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NEW IT INVESTMENT SUPPORTING JUSTICE PRINCE DRIVE TO HELP MORE PEOPLE INTO WORK

A new suite of IT equipment is set to give a major boost to the work of a North Tyneside employability project that has helped more than 250 local people find work.

The Longbenton Employability Hub run by Justice Prince CIC aims to help people search for and apply for jobs, prepare for interviews and equip them with the confidence, skills and knowledge they need to have the best chance to find employment.

Based at the Oxford Centre on West Farm Avenue, the project has engaged with more than 1,100 local people since it was established in 2012, and also offers ongoing support for anyone who might need to access its assistance on an ongoing basis.

The service was originally set up with a range of donated second hand computers through which job searches are carried out and applications written, but as time has gone on, they were becoming more unreliable and would often break down.

But now, thanks to a £5,000 grant from regional employer the Banks Group via its Banks Community Fund, a dozen new desktop PCs, software licences and a new printer have all been purchased, with the installation being carried out by local contractor Harrison IT Services with help from 82 year-old local resident and volunteer Gordon King.

The Hub currently provides a wide range of support to local people including drop-in support sessions, bespoke one to one support by appointment and small group sessions.

And with demand growing for its services in what is an economically challenged area, the team behind the employability project is hoping that the new equipment will give local people a better chance of getting into or returning to work.

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Ken Dobson, a director at Justice Prince CIC, says: "We're based right in the heart of the community, which makes accessing the support we provide as easy as possible, and we try to meet a wide range of differing support needs to give local people the best chance of getting the job they want.

"We've had real success over the years and want to keep doing as much as we can, but the problems we've been having with the old computers were becoming a real issue and we simply didn't have the money in the bank ourselves to get them all replaced.

"The funding we've had from the Banks Group will make a huge difference to the support we can provide in the future, and at a time where we're seeing a real growth in demand for the help we can provide, it will also have a big positive impact on the wider local community."

Chris Kelsey, communications manager at the Banks Group, adds: "The support, advice and time offered by Justice Prince makes a tremendous difference to the lives of local people in challenging situations, and the success they've had in helping hundreds of them find jobs is testament to how well they meet local needs.

"We're very pleased to be able to help the Employability Hub team continue their excellent work, and wish all those accessing their services the very best of luck in getting the jobs they're applying for."

The Banks Community Fund provides grants for community groups and voluntary organisations in the vicinity of Banks Group projects. Anyone interested in applying for funding should contact James Eaglesham at the Banks Community Fund on 0191 378 6342 to check if their group or project is eligible.

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For further press information, please contact Julian Christopher at Footprint Public Relations on 07891 005034 or via julianchristopher@btinternet.com

Notes to editors

Banks Community Fund

The Banks Community Fund supports local environmental and community improvement projects in the areas surrounding the Banks Group's operations.

The Banks Group was founded in 1976 in County Durham and now employs around 400 people. Banks' development with care approach ensures sites are developed in close consultation with the community as well as carrying out extensive environmental assessments. More information can be found at www.banksgroup.co.uk