



Community Lives Consortium is fully committed to changing the way that we support people to have their say and express themselves. Too often we are introduced to the people we support by being given a file with information about the person in, written by professionals. Needless to say the written text does not capture the true personality and individuality of the person and rarely gets updated. Crucially multimedia recording is allowing people to describe themselves in the way that they want to, which is proving to be far more effective, engaging and most importantly empowering.

Social work is currently undergoing change. With initiatives such as Direct Payments, In Control, personalisation, Individualised Budgets, Assisted Homebuy and Assistive Technology it is important that service users have an effective way of communicating choices they make in their lives.

Multimedia is a very powerful tool in supporting people to express choice and record their lives. Multimedia supports the use of Person Centred Planning (or Person Centred Approaches). Person Centred Planning (PCP) is a way of working along side individuals who wants to make changes in their lives. It's a way of finding out where people want their lives to go and what needs to be done to get there. PCP assumes that everyone has hopes and dreams and that those aspirations will change and grow with experience. PCP is not something which can be done quickly neither is it something which gets done once only, it should be a vibrant and enjoyable process which the person takes an active role in, as much as their ability allows them to.

In recent years multimedia hardware such as cameras and simple to use video cameras have reduced in price and increased in quality. There are now many very simple to use cameras also making it much easier and less scary to use. In addition multimedia software on computers has become much better, simpler to use and in many cases free to download, using the combination of camera and software simple yet superb results are within the grasp of even the most technophobic people.

Having seen the power of multimedia being used in this way and recognising the need to help people gain the skills required, Community Lives Consortium has developed a course for managers and staff called 'Supporting Participation through ICT, commonly being referred to as 'SPICT'. The course piloted during 2008 and has undergone a number of redesigns following positive feedback from participants. The course is now running within Community Lives Consortium with a view to all it's staff and managers receiving training by 2011.

What does SPICT training involve?

The main SPICT course is a 3 day course. However we also run a one day SPICT awareness course designed for managers who may not necessarily need to use all of the skill themselves but will need to understand what their staff have learnt and are going to be using. We are also in the process of designing a train the trainer SPICT course which can be delivered so that other agencies can deliver SPICT for themselves.

3 Day Course

Day 1 concentrates on the principles of Person Centred Planning. It is not a passive day though there is still plenty of opportunity for participation. Various workshops will introduce PCP tools, cover legislation and the benefits and ethics of PCP. The workshops are practical and relevant to the participants' work experiences. The

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group is encouraged to discuss experiences and to find ways of integrating PCP into present work practice. The day provides practice for people to use the tools for themselves as a way of reinforcing the learning.

Day 2 introduces Swansea People and Places, a social networking site for adults with learning disabilities, their friends, families and other supporters. The participants will have accounts created for them and have the opportunity to create their own profiles and use other functions of the site such as the instant chat feature. Having created their accounts all other work generated during the remainder of the SPICT course will be saved using People and Places allowing them to revisit and access their work at any time, in fact many participants are so excited about their achievements they want to show their families when they get home, how often do you hear that on a training course?

The remainder of day 2 focuses on the power of Lifestories and why they are effective and beneficial to the people we support. Participants are taught to create a personal Lifestory using PowerPoint. Even with basic computer skills, staff are still able produce powerful and creative Lifestories. During learning how to put their Lifestory together participants will be taught how to use the internet effectively for resources such as pictures, video and sounds. Participants will also be shown how to record their own sounds and include them within their Lifestory; needless to say this session is a lot of fun but very empowering.

Day 3 concentrates on multimedia hardware and software - the use of the Flip video camera, a webcam, Photostory 3 for Windows (basic software which produces a presentation from photographs). Participants will have the opportunity to record their own video footage and then use the computer to make a short video diary with it. Participants are generally surprised at how much they have been able to achieve in such a short space of time. Finally on day 3 participants consider all the tools and techniques they have learnt over the whole course, which ones they will use, who with and what their responsibility is in making it happen. Participants are also asked what it is their own organisation needs to do to support the effective use of ICT, which is very useful feedback. Day 3 finishes with each participant working with one of the SPICT trainers to carry out a brief video contract telling us about what they are going to use, who with etc. This video is very useful in following up with participants at a later date to remind them about what they have committed to and supporting them further to achieve it.

