Computer sessions for adults with a learning disabilities

IDEA DETAILS

What do you base this on?

- In 1999 Hft (Home farm trust) began to run computer sessions for adults with a learning disability from its centre in South Oxfordshire (Milton Heights). The people using the sessions have a mixture of learning and physical disabilities.
- There are four groups held at different times each week.
- These sessions give adults with learning disabilities the opportunity to explore ICT and the positive benefits it can bring, in many forms.

What views were expressed by the people you support and carers?

The people we support were keen to try something new, some who had never seen a computer before were slightly wary but once they started to see results they were keen to continue.
Carers enjoyed supporting the individuals to achieve chosen goals; some of them felt they didn't have the ICT skills themselves to support the individuals; this was overcome with so basic training.

Who are your other key stakeholders and what do they think about your idea?

Parents are pleased to see their sons and daughters learning new skills, especially when they use this skill to help them communicate via email and with webcams etc.
Some of the parents were shocked to realise that their sons and daughters were able to do as much as they could and that they could progress quickly once they had started.

OUTCOMES WANTED

What are your intended outcomes and how will these be measured?

- To allow choice and independence.

- To encourage interaction with a chosen programme.

- To raise level of awareness and improve attention span.

- Develop hand to eye co-ordination.

ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN TO ACHIEVE THE OUTCOMES

The actions I undertook to achieve my outcomes and whether stakeholders find these acceptable?

- Use a variety of equipment for example keyboards, mice, microphones and earphones to suit the individuals needs.

- We provide extra support or adjustments such as a roller ball mouse or a screen magnifier to support people to get involved.

- Some of the sessions are structured and involve activities such as writing newsletters, others involve free time sessions where the people we support can use the computer however they wish. Some choose to communicate with friends and family either by using MSN or email, all in a secure and safe environment.

What do the people who you support and carers think about your practice methods?

They really enjoy the computer sessions, when new equipment is introduced they feel proud of the fact that they can achieve things they once couldn't.

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

Briefly describe outcomes you achieved. Were there any that were less successful?

- The computer groups have supported individuals to make their own choices and to gain a sense of achievement when taking part in a project.
- They feel proud when they realise that what they are doing with their hands has caused a change on the screen in front of them.

- People who having been limited in the past now have more opportunities to get involved and communicate using a computer just by simple introducing a roller ball mouse or screen magnifier.

How did you draw on the experiences of the people you support and carers?

By building on interests and letting these be explored further, goals were made and each week an individual would complete steps towards achieving it.
It also helped in other areas of life e.g. if an individual was due to go on holiday then they could use the computer to look at the places they may visit.

How did you draw on the experiences of other key stakeholders?

Hft could see that using ICT was a way forward for the people we support; it could allow lots of opportunities to develop in many areas for example fun, communication, education and employment. As we progressed with the session we introduced more personal technology to aid individuals and introduced new software.

Were you surprised by what actually happened when you tested this good idea?

Not really as I had a feeling something new would be grasped providing it was appropriately supported. I was surprised at how quickly some people picked up the skills and progressed further. For example one lady regularly emails friends and family and this year sent E cards to everyone.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Do you think this practice is sustainable and why?

The practice is sustainable due to the low cost of ICT equipment. In recent years, the price of desktop computers have dropped significantly, you can now buy one for around £400.

Why and how could this practice be taken up by others?

Hft have its own IT department so the support is always there should we need it and once the initial infrastructure was in place there wasn't any more major expense. It's worth researching for free downloads it assist people for example, screen readers and magnifiers.

What is your evidence about its affordability?

Once the initial infrastructure is in place the only other cost would be for additional software and hardware and up keep. The computers are used a lot so it defiantly isn't money wasted.