



ICT HUB CASE STUDY – HEALTHY COMPUTING

Organisation name:

Wansbeck Council for Voluntary Services (WCVS)

Summary

The North East England regional ICT champion worked with Wansbeck CVS to improve their understanding of accessible and healthy computing.

Established in 1987 Wansbeck Council for Voluntary Service provides information, support and advice to voluntary and community groups throughout the Wansbeck area, it currently has over 200 members.

What happened?

Wansbeck CVS were aware of their duty to provide equal access to the information and facilities they offer, but without knowledge or experience in this area, needed guidance on what steps they could take.

The organisation realised it had a responsibility to its own employees as well as a role to play in helping to educate its CVS members.

Staff and volunteers were shown how to customise a PC using settings found within Microsoft Windows. It was explained how people with certain disabilities can benefit from particular modifications such as how changing the background colour to a pastel colour can improve the ability of someone with Dyslexia to read text on the screen, as well as reduce glare for migraine sufferers.

The regional ICT champion demonstrated various items of hardware (including small keyboards with and without key guards, trackballs, joysticks and switch buttons) and software (from Microsoft's On Screen Keyboard through to Dolphin's SuperNova) allowing Wansbeck CVS to get hands on experience with each. Time was taken to explain how each item could help someone with a particular problem such as reduced mobility or visual impairment.

Wansbeck CVS asked if it was possible to get an assessment of a disabled person's computer usage and they were in luck, AbilityNet had recently launched an online remote assessment system whereby someone at AbilityNet will remotely control the assessed person's PC so they could be taken through an assessment routine online.

This service can be accessed at http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/atwork_remote.

What difference has ICT made?

Wansbeck CVS obtained a greater understanding of accessibility issues, gained an insight into the wide range of equipment on the market and how it can benefit all computer users, from able-bodied office staff (reducing the risk of migraines and RSI), through to those dealing with dyslexia, visual impairment and mobility impairment.

What was learnt?

Wansbeck CVS found it useful to get hands on experience of the various pieces of software and hardware, working with each through different scenarios.

One example was Microsoft Word's spell and grammar check, which works well to a certain point, but compounds the issue when used by someone with dyslexia who is using correctly spelt words in the wrong context. The example solution to this was to use PenFriend (www.penfriend.biz) to predict the next word in a sentence as it offers words in the right context.

It was clear that accessible technology is not expensive and it is not difficult to make significant differences with little effort. It is also a legal responsibility under the Disability Discrimination Act to provide equal access to computers, technology and websites.

FIND OUT MORE:

Organisation's web address

www.wansbeckcvs.org.uk

Regional Champion

Andrew Samuel – North East Regional Champion (VONNE)

Email: andrew.samuel@vonne.org.uk

Web: <http://www.vonne.org.uk/issues/ict/main.htm>

Knowledgebase

Making Computers Accessible for Disabled People

www.ictHubKnowledgebase.org.uk/computeraccessibilitytips

Mac OS X Accessibility Features

www.ictHubKnowledgebase.org.uk/macaccessibility

Web Accessibility Resources

www.ictHubKnowledgebase.org.uk/webaccessibilityresources

Computer Health and Safety

www.ictHubKnowledgebase.org.uk/healthandsafety