A new way to look at government transformation and enhancing inclusion: A visionary composite case study of Peter

Introduction

The purpose of this new method of considering service transformation is to engage elected representatives, administration officials and citizens with a unique vision of how ICT can be used to enhance inclusion.

The simple story telling technique demonstrates how if all the best elements of existing projects in the UK were introduced in one administration or for one citizen they could be helped by ICT, both in the back office and at the interface with a socially excluded person to become more included in society. The story is not a fanciful prediction of what might be possible with technology in the future. It portrays what could be achieved now if a wide variety of successful best practice initiatives already operating were joined together. The first pilot study focuses on Peter – a young person not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The nine page story provides policy makers and citizens with clear evidence of what is possible now. By joining together a variety of initiatives it highlights the organisational and other changes that are required to enhance transformation both within an administration and across all tiers of government. For too long case studies have examined individual projects in isolation, frequently concentrating on the use of ICT at the interface with the citizen. This short paper provides an overview of the approach, goals, the storyline and the initiatives used in the story.

Peter's story

The story joins together fifteen 'best practice' initiatives from all over the UK that use digital technologies (the initiatives can be found in the appendix, each is cross-referenced by a number n the text). Peter is a small time reclusive drug dealer who is disengaged from society. The story recounts how the Local Strategic Partnership analysed local intelligence and worked with the local police, fire service , schools and other groups to target his street for special attention during school holidays to prevent anti-social behaviour[1].

A digivan visits the area to engage young people in a one week long local film making initiative[2]. This strategic approach was supported by a Games2Grow initiative which provided young people with TV games playing 'missions' in their local youth centre[3]. The war game and other 'missions' had educational and skills development content and teams from Peter's local area played online against other groups elsewhere in the region. Peter slowly gained respect from his peers and his self-esteem grew. He decided to try and wean himself off drugs and found the online and phone assistance provided by 'Talk to Frank' invaluable[4].

One of the reasons for Peter's reclusive nature was his role as a carer for his elderly grandmother. A social worker with a laptop computer visited them at home and was able to assess their eligibility for more than 60 benefits[5]. Applications for benefits were completed and submitted wirelessly during the visit. Peter and his mother were also given details about a wide variety of digital devices such as fall monitors, pill dispensers and panic /emergency alarms that would enable his grandmother maintain her independence and help her in an emergency if she was alone in the house[6].

Re-assured that his grandmother would be OK alone in the house Peter started to go to school more often and with the help of Games2Grow staff decided to think more seriously about a career. He took an online aptitude test at CareersFORu.com[7] and this suggested his skills and interests were matched to computer software development jobs. This was comforting because Peter had decided he wanted to become a computer games developer. The salary of £19-55,000 he found online[8] was very attractive, but he realised finding a job to provide the "on-the-job" training described by the web site would be difficult.

It was the summer holiday and Peter's school was closed so he wrote an email to his eMentor[9] who worked for a large local electrical company. The company was part of the local education and business partnership[10] and his mentor was able to search the partnership's online database of employers and find a local software company developing games. His eMentor phoned the company's MD and arranged an introduction for Peter to discuss a work experience placement.

The MD asked Peter to send a cv. Peter's heart sank. Writing a cv was one of the many lessons he had missed at school. He went back to the CareersFORu website and found that all the personal information he had tediously typed in to access the job details had neatly been dropped into a cv template[11]. The site guided him to fill in a few additional details together with the details of two referees. Peter had never had an interview before so he also undertook the interview preparation games, read the interview tips and even took some online practice assessment tests[12] in case he was asked to complete one of these during the interview.

Encouraged by the positive reaction shown by his eMentor to his newly completed cv Peter also placed his cv in the online jobs marketplace section of the CareersFORu website[13,14]. Employers searching the online cv's were impressed by Peter's cv and a couple invited him for interviews. However, each emphasised that he needed to successfully complete his AS courses before they could offer him a job.

The MD interviewing Peter for his vacation work experience job also stressed the need to gain qualifications. Peter loved his work experience in the Christmas and Easter vacations. Spurred by the offer of a full time job with the company if he did well in his exams Peter worked hard at school. At home Peter accessed interactive learning materials, online discussion forums and an online educational mentor available 24/7 [15] to resolve the problems he was encountering in restarting his learning and to ensure he did as well as possible in his AS exams.

Next Steps

The visionary composite case study has been very positively received by organisations used in Peter's story and by others involved in trying to emphasise the benefits of ICT use to assist transformation and social inclusion. The Digital Inclusion Team Board confirmed further support for the concept at a recent Board meeting. Further activities might include:-

- Discussions with leading organisations identified by case studies in Peter's story to examine the opportunities and barriers for co-ordination and joining-up identified by the story and to consider further ICT initiatives that might be added.

- Discussions with senior officials in Partnership's and ICT system managers to consider broader strategic and technological barriers and opportunities to more joining up. Some require action at the national level, others have a local emphasis.

- Development of further best practice composite case studies for different groups such as families at risk, offenders leaving institutions, the elderly or other groups relevant to current policymaking priorities.

- Development of Peter's story into a short video (or cartoon type approach) to enable a more dynamic and visual presentation of the advantages of joining-up.

- Wider dissemination of Peter's story and/or accompanying stories or video presentations to enable elected representatives, administration officials and citizens to better understand how ICT can be used to enhance inclusion.

If you would like to learn more about the case study please contact Professor Paul Foley (pdfoley@btinternet.com, Tel 07796 174330).

The Fifteen initiatives joined together in Peter's story

No.	Initiative	Example location	Scale of implementation	Back/front office user activated	Interface(s)	URL
1	Local Intelligence Systems	69 in England	Local	Back	Internet	www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1508580
2	Digivan	London	Local	User	Internet, digital video recorders	www.peabody.org.uk/pages/GetPage.aspx?id=214
3	Games2Grow	Walsall	Local	User	Nintendo DS, Nintendo Wii, xbox	www.learnplayfoundation.com
4	Talk to Frank	UK	National	Front	Email, phone, MSN messenger	www.talktofrank.com
5	Benefits Calculator	Rotherham	Local	Back	Laptop computers	www.rotherham.gov.uk/graphics/Benefits/e-Benefits
6	Assistive technology	Newham	Local	Passive monitoring & alarms	Sensors, web cameras, set top boxes, telephones	www.changeagentteam.org.uk/_library/docs/Housing /Factsheet05rev02.pdf
7	CareersMatch job information	Scotland	National	User	Internet	www.careers-scotland.org.uk/./WhichCareer /CareersMatch
8	Jobs4u	England	National	User	Internet	www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u
9	Npower eMentors	England	Local	User	Phone and email	www.npower.com/About_npower/In_the_community /Employee_volunteers/Volunteering_as_an_e-mentor.html

10	Walsall Education Business Partnership	Walsall	Local	Back and user	Internet	www.walsallebp.co.uk
11	Careers Scotland cv developer	Scotland	National	User	Internet	www.careers-scotland.org.uk
12	Careers Scotland cv and interview skills	Scotland	National	User	Internet	www.careers-scotland.org.uk
13	Jobcentreplus job search	England	National	Back and user	Internet and SMS	www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
14	Redgoldfish online cv marketplace	UK	National	Back and user	Internet and SMS	www.redgoldfish.co.uk
15	Virtual Workspace online learning	UK	National	Back and users	Internet and phone	www.virtual-workspace.com/