

This occasional newsletter is designed to keep you up to date with news and information relating to healthy computer use/computing with a disability and how we can help you. If you know someone this information may help, please Forward this newsletter to them.

DID YOU KNOW? – We helped even more people in 2006

At the heart of our work is our direct day to day contact with people with a disability, helping them to find the most suitable way for them to use a computer. We are pleased to report that in 2006 we helped a staggering 850,000 people including care professionals, employers, teachers and central and local government and we are online to help even more in 2007.

Our new remote assessment service helped us reach even more people in 2006 with 465 people having an assessment remotely. Initiated in Scotland through funding from the Big Lottery fund and Scottish LearnDirect, this service now includes London and other parts of the UK. Delivered through internet connectivity, and using screen sharing and video calls, along with a loan bank of equipment for users to trial, this low cost service has met the needs of significant numbers of disabled people in 2006 and looks to grow further in 2007.

We are also now using the internet to offer expert assistance to teachers, parents and carers without the need for a personal visit. It's an extremely flexible approach with can provide excellent learning opportunities for teachers and specialist staff who work with the pupil during the process. Without travel time and costs, this can prove a cheaper solution. To find out more visit http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/edu_remote

FREE Skillsheets on Windows Vista – what it means for Accessibility

AbilityNet have recently produced a series of Skillsheets for Windows Vista, through the RAPS project, which explain the accessibility options and how to make Windows Vista work best for you, your staff and your learners

Windows Vista is the latest version of Microsoft Windows which was released earlier this year and contains some exciting inbuilt accessibility options. If you are an old hand to Windows, or if you are completely new to PC's, there is some learning required! But these detailed skillsheets will point you in the right direction and help you get the very most out of your initial Vista set up.

As always, these skillsheets are FREE to download and can be found at www.abilitynet.org.uk/raps. However, we do ask that you make a text donation if you find them useful. Instructions are at the end of each skillsheet.

There are five Skillsheets available:

- Windows Vista - Ease of Use Centre
- Windows Vista - Mouse Properties
- Windows Vista - Personalise the Display
- Windows Vista - Text or Visual Alternatives for Sounds
- Windows Vista - Tuning the Keyboard

If you would like to find out more we will also be running a courses on Windows Vista during the second half of the year. Email courses@abilitynet.org.uk to find out more. We can also offer you consultancy on implementing Vista and bespoke courses on Vista accessibility.

Vista and Voice Recognition

One of the most used applications supporting people with a disability in the workplace remains voice recognition software, traditionally provided by two companies Dragon and IBM. With the advent of Windows Vista another option is now available to purchasers. Vista is the first full version of Windows to be shipped with an integrated voice recognition option built into the Operating System. Opened through the new ease of access centre, Vista voice recognition can be configured to run at startup and offers potential both for dictating text and for hands free computer operation.

We recently gave Vista Voice recognition an "in the field" test, with an inexperienced user with just 15 minutes of training the voice model and were pleased to see that accuracy hovered around the 94% mark. Clearly this is not quite as impressive as the 98% offered in similar settings by Dragon Naturally speaking Professional - but as a free solution it will certainly meet the needs of many users with conditions such as RSI or Dyslexia and at the very least offer others the opportunity to discover whether VR is something they would like to pursue further.

AbilityNet can offer you Vista events to introduce your OH, HR or IT team to the new developments within Vista, alternatively we are running a series of Vista training days throughout the UK and a vista accessibility course is available on our elearning site at www.abilitynettraining.org

Cost of RSI in the workplace

Have you ever wondered just how much RSI might be costing your business ? AbilityNet have been researching some interesting statistics that suggest that the costs may be much greater than you anticipated.

Ergonomic Keyboards Specialist - Maltron suggest that "It costs all of us UK taxpayers around £160,000 when someone in the prime of life is struck down with a disability, stops work and has to be cared for by the state for, say, twenty years. But this money is saved when the individual concerned gets back to work." And if that wasn't enough to make you stop and think then consider this. The TUC has recently published a report that says employers are ignoring the massive costs to their businesses of RSI and back strain at work. With over a third of a million sufferers taking ten million days off work a year Government statistics show that musculo-skeletal disorders, viz RSI and back strain, are the second most common work-related disease in Great Britain. The cost is estimated as £2b per year.

