

## PRESS RELEASE

12 February 2012

### **Digital Unite to deliver pioneering digital inclusion programme with Affinity Sutton**

Digital Unite is working in partnership with Affinity Sutton, one of the largest providers of affordable housing in England, to deliver an innovative and multi-layered digital inclusion programme designed to develop, improve and embed digital skills for residents and staff.

This ground-breaking initiative forms an integral part of Affinity Sutton's Get Connected campaign – aimed at helping the housing provider to meet the challenges and opportunities arising from the Government's Welfare Reform and to tackle the wider issues of digital exclusion amongst its 161,000 residents.

Starting this month, the Get Connected Digital Champion programme of activity encompasses a wide range of support across to residents of all ages across the country. This initial phase will run until March 2014 and the work includes:

- Face-to-face computer learning sessions for residents in schemes and community hubs delivered by Digital Unite's network of quality assured tutors
- Digital Champion training for residents, volunteers and staff via tutor support and a bespoke e-learning tool. The e-learning includes tailored online courses such as managing personal finance, job hunting and accessing Government services online.
- An extensive marketing and recruitment campaign to raise awareness and engage and enthuse participants and stakeholders
- Data capture mechanics to enable high quality evaluation and full measurement of the programme's impact and reach.

The project will be showcased at the forthcoming Social Housing Digifest on Thursday 7 March which is being held in London by Digital Unite and Affinity Sutton. This free event is aimed at housing providers and will explore and promote practical ways of digitally enabling housing communities. Visit [www.digitalunite.com](http://www.digitalunite.com) for more details.

Emma Solomon OBE, Managing Director of Digital Unite said: "Digital Unite has been working with social housing for over ten years. We know that better digital skills throughout these organisations – from head office staff, to in scheme staff to residents – have a huge impact on overall organisational efficiency as well as realising profound personal benefits such as a reduction in loneliness and isolation, personal cost savings and an enhanced sense of community and 'connectedness'. Indeed, with the Government's Welfare Reforms driving people to access services and benefits online better digital skills is becoming essential.

"We are convinced that the most effective, strategic approach to reaping such rewards is to embed digital skills – and a passion for realising them – throughout the whole organisation. That is the foundation from which we have developed this Digital Champion programme and we are excited about the possibilities it offers. We congratulate Affinity

Sutton on taking this bold and inspiring step and we very much look forward to helping them realise a bigger, better and brighter digitally-enabled future.”

Stephanie Noyce, Head of Financial Inclusion, Affinity Sutton said: “Our emphasis is on how we change peoples’ lifestyles so that the internet becomes integrated into their everyday live. Working with Digital Unite on this Digital Champion project will make our digital inclusion work much more impactful in the long term, not just a “fad” with our beneficiaries. The data was get back from the project will be invaluable to us as we refine and adapt our offer for residents today and residents of the future.”

### **About Digital Unite**

Digital Unite is an independent organisation and one of the leading providers of digital skills learning in the UK. The company has been helping housing providers and other community organisations to deliver digital inclusion strategies and activities through a range of products and services. This includes online courses to develop Digital Champion skills, an extensive and free collection of [online learning guides](#), a quality assured network of tutors and the award-winning [Spring Online campaign](#) which this year takes place between 22 – 26 April.

### **About Affinity Sutton**

With 57,000 homes and a one hundred year history, Affinity Sutton is one of the biggest providers of affordable housing in England. As a business for social purpose we’re committed to helping people put down roots. We act as a springboard, maximising life chances for our residents and creating places for communities to thrive.

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For further information please contact Katharine Teed, Communications Manager at Digital Unite on 0800 228 9272 / 07801 138383.