

Digital Exclusion Profiling of Vulnerable Groups Adults with Learning Disabilities: **A profile**



Executive Summary

Adults who suffer from Learning Disabilities face numerous social and physical barriers to inclusion within wider society. ICT is being developed in constructive ways to improve engagement channels and services offered by support organisations focusing on this Vulnerable Group. The cost of these ICT solutions however can prove prohibitive to certain segments of the Group which could reduce further progress in this area. These developments remain a way to tackle an over-dependence on the different forms of state support that is causing a mounting bill at local and national level.

Research suggests that there exists a significant proportion amongst adults with Learning Disabilities who would like the opportunity

to become more independent and obtain more control of life choices and finances, moving away from state support. Despite the backing of Government initiatives (Putting People First, 2007) the statistics show that only 1% of individuals have control over choice of carer and direct payments programmes are not showing high rates of take up.

Although research shows that 65% of adults with Learning Disabilities indicate a desire to work, only 10% actually are in employment. Difficulties of employee and co-worker attitudes are coupled with a lack of meaningful training and development.

The Profiling Report

Aim

The Report, published in October 2008, provides a study of the characteristics of this Vulnerable Group and in particular investigates successful use of ICT by individuals and by those organisations involved in the care of this group.

The Report highlights different challenges in place and how technology is being used to tackle these while suggesting areas for consideration where improvements could be made, for both the Group and to progress the understanding of the wider community.

Methodology

The research methodologies for this report consisted of secondary research for profiling of the Group and primary research with focus groups of members and the organisations that support them. The profile focuses on adults (people of a working age) who suffer from Learning Disabilities and recognises that this encapsulates differing degrees of severity.

Highlights of Findings

Barriers

- Negative attitudes to Learning Disabilities in society through misunderstanding or lack of awareness leads to exclusion and high rates of bullying
- Reliance on others to perform regular daily activities and difficulties in accessing full medical care hinder independence
- Employer attitudes to Learning Difficulties and psychological barriers of sufferers towards training can obstruct employment opportunity

ICT

- The nature of the Group means that ICT requires individual needs to be recognised and tailor-made solutions developed that are not prohibitively expensive
- ICT can be used to spread more information on this Vulnerable Group and develop more awareness of Learning Disabilities within society to tackle existing barriers
- Support groups are currently making use of ICT successfully to improve care and development programmes for this Group

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The full Report provides detailed findings from the working groups on the usage and current barriers for technology. It also details the wide range of support that is available, access to which is the underlying consideration of this study. The Report uses a number of Case Studies to highlight projects that are delivering success in this field.

The full document is available on www.esd-toolkit.org.uk



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