

Personalised Technology & Hft

Background

Hft has been developing ICT for adults with a learning disability since 1999 and some assistive technology was used around input devices to help access computers. In 2004 Hft secured a 3 year ESF (European Social Fund) funded project, TATE (Through Assistive Technology to Employment). The initial focus was on underpinning knowledge and skills (software) and innovative assistive technology solutions. Eighteen months before the end of the project it was suggested that we should have been including existing products such as telecare, environmental controls, automatic lighting etc. There was little evidence that any organisation (apart from a small provider in Wales) had tried these technology based solutions with people with a learning disability.

TATE highlighted the potential benefits of using assistive technologies to support people with learning disabilities. It developed the concept of person centered technology (later personalised technology), which includes telecare, environmental controls, telehealth and other electronic assistive technologies. As part of the project, a very small scientific evaluation was conducted. This highlighted significant cost savings when using PT, but did not give much insight into the impact on the quality of life experienced by people using PT.

It also highlighted that telecare was essentially seen as the domain of the ageing population and environmental controls the domain of people with physical disabilities. Provision of equipment was generally made via providers of social housing or care homes, as part of the environment or via health provision. Funding streams varied.

The aim of the project was to reframe provision around an assessment of need that included an ethical code, referral, self-assessment and consent, which allowed for changing needs and on-going support.

Since the TATE project ended Hft has built on the lessons learned and worked hard to implement PT across the organisation and also raise awareness of PT – both internally at Hft and also externally.

More recently, the two main environmental factors have stimulated a great deal of interest in PT:

- The growing awareness of the size of the market
- The recession

Hft started using Personalised Technology (PT) before the recession had really 'hit'. But there is little academic evidence of the benefits of PT and there is increasing pressure to highlight the economic benefits. Consequently Hft has commissioned a research company to develop a 'tool' to assess the benefits (or not) on the quality of life, level of dependency and economy in the use of PT. The first results (80 individuals) show that there is a significant benefit in the quality of life and less dependency on staff (save money). However, PT is not a one off solution. People's needs change and some solutions may no longer be required while other solutions may be required.

Activity Report

The latest grant has been from Technology Strategy Board (TSB – now Innovate UK) funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The overall project is called ‘dallas’ (delivering assisted living lifestyles at scale). From over 800 registered interested organisations, through a series of workshops and eliminations, four partnerships with approximately 35 organisations were successful. Hft is one of the lead organisations and on the board of the Liverpool ‘Mi’ (More Independent) partnership led by the Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG, formerly the Primary Care Trust). The partnership was awarded £7.8 million (3 years from 1st June 2012) subsidised by a further £5million from the CCG.

‘dallas’ is an attempt to encourage communities to look at new ways and methodologies to enhance its overall health and economic sustainability at scale. The ‘assisted living’ part in ‘dallas’ is very much supported by Hft’s development of PT. Essentially the way Hft approaches the use of PT with the issue first can be transferred to other groups, including vulnerable groups and the general public. This has required Hft to develop generic mobile and virtual smart houses and modify its training for the different stakeholders (volunteers, carers, social workers, front line clinicians). Probably more importantly ‘dallas’ is giving Hft the opportunity to raise the issues associated with learning disability with commissioners (social care and health) both locally to Liverpool and nationally.

References

www.hftsmarthouse.org.uk

www.hfttechnologystore.org.uk

www.moreindependent.co.uk

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