

Changing Information and Communications Technology: *What will it mean for your organisation?*

Group discussion:

So *what* are the implications of ICT change for public service delivery?

Opportunities

- Public spending cuts – ‘deliver more for less’, making use of limited resources. Social media will help organisations to engage more effectively with ‘citizens’, monitor what they are doing, tap into what’s going on.
- An increase in the sector’s networking tools - e.g. NAVCA ‘boodle’.
- Using technology to find and submit joint funding applications will increase.
- More sharing of back office functions – e.g. client and financial data sharing – supporting more efficient working.
- Reaching more people via existing technology – sharing existing resources rather than creating new ones – using the web to assess demand and supply services through this technology as well.

Risks

- Data protection issues, in terms of sharing information between organisations. Also the local ‘politics’/VCS ‘politics’ of sharing information - e.g. people holding on to information they see as belonging to them.
- Development of e-services in place of face to face contact – e.g. existing pressure on CABs – what impact will this have on the quality of service? Will it have the nature of services in a negative way?
- Small organisations may lose out in terms of commissioning, they are finding it increasingly difficult to engage and to align systems and cultures - in relation to each other and commissioners, in a number of ways but also in terms of ICT – the feeling is big organisations will ‘win’.
- Will organisations become entirely volunteer led (due to lack of resources and inability to access existing resources)? This may have

implications for the quality of services delivered by small, volunteer led organisations.

- Change of government – if there is more procurement, which may happen if either party get in but particularly the Conservatives – small organisations will lose out even further – lack of ability to access on line information/expressions of interest etc, have databases to monitor work, and have financial systems sophisticated enough to win contracts.
- VCS orgs will need more links with their local authority – who will hold the purse string/have control over procurement.
- There is a challenge in terms of how to keep up to date with technical developments – both for frontline and for infrastructure to support them.
- Most organisations now have their website sorted out but ICT has now moved on far beyond this
- Another challenge is finding a method to work out which kinds of services could be developed/delivered through ICT?
- There is increased pressure on the VCS to deliver public services – but less people will be entitled to this through tightened eligibility criteria.

Now what strategic decisions and actions need to be taken to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges around ICT change and public service delivery?

- Personalisation – the VCS needs to get to grips with the Choice Agenda. How can they help service users make effective/good choices?
- Organisations need to look at and think about who controls this agenda and think about where the voice of the ‘customer’ can be heard.
- Could organisations work with/replicate the Shop4Support site to help users?
- Communications strategies and marketing plans become essential - how does ICT fit into your strategies and plan?
- How does your organisation craft legitimacy on-line? Why should service users come to use your site/social networking tool for information and not someone else’s?
- Could membership organisations use technology to gather opinions on how to shape public service delivery?

- Rural organisations and 'single issue' VCS orgs could look at how they use technology to reduce isolation – e.g. could your organisation use the model of 'Mumsnet' to support people?
- How could 'touch' technology be used to help older people find using technology easier?
- The public, private and voluntary sectors could work together more to use their existing on line networks – to cross reference these networks?
- Organisations could sign post on line.
- Organisations need to look at how they make their information smarter – e.g. RSS feeds from their website, e-bulletins – it needs to be accurate, clear, and concise.
- Organisations need to consider those who are unable or don't like on-line bulletins are contacted – however they need to think about the cost/resource of having dual systems. How do you respond to people who are resistance to change? Do you risk losing a core client group? Is it too risky not to go on-line?
- Organisations need to be very clear about why they are using technology and what for. Is it for finding funding information, generating revenue, delivering services, networking? Where it is appropriate to use technology and where isn't it?
- Organisations shouldn't make assumptions about particular groups – e.g. Saga on – line has a phenomenal rise in usage. Do your research properly on demographic groups! Also understand how those groups use it and then how it can relate to your organisation and the services/public services you offer.