the visitors who came through our doors for the first time. For us, every week is a Get online week! If you’ve never used computers before, or if you’re just not too sure about them, please do come and pay us visit.”

If you want to be one of those getting online this October, please 01260 290682 for more information.

Notes to editors

Picture 1: Fiona Bruce MP chats to computer novices Arthur and Janet Rowe at Get online week event.

Picture 2: Fiona Bruce MP chats to learner Sarah Cunningham and Learning Centre Assistant Janthea Maddocks.

- This year is the fourth Get online campaign from UK on line centres, and Get online week 2010 runs from 18 – 24 October. It is run in partnership with major Race Online 2012 partners including BBC, Post Office and mobile phone network Three.
- 30 million people use the internet everyday in the UK. More than half of all leisure travel is now booked online, 90% of all new jobs require basic internet skills and seven million jobs were posted online last year. However, there are still

10 million adults in the UK who have never used the internet, and are missing out on the benefits, opportunities and conveniences it can provide. The problem is worst for those already at a disadvantage. If you're older, disabled, or on a low income, you're far more likely to be off-line. Visit www.raceonline2012.org to read more in Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox's Digital Manifesto – *Manifesto for a Networked nation*.

- **myguide** (www.myguide.gov.uk) is a simple web platform designed to make getting online easy and intuitive, and was developed by the central UK online centres team in consultation with a wide variety of partners.
- UK online centres provide millions of people with access to technology and support in using it. They offer free or low cost access to the internet and email, deliver online courses and encourage people to progress onto further learning. For more information please visit www.ukonlinecentres.com. There are thousands of UK online centres across England, and many use **myguide** and **Online basics** to introduce people to the world of ICT.

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