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Case study, May 2013: maximising benefits from a one-off national grants programme

Get Connected
Funding ICT to support personalisation and workforce development in adult social care in England

Users of social care services are frequently digitally excluded. If they are resident in a care or nursing home there is likely to be limited access (if any) to ICT. Many people receiving domiciliary care are likely to be in the most excluded group - people of pension age in lower income groups. Staff working in care services often have limited access to ICT, although there is a wealth of online learning and information resources available. Being able to communicate freely, whatever your age or disability, should be considered a basic outcome for adult social care users and carers.

Get Connected set out to do three things:
1. To offer grant funding to small independent sector adult social care providers to improve their access to ICT and the equipment they had available. The providers had to define a project that offered benefits to those who used their services and/or to staff in support of eLearning.
2. To improve the link between social care and ICT, through partnership working, in particular to provide information on ICT set ups, identify trusted suppliers and help care providers to get started in using ICT.
3. To embed access to ICT as an expected standard for social care providers to adopt.

This project, funded by the Department of Health (DH) and managed by SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence), created partnerships with the Charity Technology Trust [(CTT)](#) and [Lasa](#). SCIE advertised in four cycles during 2010 and 2011 the opportunity to bid for up to £20,000 for an ICT project. Large care providers and statutory agencies were excluded, and medium sized providers had to match fund. Bids were screened for project objectives, technical competence and fair value for money for equipment included and prices.

At the end of the programme the following reflections were shared on the outcomes from Get Connected:
- 1242 grants made across England to small care services of all kinds, with great stories on the uses of ICT by users and staff. All grants listed on the SCIE website with photographs from work funded
- Solidly researched independent outcome evaluations: one on the project itself from ARP and two from NIACE in partnership with IES – all published on the [SCIE website](#)
- Case studies produced by the NIACE and IES team showing ICT in action in social care – all on the [SCIE website](#)
- Two guides written for care workers, one on getting online and one on using ICT with people with dementia which is ground-breaking – both available on the SCIE website. For a free printed copy of *Get Connected to elearning for social care providers* email GC-Elearning@scie.org.uk.
- A detailed literature review from IES on the knowledge base behind using ICT with people with dementia – available on the SCIE website
- Two additional MORI polls (2009 and 2012) to add to an original one done in 2006 tracking the use of ICT in social care, particularly for eLearning. They show the situation improving but still staff are doing more with ICT at home than their managers think they are able to do at work. All three polls are on the SCIE website.
- Excellent case studies and evaluation from the Rix Centre which had a small grant to support a number of care providers working on multi-media advocacy for people with communication needs. The films are inspiring and are available to view on the Rix Centre website www.rixcentre.org.uk

Spin off developments that Get Connected contributed to are also exciting:

- Early interest from the Care Quality Commission in ICT use in social care as an element of ensuring that users of service can communicate as well as add to their information and entertainment options
- The Digital Champion ITQ award developed by Digital Unite to support people getting online which SCIE staff helped to pilot. More information on www.digitalunite.com.uk
- Providing advice to AgeUK on their guide to the digital inclusion of older people in care homes, spreading the message more widely – available on the AgeUK website www.ageuk.org.uk *The Digital Inclusion of Older People in Care Homes*
- Finding a care home in Reading that Microsoft staff could volunteer in (supporting ICT use) as part of their community outreach project
- SCIE are members of the stakeholder group for Carer+. The project with is co-financed by the EU aims to support the development of digital competences and digitally supported professional skills for care workers. For more information see www.carerplusproject.eu
- UK online centres have funding for 2013/14 for a new Specialist Network which will focus on engaging with older people who are socially and digitally excluded – http://www.ukonlinecentres.com/media-centre/latest-news/item/1418-new-specialist-networks-launched.html
- Supporting the bid from Lasa to DH which has resulted in them being awarded funding for three years for *Connecting Care* which will specifically take forward learning from Get Connected to:
  - Improve the capacity of care providers to use technology to deliver services and improve efficiency
  - Develop care staff skills and confidence to use technology to support their care practice, and to improve choice of care and support
  - Develop opportunities for care service users to use technology for peer support, knowledge and information; increase communication, build confidence and manage care needs.
  - There is more information on Lasa's website www.lasa.org.uk

Get Connected also won a Technology4Good Award for partnership working in 2012.

In more detail:

By December 2011, 1241 services had received funding totalling some £12 million. 86% were registered care or nursing homes, 10% domiciliary care agencies, 4% other services (including day services, drop in centres, women's refuges). The average grant requested was just over £12,000, the average paid £9,631, and some 75,000 users, 44,000 carers and 40,000 staff are estimated to have benefited directly from the funding.

Guidance was provided on getting set up with ICT by LASA, adapted for care services. LASA also provided a list of accredited suppliers of ICT equipment and services that grant recipients could use. Care providers did not have to choose from the list, the emphasis was on getting a good relationship with a supplier to help with the successful implementation of their project and contribute to its sustainability. SCIE subsequently

Managers, users and staff reported positive outcomes from their Get Connected project, generally exceeding their expectations. They provided examples of improved communication, including using e-mail and Skype; enhanced activities; support for learning and up-dating knowledge; and access to information that allowed choices such as shopping and price comparisons. Managers added that visitors were on some sites using Wi-Fi access to bring in their own laptops and tablets to share activities, which was particularly popular with younger visitors. As a by-product of the ICT investment examples were given of administrative gains such as improved care recording and sharing, rota management and joint working with NHS professionals.