

Building Better Opportunities in the West Midlands



We have secured £380,000 through two Building Better Opportunities programme streams, Community Matters and Black Country Click Start, co-financed by the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund. Each of these is expected to run up to the end of 2019. Provision through the BBOs is primarily entry level or level one. However, through our training subsidiary, Himilo, we can offer alternative and complementary routes for those suited to accessing level 2 or 3 courses.

Both strands target those unemployed or economically inactive, particularly the so-called 'hard to reach'. Some beneficiaries will be drawn from our own refugee tenant base, but the larger majority will be from the wider B&ME communities. We'll initially concentrate on areas of highest deprivation within Sandwell and, to a lesser degree, Wolverhampton, with a minimum target of supporting 380 people across the two strands. The team will be outreach orientated and often working remotely out of the core base.

Black Country Click Start will have a specific focus on digital and financial exclusion, including a specific priority to support the development of small scale, community-based loan schemes. Community Matters will provide a wide range of employability skills support, possibly some directed towards self-employment. See overleaf for current details, but we're happy to discuss how our provision can compliment other work taking place locally.

Contacts

The brand new BBO team comprises Clarine Powell (Team Leader), Andreea Chelaru (Office Coordinator), both in post, and James Haughty (Outreach & Training Officer, Community Matters). We are currently seeking a 2nd Outreach & Training Officer to take responsibility for Click Start.

We have now relocated to the Victoria Park Skills Centre, Corbett Street, Smethwick, B66 3PU. Please contact us on 07956 177913 or email clarine.powell@ashleyhousing.com

Planned Provision

Community Matters is designed to help people who are furthest away from the labour market, and who face some of the toughest challenges, to move closer to securing paid work and get into work where possible.

Under this strand we currently expect to provide support around:-

- Functional English/ESOL, delivered via trained local volunteers
- Employability Skills training
- Vocational Skills training
- Job Clubs
- One to one careers advice and guidance
- Basic ICT
- Social Inclusion
- Health & Wellbeing

- Women's Craft Club

Black Country Click Start is designed to provide wraparound support to improve digital and financial inclusion. The project will specifically target social housing tenants who will be affected by the roll out of Universal Credit and other welfare reforms, and offer clear progression routes onto skills and employment provisions.

Under this strand we currently expect to provide support around:-

- Finance & Budgeting
- Promoting and supporting small scale community saving schemes
- Basic ICT
- Benefit calculations
- One to one advice and guidance
- Supported Driving Theory practice
- CSCS preparation for building trades