But what does this mean for each individual employer. A recent example looks at this. Interpay is a middle-sized Dutch company that takes care of most of the financial traffic of all the Dutch banks. Processing millions of transactions daily, most of the 1500 Interpay employees do heavy screen work, like: high speed data entry, help desk, IT and R&D. Therefore, employees at Interpay are quite vulnerable to RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury). The average cost of RSI is calculated to be €1089,-/fte annually
That's around £700 a year per employee - not per employee with RSI symptoms - per employee

And if this wasn't enough, the cost of RSI to employers was brought home again in May when The Guardian made an out-of-court settlement of £37,500 to Andrea Osbourne, a casual night-shift editor at the newspaper, who spent much of 2002 and 2003 crippled by RSI.

AbilityNet offer real solutions to employers where RSI is an issue, training, assessment and proactive resources are all available - for further details contact David Banes - Director of Development at david.banes@abilitynet.org.uk

A Winning Time for our Remote Assessment Service

We have now won two awards for our work – an eWell Being award and a BT Telephone Helplines Award.

The eWell-Being awards commend projects that identify and promote the benefits of information and communication technologies (ICT). AbilityNet was presented with the Age and Disability award which focuses on access and services for elderly and disabled people. This was as a result of our remote assessment across broadband service. This allows us to assess and determine an individual's technology requirements remotely using webcams and the telephone.

Judges' comment: "A unanimous decision, this project enabled a reduction in home visits and increased the number of remote assessments that can take place by tapping the potential of broadband."

You can read more about our award on <http://www.sustainit.org/ewell-being-awards/ewell-beingbrochure2007.pdf>

We have also won a BT/Telephone Helplines Association Award. The Telephone Helplines Association (THA) is recognised as the main source of specialist information relating to the setting up and running of non-profit helplines in the UK and Ireland. The aim of the Awards is to highlight and share significant achievement by the Association's members over the last 12 months. The Awards complement the THA Quality Standard in promoting *quality and confidence for callers to helplines*. Our entry was under the category 'Integrating multiple technologies to provide services' and is on our **remote assessment service**. This is the second time we have won this award and we are very happy that it was for this newly launched service. More information can be found on http://www.helplines.org.uk/awards_07.htm.

New ways of learning more about Assistive Technology

Keeping up to date in the fast moving world of assistive technologies is difficult at the best of times. Releasing staff to attend regular training events is costly and the long term benefits of short term training are often hard to be certain of. As a result AbilityNet have created an online training portal at www.abilitynettraining.org offering our own training materials, the best of those available on the web and links to related areas such as free ecdl courses.

The AbilityNet elearning approach combines online resources with personal support through a course tutor available by email and skype. Courses are available to individuals at £100 + VAT for all courses for one year. Alternatively access to courses can be incorporated into a menu of services purchased through a service agreement with AbilityNet or we can arrange multiple log ons for an organisation. For more details contact david.banes@abilitynet.org.uk.

Web Accessibility - A World Denied

Socitm *Insight* has launched a DVD that explains the need for websites to be accessible to people with disabilities. The DVD's message is targeted at senior decision-makers in the 80-90% of organisations that have websites inaccessible to

people with disabilities using adaptive or alternative technologies, as well as those with common visual impairments, reduced mobility or dexterity, dyslexia and other issues. The DVD, made in association with AbilityNet, assembles an impressive set of advocates for website accessibility, including Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, and James Corrigan, Web Manager at East Devon District Council. Further details can be found at

<http://www.socitm.gov.uk/socitm/Library/A+world+denied.htm> along with a trailer of the video. This DVD plus other useful resources can be purchased through our online shop at <https://shop.abilitynet.org.uk/catalog.php?category=3>.

Corporate Support Packages

AbilityNet have created a structure of Service Agreements to meet the needs of the business and private sectors. Service agreements are packages of services that you can use flexibly throughout a year and include consultancy days that can be used for assessments of need, training, support etc as well as discounted courses places, network events and web resources including access to our elearning site. We believe that the agreements are in invaluable aid to those planning for inclusion and diversity to support customers or to meet the needs of employees. If you would like to know more about our agreements please contact our Director of Development - David Banes at david.banes@abilitynet.org.uk

WCIT IT Directors Guide on Accessible IT

The Worshipful Company of Information Technologists recently published ACCESSIBLE IT. The guide, produced in conjunction with Ability Magazine and supported by AbilityNet, focuses on how IT Directors can ensure that their organisation's systems are ready for a more inclusive style of business and are accessible to as many people as possible.

The Guide explains the needs of disabled people; how they can be assisted by technology; and the steps that those in charge of IT can take to put accessibility issues higher up the corporate agenda. The guide can be downloaded from

http://www.wcit.org.uk/Publications/main_content/ITDirectorsGuidetoAccessibleIT.pdf

Or call us on 0800 269 545 for a printed copy of the guide. If you want to follow up on any of the issues raised in the guide please feel free to contact Director of Development David Banes or call our advice line 0800 269545

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