

Partially Sighted Society

Summary Report

Healthwatch Doncaster

Engage, inform, influence

1 What was the purpose of the activity/session?

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project was to encourage 'non-techie' people with a visually impairment to try using an Amazon Echo to see if Elixir would be useful in their daily lives. For example: finding out when the next bus is, keeping track of medical appointments and birthdays. This would also help towards reducing some peoples' social isolation as if it is easier to find out information about groups/how they can get there, they were more likely to go. Then if they socialised more, this in turn would help their mental health and general wellbeing.

1.2 What did you do?

We bought four Amazon ECHO Dot's for people to loan for up to three months and offered to visit them to set them up in their home etc. Not many needed this as they asked family to help.

We have only had 6 people use the ECHO's we bought, but out of them only one brought it back and said they didn't like it. One person kept the one he had and bought a new one for our project and the three others all returned their Echo Dots and went out and bought a larger ECHO's as they wanted better speakers.

In addition, we have demonstrated the ECHCO Dot at our groups and we know of at least another two people who just went out and bought their own. Therefore, we have converted 8 people so far to a new technology. The project will continue indefinitely and we will encourage those who would not normally try anything new to have a go.

If you could describe your project in 3 words, what would they be?

1. Educational
2. Helpful
3. Fun (for those trying something new)

1.3 Results of the activity/session(s)

The people who took part, were a little unsure at first but once they started using the ECHO Dot they really got into it (except one person) and one even started cooking from recipes again, which he hadn't done for some time due to his sight loss, he could stop and start the ECHO as he did each task.

Other than the number of people taking part so far and verbal feedback from those who took part, we did not do any formal feedback. But from the verbal feedback we found that once they got used to it they spoke to Elixir regularly.

One person who kept his ECHO and bought a replacement to give back to us had recently lost his wife. He was struggling being alone without another 'voice' in his home most of the time so he tells us that he talks to Elixir often. Asking about the weather, buses and plays his music through the ECHO. This has helped him get over a difficult time.

Through him telling us this, we have also referred him to other organisations and he now has a befriender and is a member of a fishing group.

Feedback from people who took part

I think we have answered this section already. But most people spoke about how easy it was to get information, such as bus times and that they were pleased that they had tried the ECHO.

Feedback from staff/volunteers who took part

From our point of view it was good to see people embracing a new technology when they are not normally interested in anything 'techie' and their enthusiasm for the ECHO.

The main priority at The Partially Sighted Society is to encourage people to use what sight they have, but also to stay independent and find ways to make this happen. The ECHO really helps with independence.

I don't think we could do anything different, but we will continue to encourage more people to try the ECHO.

1.4 Conclusion

I think this point is the same as the last part really. We learnt that you can encourage someone who is not very forthcoming to try new things.

The short and long-term difference to the individuals is more independence. To our service it is that the ECHO gives another option to our customers when looking at all the aids and equipment that is available to help anyone living with sight loss to continue living independent lives. It would be good for other populations, such as those with hand issues through arthritis etc and for most elderly people.

The improvements will last as long as each individual wants to use their ECHO. But word of mouth is a great thing and once people tell their friends how helpful the ECHO is, who knows how many people will benefit.

I think the message to be shared would be to give customers choice in all decisions. To encourage independence through whatever works for that person.