How will learning take place?

The practicalities of the course mean that numbers are limited to 10 participants. On each day there will be at least 2 trainers (we currently have 6 trainers involved in the overall delivery) to facilitate the course and importantly give participants the time and 1-1 support they may need to learn and practice the skills.

To supplement the teaching each participant receives their own SPICT folder with the various resources such as 'easy to follow' (their words not ours!) practical workbooks included. Participants will also receive a CD Rom with video tutorials on to help them practice the skills in their own time and at their own pace.

Laptops, cameras, microphones are all provided for each day.

Some comments from staff members about what they have gained from SPICT:

- 'A better knowledge and understanding of PCP'
- 'Enthusiasm to take back to the service'

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- 'This is the way forward and I am happy to keep up with it to ensure the people I work with benefit.'
- 'Lots of materials used and it was not boring – fun activities'
- 'Good question and answer times – not rushed'
- 'Enjoyable – reminded of previous training and updated on all new info'
- 'Equipment was excellent and trainers were always at hand for help'
- 'The best course I have attended'

How are people using what they have learnt in the workplace?

One of the key differences with SP ICT is that once people have attended the course they will have a follow up visit from members of the Community Solutions Team to see how they are using the skills learnt. Often training is not followed up in this way, but such is the importance placed on using multimedia by Community Lives Consortium we have recruited staff specifically to follow the course up and offer additional support in the workplace as required. So far we have seen some great examples of how people are using their new skills to make a real difference.

- Staff and people living in Port Talbot have found the course to be a positive experience. John, Brian and Peter who share their home are presently doing lifestories. Each person is expressing themselves in an individual way. John is using the computer to produce a lifestory. Brian who loves to share experiences in his life and is very creative is using a scrapbook whilst Peter who loves photography is using his photographs which he downloads on to the computer to produce a very personal lifestory.

The Service Co-ordinator supporting John, Brian and Peter said 'staff are very positive about this new of working'. John, Brian and Peter are finding the process fun and meaningful and look forward to working more on their lifestories. Supporting staff are enjoying using their new skills and are supporting an enthusiastic staff member who has not yet received training.

- Maureen and Rosie who live in Port Talbot have also started using PowerPoint to produce their lifestories. Below are a few of the comments particularly about the computer aspect of the course from staff who did the training last year:

'Some of us are frightened but we are getting used to it.'

'There should be a refresher course because some people have forgotten what to do as there was so much to learn'.

'Support workers should go on the course to help support co-ordinators get cracking on PCP'.

- Winston who also lives in Port Talbot is enjoying how staff are supporting him in a more person centred way. Winston loves talking about himself and has been enthusiastic about filling in gaps in his life – 'a few early memories' and 'coming to Consortium'. Winston has talked about the people in his life and how he would like to get ready for a meeting. He has expressed his likes and dislikes and has been supported to work through the All About Me workbook. Staff have said about the Person Centred Planning and the course:

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'It's a good thing but I wish other people involved would let us get on with it'.

'It's about chipping away and getting ideas across'.

Summary

So overall SP ICT is starting to make a difference, but we need to listen to staff who say that there is not enough time, or that others need to let us get on with it etc. We need to ensure that all staff and managers recognise the importance of using multimedia and that it is no longer an optional extra for a few people who can use a computer. Working in this way will further establish Community Lives Consortium as an agency committed to best practice and prepared to push forward with new ideas to ensure people receive the best support possible.

During 2009 we need to ensure that SP ICT has a big an impact as possible and is delivered in the most effective way. We are currently considering how best to do this so that as many people receive the benefit of SP ICT. We look forward to meeting you on a course soon.