



“Business Link has given us the advice, the help. They have been there when we’ve needed someone to talk to. They’ve pointed us in the right direction.”

Allen Davis, Sava Comp

Recycling computers presses all right buttons

Scores of families have joined the internet revolution thanks to Sava Comp – with a little help from Business Link Yorkshire.

The Keighley-based social enterprise, established in 2007, refurbishes and resells redundant computers. In its first year Sava Comp has saved about 11 tonnes of IT equipment from going into landfill.

At the same time it has provided invaluable work experience for unemployed people while enabling children from disadvantaged backgrounds to get on the information superhighway.

The computers are donated by organisations and individuals across West Yorkshire. “We check all the equipment to make sure it’s working,” explains Sava Comp’s co-founder Allen Davis. “PC hard drives are sanitised to government standards so no information is passed on to a third party.

“Any equipment that’s still of use, we refurbish and sell on to our target customers who are low income families, charities, start-up businesses, that sort of thing.”

With internet-ready PCs starting at £45 and its top-of-the-range system, complete with flat-screen monitor, only £225, Sava Comp brings computer technology into homes which would otherwise miss out.

“We believe that no child should be deprived of IT equipment, which they need for their schoolwork nowadays,” said Allen. “It’s not a luxury, it’s a necessity.”

Sava Comp rose from the ashes of education charity the Russell Street Project, which closed in 2007. The charity recycled computers and Allen, along with business colleague David Spencer, decided to turn this venture into a social enterprise.

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“Business Link has helped us to secure finance, given advice on marketing and recommended new sources of surplus equipment and product outlets. Its support has enabled Sava Comp to develop into an independent business – our first retail shop opened in September 2008”, continues Allen.

With Business Link guidance the enterprise has appointed non-executive directors to oversee its strategy and expanded into doing commercial computer repairs, upgrades and appliance testing.

Sava Comp provides work experience for seven volunteers who are either long-term unemployed or disabled. It has also taken on two pupils from local schools who are spending a few days each week learning how to repair and upgrade computers.

Allen is now discussing the future of the fledgling enterprise with Business Link. The shop will remain in its current premises until September 2009, when Allen hopes to have

found a new permanent venue in central Keighley.

“One idea I’ve had is to put an internet café within our store. That would complement what we’re already doing, promote our equipment and offer a low-cost facility for the local community.”

“Business Link is an important part of the team,” says Allen. “We’ve received all-round help. Our business adviser, David Morrissey, was another shoulder to lean on. If you’re doing something in isolation it’s quite scary: it is nice to have someone to bounce ideas off or offer support when you have doubts.”

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NB: A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose rather than being driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders or owners. (DTI, Social Enterprise Strategy 2002)

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