

IT Makes a Difference

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I am going to present the national perspective on the Alliance with Users in the context of Inclusive eGovernment. That means I am going to talk about how IT in public services can make a difference to everybody including the most disadvantaged and socially excluded people. My Team and national programme exist because we believe that IT can make a difference to people through alignment with users' needs. And make a difference to the nation through the positive social and economic results that you get if you do that.

So that means a win-win for the nation and users through the alliance. How does that work? Well, think about this...

Please view the movie "Think About IT..." available online from March 2008 at www.digiteam.org.uk

So, IT Makes a Difference, to the lives and life chances of disadvantaged people and to social exclusion. I shall briefly tell you about our national approach (which is about England). As far as I know it is unique.

We work towards the Manchester Declaration i2010 goal for Inclusive eGovernment. The political ambition in that is that when you take public services, add in ICT to help deliver them, then **everybody** has to benefit, **including** – especially – the disadvantaged and the socially excluded.

That means, to do that, we have to think beyond putting government transactions on the web. They are not important to everybody, and not everybody can use them. We have to think about what works for the users and delivers benefits. We have to think about other delivery channels that use ICT. And we have to think about partnerships with the organizations that deliver services to disadvantaged people, often local, often not part of government.

Let's set the national perspective in context, contrasting it with European and regional or local perspectives

We expect that at European level we set targets to give us all something to aim for, to raise the bar for us all. We expect to have the facility – such as through ePractice.eu to share resources, to network and to exchange knowledge. And as part of the open method of coordination, we expect Europe to create the famous league tables, to compare our member state performance and encourage us to match the best.

At local and regional level it is much simpler. That is where the work gets done. When we are focusing on disadvantaged people, most services are organized locally. So the aim there is to just Do It!

That leaves us at **national** level to do five things.

- to **lead**: set the direction for the country – say who has to do what and how? Explain what it is all about. Inspire action.
- to **connect**: make links between people, projects, and ideas to generate new ideas, projects and services. For example, people who understand the problems of social exclusion rarely connect with people who understand technical solutions – we must make that connection to create new ICT-based services.
- to **facilitate**: help good things happen by making positive interventions to support projects get off the ground and to remove barriers to success
- to **transfer**: find out what works and take it somewhere else
- to **scale**: find out what works and make it bigger to help more people

So in our national programme – what do we do about these? We have **three** main areas of action.

To achieve all of these: we must switch emphasis from innovation and pilots to driving the adoption and operation of things that have worked somewhere else. That means we have to integrate new ways of working in local administration **service delivery**. That is, to mainstream in local public services.

The main thing we are using to do that is the current change to the way the performance of local government in England is managed and monitored by central government. New roles, new performance measures and new audit procedures are being designed. With those there will be systems and resources to support local governments and their service delivery partnerships. We are involved in that whole change to embed the principles of using ICT to deliver the social outcomes they need. With us on this are Sunderland Council creating a leading example of a digital place, a collaborative group of 10 local authorities, and a central scheme to identify other leading example local authorities who will share their expertise.

To enable us to lead, connect, facilitate and scale, we are working with a small number of local authorities on **projects**, to identify and create IT-based services that address local social exclusion challenges. These bring together people from different organizations and skills to deliver a change in local service operations. And the **users**: an alliance with users. These are not technology projects or pilots, they are there to design and prove new operating and financial models for services to disadvantaged people.

One example is in North Lincolnshire. We are focussing on the needs of children who have been taken into the care of the local authority and are either looked after in an institution or by another family. The local authority acts as the parent. We have worked with the care workers, the children, the local officials, charities and technology suppliers to identify and specify two possible systems that help the children when they are in care and when they leave it to set out on their own. We have helped develop the business cases for new ways of working, and

are on the point of initiating implementation projects. The projects are owned locally, not by us. We have facilitated, and aim to learn lessons and take out products that can be transferred and scaled.

Third, to reinforce our role in leading and connecting, we commission lots of **research**. The aim is to find out what is going on, what isn't happening, and to tell everyone. That helps point our work and the work of others in the most useful direction, and help spot connections that we might make.

Here are three examples of our research.

The first thing we did was a study of what was happening in England and elsewhere on the use of ICT in projects and services for socially excluded groups of people. We mapped projects, policies, case studies and organizations, and called it our landscape. It has helped us focus on where the least amount of work was already happening, and connect many initiatives that were unaware of each other.

In contrast, we commissioned a deep look at a narrow topic the current state of the art in using ICT in supporting people with mental health problems, mainly through remote counseling and psychotherapy. It assembled evidence and analysed what needs to be done to achieve successful outcomes.

And to show what could happen if lots of things were connected in one place, we made up a story — Peter's Story. This is a story about the journey to a better life by a young man in a very bad situation. He is helped by eleven ICT-based projects and services. The eleven projects and services are real: they exist in the UK. Peter is made up, but he could be one of 150,000 young people. What is not real is the ability of someone like Peter to use all these services: they are not available in a single package anywhere. The point of the story is to illustrate the power of connecting, transferring and scaling things that work somewhere else already. Let's watch Peter's Story now.

Please view the movie "Peter's Story" available online from March 2008 at www.digiteam.org.uk

Here are the links to find our work and the research I mentioned. Two are in the cases area of ePractice.eu.

www.digiteam.org.uk

www.epractice.eu/cases/mentalhealthonline

www.epractice.eu/cases/petersstory

IT can make a difference. In ways you may not expect. Think about it. Thank you.