

## **Submission for evidence**

The “icare” Project in the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) is an innovative project established in November 2012 to develop the use of Multi Media across all vulnerable client groups so that individuals have access to different technology to communicate, make choices and ultimately improve their lives.

Funding was secured by a “Dragon’s Den” event, hosted by LBWF, in which Councillors and lay members of a panel judged submissions for funding. The Project secured 30k of funding for equipment. A worker was appointed part time to support the Project, and the membership of the Project Group was open to all front line staff and service users, alongside Managers. The Project Group meetings, minutes, Terms of Reference, and any documents were made accessible and used Multi Media where appropriate. This innovative partnership approach enabled service users to be equal partners in the decision making, setting the agenda, shaping the direction of the Project, and evaluating the Project.

Service users shaped the Project Plan, the milestones and gave feedback to the monthly Project Group. Service users and staff within the Project Group volunteered to become “champions” in their services. Right from the start front line staff and service users worked together to experiment, embrace, and enthuse different ways of working on a day to day basis. This learning and practice was then fed back to the monthly Project Group meetings, with action agreed for the following month. Project Plans were kept simple and accessible to all.

The aim was to have equipment in place, accessible, and also to train at least 100 staff and service users within a year across older people and learning disability services in using the equipment. So far we have met this target already, within a year.

A key objective was to support better communication, and to demonstrate individual choice and control through the use of Multi Media. This has been achieved by detailing the outcomes for individuals- whether it’s the use of Skype to keep in contact with relatives, or a video used in a Review meeting, or incorporating a MP3 player into a rummage bag as an activity.

To be successful the Project needed to ensure that the multimedia equipment purchased was fit for purpose, useful, accessible and enabling service users to communicate. So flexibility and creativity were key principles in the design of the Project, as the project needed to be able to actively listen to, and quickly respond and act upon how service users were using the equipment: the Project had to be in tune with what was working well for individuals or groups and come up with solutions

to any problems. Initially we borrowed and brought a limited range of equipment, to test out what worked for individuals, evaluated and analysed what was working, and then the Project Group decided how to spend the remaining budget. From this, the Project Group decided initially to focus on offering MP3 players, cameras and Tablets. This then evolved to using videos, touchscreen laptops and mobile phones.

Service user involvement is a key element of the Project, with a robust feedback loop to ensure that service user's experience of using the equipment is captured, evaluated and used as foundation for the next step. Service user involvement with rapid action towards the next step has contributed to innovation within the Project.

The impact of offering MP3 players has been immediate, especially with those service users living with Dementia and those within the learning disability services with challenging behaviour. There is already substantial research on the power of music within different client groups, and the use of MP3 players with individualised playlists reduced challenging behaviour, anxiety and also provided an activity that individuals could initiate themselves. For example, Sue, one woman living with advanced Dementia, who would usually stay standing on her feet and walking, began to sit down and enjoy listening to music. A man with learning disabilities, who usually become agitated at lunch times settled down instead to listen to his personal playlist.

Throughout the project videos and photos are used to document work, outcomes, and our learning. This has also meant that Services have a catalogue of photos to share with referrals, to show what sort of work Teams do, plus to showcase what individual service users can do for them. At Reviews, the individual can use photos and videos to share with social workers and families- the individual remains in control and centre to their Review.

Videos made by service users have been one of the achievements- within a few months of the start of the Project a film made by a service user David as part of the Project was shown at the Tate Modern in London. People living with dementia are currently making a film about "Memories". We have also used videos to demonstrate how to use gadgets, what we are doing, how we are doing it, so the examples above have video evidence to show what a difference the Project is having both on individuals and as a collective force to change how we work. By viewing videos staff and managers understand the power of what we are doing, and how we can change what staff offer within services and therefore change people's lives.

The success of the project is not just reliant on skills and abilities; it's about values and passion. Feedback from staff has included comments like "It has opened my eyes" and "I believed it was not going to work, but I was wrong". The membership of the Project has included bus escorts, admin staff and care assistants, with membership based on values, passion and enthusiasm. Service users with a range

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of disabilities, from a cross selection of client groups, have been equal partners and this unique partnership has enabled innovation within this Project.

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