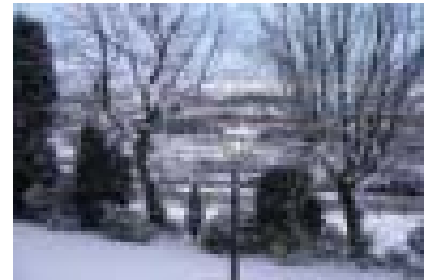




people before technology

e-mpirical supports Lancashire Social Services CyberSkills

In January 2003, e-mpirical completed a major assignment in its continuing relationship with Lancashire County Council - the delivery of the Knowledge and Leadership Programme for Lancashire CyberSkills. Lancashire CyberSkills is an initiative to give access to and knowledge of computers and the Internet to the service users in Social Services. Almost three years previously Tony Worsdall, e-mpirical's Managing Director, met with David Halpin, Services Manager Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment, when attending a Better Government for Older People conference in London. They started discussing the ideas that eventually became Lancashire CyberSkills.



CyberSkills Workshops, a programme established by Fujitsu Services, provide the means for any organisation to give people exciting and relevant experiences of digital technologies, engaging and allowing them to work out exactly how computers and the Internet can benefit them as individuals. The Knowledge and Leadership Programme is a key part of a CyberSkills Workshop as it enables staff and managers to facilitate these exciting experiences in a way that really motivates the service users. Over the last 7 years, e-mpirical has delivered the Knowledge and Leadership Programme throughout the UK and in Poland, Belgium and Australia.

This experience was vital for Lancashire CyberSkills, where the objective was to enable staff within Lancashire Social Services Resource centres (who did not have a large requirement to use computers as part of their existing jobs) to be able to help their service users get the most out of the computers and Internet access provided by the programme.

"Our unique knowledge of the CyberSkills programme has allowed us to get the best out of the staff at Lancashire by ensuring that they had exactly the right support at the outset, and were not overwhelmed by the task", Tony Worsdall

Having briefed all of the staff and managers about the programme, the training started in earnest in January 2003. Staff for each of the 5 centres were selected to take part in the training which was run over 4 weeks in Lancaster and Rawtenstall. Many of the staff had no previous experience of IT or of training others to use computers. By utilising the proven CyberSkills methodology, Tony was able to reduce the "fear factor" for the facilitators and help them understand how the computers had been set up to allow service users to explore the Internet, send e-mails and even talk to people in other centres via Web Cams.

Tony Worsdall again, "The success of the Lancashire centres is down to the willingness of the staff to try new things, and to understand that they already had the right approach to helping service users explore new, and sometimes difficult things"



Having completed the training, each of the centres practiced for a few weeks before the centres were approved as accredited CyberSkills Centres. Jonathan Evans (pictured left with Julie Whittaker, the Lancashire County Council CyberSkills Project Manager) approved all of the centres in April 2003. The centres had taken the CyberSkills materials and adapted them into short sessions that engaged service users in the use of computers without making things too complicated for them.

The CyberSkills team at Lancashire are pushing back the boundaries. Taking IT training into Resource Centres is a great way of helping people to work out what's in it for them. **"Working with the Lancs. Team has been a great experience and privilege for me" says Tony**