

## 2008 marks big year for istop

This bulletin aims to give stakeholders and interested parties a short update on the introduction of istop information and shopping kiosks across the UK <http://www.istopkiosks.co.uk>



## JobcentrePlus endorses link

JobPoint is a free service from Jobcentre Plus, part of the Department of Work and Pensions. It contains thousands of local job and further training opportunities and is currently available on all istop kiosks.

Sheelagh Keyse, Director, Customer Services Directorate, Jobcentre Plus recently told 'intouch', "Jobcentre Plus is delighted to work with istop in bringing a range of information and services to customers through its network of local kiosks. By linking customers to the Jobcentre Plus website, the kiosks provide an invaluable resource for anyone looking for work or who may need information about welfare benefits.

"For each week this year, our website has received an average of 2 million user visits and handled an average of 6 million job searches – providing access to this service for even more people can only be seen as a good thing."

Sheelagh will be visiting the North East of England in the spring to get an update on istop kiosks at work in the community and to meet local retailers.

**jobcentreplus**

Part of the Department  
for Work and Pensions

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## What are istop kiosks?

- istop is a stand-alone touch-screen information and shopping kiosk
- It offers a solution to social and digital exclusion by allowing people of all ages in rural and urban areas to have equal access to online services as the rest of the population
- Kiosks are sited in local shops and other community facilities
- istop kiosks help local and national government by providing local communities with **free, self-service** information and advice about health, housing, education, family, employment and benefit services. They also provide communities with extra shopping choice (healthcare, toys, gifts) and independent retailers with additional income
- The concept has the backing and involvement of JobcentrePlus, National Federation of SubPostmasters, the Rural Shops Alliance and StartHere

**Want to know more about istop?**

See [www.istopkiosks.co.uk](http://www.istopkiosks.co.uk)

or call now on 0800 008 6727



## Strong year for StartHere

The charity StartHere was established in 1998 after research highlighted the gap in the information chain between those needing help and the support that is available to them. This research found that 68% of the population is unaware of a support group or voluntary organisation that could help them, and around 70% off all 999 calls are non-emergencies.

As a result, StartHere developed a free, self-help, signposting service built around the needs of the user.

It is designed to be an accessible, easy-to-use starting point for anyone looking for information on a range of health, housing, education, employment, welfare and social issues.

The charity recently launched a number of projects to tackle exclusion by improving access to information and support. One user said: "As a mother of a special needs child, I accept help wherever it is offered. StartHere didn't only answer my questions, it prompted



me with further questions I hadn't considered. It was invaluable and eased the pressure of seeking specialised information at an already stressful time."

StartHere provides information on over 300 subjects and directs users to relevant national and local support organisations.

The North East version of StartHere is available on all istop kiosks.

## Local retailer praises istop

Maxine Raine, owner of St John's Chapel Post Office & Newsagency near Bishop Auckland, has nothing but praise for her new istop kiosk. St John's Chapel has just 500 residents but serves a wider community of nearly 1000 people.

She says, "It's been really positive having the istop here. Our customers especially appreciate the job-seekers information. One local 19 year-old girl

has been coming in every day to check job notices. Without the kiosk she would have to travel 20 miles to the nearest Job Centre. We see a good mix of people using istop too; it's not just the young ones. Everyone seems to get on with it very well. Even those that need a bit of help soon get the hang of it so it certainly doesn't interfere with me getting on with my work. I think it's got great potential and there's a lot of demand for the shopping side too."



## Influential supporters

istop benefits from the wholehearted backing of a number of influential national organisations. These currently include the Rural Shops Alliance, the National Federation of Sub Postmasters and the North East Portal (part of the One North East Regional Development Agency).

All of these organisations share the same concerns about social and digital exclusion and are committed to finding constructive, workable solutions to prevent the problem from becoming an unbridgeable divide.

Vincent Robinson OBE, Former North-East Director of the Department of Employment and Jobcentre Plus is among a number of individuals who

are also working hard to raise awareness of the benefits and advantages of istop kiosks.

Vince says, "I am delighted to be associated with such a unique and innovative programme, which is designed to respond precisely to the needs of people who are often overlooked within our communities."



