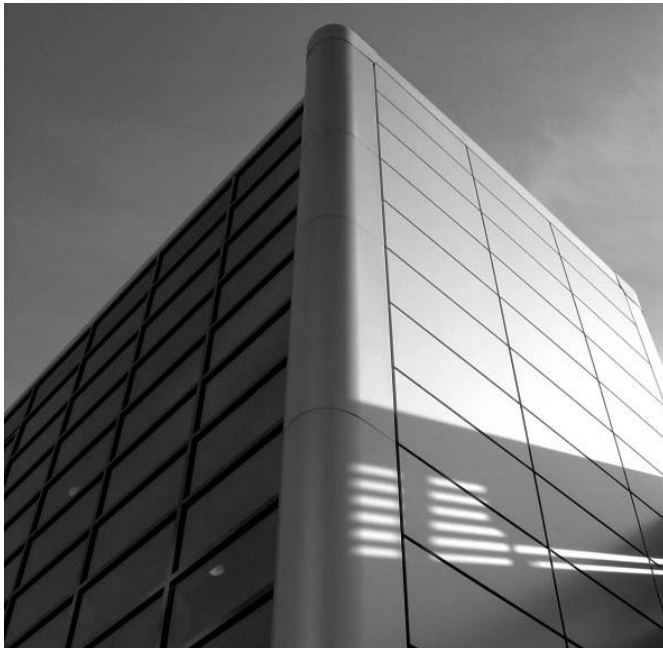


“Our role is to help physically disabled people move from 'I can't do' to 'I can do' through exploring the world that IT enables.”

David Halpin, Service Manager, Physical Disability, Lancashire County Council Social Service Directorate



Customer's Challenge

The traditional emphasis for the physically disabled has been medical rehabilitation, which is based on how well individuals can perform daily living tasks. However, while physically disabled people may have successfully met the criteria for medical rehabilitation, they have often found themselves isolated and unable to find employment. In response to this, in recent years the government has set targets that relate to reducing social exclusion.

David Halpin is Service Manager, Physical Disability within Lancashire County Council Social Services Directorate. *“These centres used to be the end of the medical and social care line for many people”* he explained. *“What we had to do was transform each of them to be a starting point instead. This meant we had to change from providing an old fashioned day care centre to providing a service that encourages users to develop their own identities.”*

The new focus was on personal achievement and every centre attendee was encouraged to develop an individual action plan (IAP). This was to be agreed between the service user and the centre staff and would include practical real life objectives, such as feeling more confident about making a visit to a library or a restaurant.

David Halpin recognised that the new emphasis on lifelong learning and the application of learning to enrich daily life would involve a cultural shift for Lancashire County Council. *“The service is no longer simply offering day care; there is a cultural shift to the provision of tailored individual action driven programmes.”*

The first challenge was to find a tool to enable a different approach and a partner to help implement it. When one of David's team came across Fujitsu's concept of Cyberskills she immediately identified a fit both with the council's new targets for social rehabilitation and with user needs. *“I could see that Cyberskills was about problem solving and connections with other people,”* said Janet Gray. *“The next challenge was to obtain funding.”*

Fujitsu's Solution

David Halpin sought advice from Fujitsu to help the council to identify potential sources of funding. *“We believed that using IT as a tool for social change in this environment would be successful”* commented David Halpin. *“When we justified this belief, we were successfully awarded funding.”*

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

Organisation	Lancashire County Council Social Service Directorate
Contract signing date	July 2002
Service/s delivered	Managed Service delivery to five resource centres for the physically disabled, as well as change management advice, user training and support and a Helpdesk facility
Key metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of 5 Cyberskills suites
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services is more effectively meeting user rehabilitation, social exclusion and e-Government targets • Increased efficiency of service delivery • Users report increased self-confidence in daily life • Users can connect with other centres, local resources, Councillors and each other via video conferencing and email

CASE STUDY
LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
SOCIAL SERVICE DIRECTORATE

The council was able to buy Fujitsu's Cyberskills managed service for five centres. The service includes a proven methodology, hardware, software, implementation advice and user support. A contract with Fujitsu was signed in July 2002.

Our Approach

Within the managed service contract, Fujitsu not only took responsibility for all technical requirements, but also advised the council on managing change. Fujitsu worked with the centre managers to help to explain new developments to service users through simple and positive messages such as 'people first, technology second'.

All planning meetings took place in resource centres and Fujitsu's experts spent time with staff to explain how Cyberskills could feed into IAPs. A project newsletter kept users informed of progress and of the opportunities that Cyberskills would bring.

IT facilities were installed in five centres early in 2003. Centre staff members were trained in February and the council appointed a dedicated coordinator to give them ongoing support. The approach was very low key. Members of staff voluntarily prepared presentations to capture the interest and imagination of service users. For example, one presenter set up a video conference with a friend in Australia. The emphasis was on peer learning and the gradual dissemination of skills so that centres would build up their own in-house expertise.

Our Expertise

"Fujitsu connected with us very quickly" said David Halpin. "Our enthusiasm was easily matched by that of Fujitsu's people. They appreciated the educational and social aspects of the project; they understood that we work with vulnerable adults in a sensitive environment and their insight really helped to develop our ideas further."

Fujitsu recommended a consistent colour and décor for the five IT suites so that the whole project became a more tangible entity. Fujitsu's experts worked with centre managers to work out the best configuration for equipment, taking into consideration such issues as accessibility for wheel chair and special needs service users.

Benefits to our Customer

"Cyberskills is about people seeing that they have a choice and taking more control of their lives" said David Halpin. "Yes, it is about taking the scariness out of IT but on a deeper level it's about having a better sense of self. It's about solving a series of problems, transferring these skills into daily life and engaging with society more confidently. The investment we've made tells people they are worth it."

The new IT facilities are helping both users and members of staff to alter their expectations of themselves and increase their resilience. The wider outcomes will be seen

through IAPs and the visions that service users have. As David Halpin commented, *"We are not teaching techniques or pressurising people to get a job. We simply provide the opportunity for people to feel more comfortable about themselves."*

Users can connect up with other Cyberskills centres, local resources, Councillors and each other via video conferencing and e-mail. This means they can communicate with people who face similar challenges; they can access and create a wider community via the web. As each centre has laptops and digital cameras, the housebound are not excluded and active users are free to pursue personal projects away from the resource centres.

Cyberskills activities generate much discussion as users pass on tips; hot topics include family and local history. *"It has opened up a whole new world for me and I love it"* said one user. *"I never realised what I was missing"* said another. Through the Internet a single mother regained contact with a brother she had not seen for 15 years; she was overjoyed at extending her family. Several users have made peer presentations on subjects of immediate interest, such as better government for older people (BGOP).

Fujitsu provides a help desk facility so members of staff can focus on their professional responsibilities and on meeting government targets for UK online.

David Halpin said, *"We are using Cyberskills as a tool for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery so that we can reduce dependency. We can clearly see how the problem solving process and new skills are influencing service user IAPs. The emphasis is now on reaching more disabled people by enabling a throughput of users through the resource centres."*

ASK FUJITSU

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