## Website update completed

The istop kiosk website is an excellent source of information for retailers, new partners and istop customers. It includes a regularly updated list of all current istop kiosk locations plus an FAQs page (frequently asked questions) and a variety of downloadable photos of

our kiosks, particularly for use by the press. The istop website is an excellent place to start if you want to find out more about the partners behind the istop concept and plans for future developments across the UK. [www.istopkiosks.co.uk](http://www.istopkiosks.co.uk)



## Mobile istop takes to the road

The launch of the first istop Mobile Roadshow allows istop kiosks to take to the road in urban and rural areas and to create awareness amongst a wider audience. The Roadshows are part of an ongoing istop programme designed to educate local communities, assist with technical questions and marketing support, and to engage on a one-to-one basis with local people.

The specially-fitted out Citroen vehicles give up to four potential customers at a time the chance to see the kiosks in action and to take short, simple lessons from the istop experts in how to use them.

The istop Development Team has received an enthusiastic response to their "space age" demonstrator vehicles so far.

"People seem to appreciate the chance to trial the istop technology in private and to see for themselves how easy it is to use. It's particularly good for people who are wary of new technology as our interactive demonstrations provide reassurance and a bit of fun," says istop Managing Director, Jon Savitt.

The istop Mobile Roadshows will be on the road in the North East from March. Further dates, times and locations will be announced in future 'In Touch' bulletins. Also check the website for updates.

Mobile Roadshows are available, on request, to any organisation interested in understanding and seeing the istop kiosk concept at first hand. They can be taken anywhere in the UK.



## How does kiosk shopping work?

Apart from free information and advice services, istop kiosks also give retailers an important extra source of income – all without having to make room for any new stock.

The istop touch-screen gives shoppers the chance to enter a section called 'DAWN' shopping. It works in a similar way to online shopping.



Customers can browse for a variety of products, including electronic items such as MP3 players, video games and digital radios, plus educational toys and healthcare or beauty products such as hairdryers and perfumes. Customers make their selection, print out a confirmation ticket and take this to the counter where they pay the retailer. Deliveries are then made back to the store a day or so later.

Customers benefit from added shopping choice on their doorstep and very keen prices, while retailers receive a commission on every item sold through DAWN on istop.



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## Kiosk development expertise

The team behind istop kiosks has an extensive knowledge and ability to design and implement both kiosk software and hardware. This pedigree has been developed over the past five years in the UK's independent retail sector. Says istop Managing Director, Jon Savitt, "We live in an information hungry age but, unfortunately, this is fast creating a divided world. Those that can and do understand the internet

and have access to broadband are privileged. But it doesn't have to be that way. istop kiosks are just one way of helping our society to prevent creeping segregation. Issues such as education, age, PC access or geography should not exclude people from having equal access to information and, more importantly, job opportunities and financial benefits."



## Rural Services Network

istop will be making a presentation to the Rural Services Network in March. This is a brief explanation of the aims and objectives of this national group.

The Rural Services Network (RSN) is a 250-member organisation that seeks to represent, argue for, and network across all rural services. Current members include 85 Local Authorities, Police Forces and Authorities, Fire Services, Housing Associations, Health and Ambulance organisations and a variety of other service organisations. This is the first time such a grouping has come

together making it the only group to concentrate on Rural Service provision in England.

RSN is linked to an All Party Parliamentary Group established in 2007 and, through a Sub Group, also brings together Universities who specialise in rural issues. A new website on rural service issues has also just been launched - [www.rsnonline.org.uk](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk).

Graham Biggs, Chief Officer of the Group explains, "Many people have a chocolate box image about rural issues

because of their mind set concerning rural scenery. The truth is, however, far from pretty.

"In reality rural services are more expensive because of the distances involved, need to replicate service points on access grounds and due to lack of economies of scale. This is seldom properly reflected in any Government funding formulas that are necessary to underpin any public service. In addition the Targets Performance Indicators and Standards that service providers are required to work to often mean concentration on more urban parts of even rural areas. As the doctrine of critical-mass producing savings gains ever more momentum rural services come under more and more threat. There is a danger that the issues involved are not receiving sufficient focus and we are keen to see a proper debate. Millions of people live in rural areas and they are clearly becoming increasingly disadvantaged by where they live. We are in danger of failing a quarter of the population of England. The network exists to allow proper discussion on this issue and to argue for change based on a firm evidence base following robust research."



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