Stockport Council - A municipality testing robots and technology with Seniors

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Abstract. Stockport Council is a medium sized municipality in the UK's north-west with around 300,000 residents. Within the Council the Adult Social Care Department aims to help older adults to continue to live as independently as possible within the community. The paper introduces the activities of Stockport Council regarding robot and technology testing with older adults as well as experiences made.

1 Introduction

The Adult Social Care Department carries out an assessment of needs, prioritised according to the urgency of the situation. If the assessed needs fit our eligibility criteria, people are assigned a personal budget to spend on meeting their needs. People can use their personal budget to receive support services such as home care, day care, respite care or breaks for carers, as well as less traditional support options, such as employing a personal assistant. We also support people to access residential and nursing care, where this offers the most appropriate type of support to meet their needs. If the assessed needs do not fit our eligibility criteria, people are supported to access a range of lower level preventative support options, designed to increase their independence and delay their need for more intensive social care support.

We also have a range of support services such as Customer Care, Information and Publicity, IT systems, performance and project management functions and strategy and policy development roles. Finally we are closely linked with NHS Stockport and play a significant role around public health in Stockport (see also figure 1).

2 European Involvement

Stockport Council has considerable and varied experience of delivering successful European Cooperation Projects such as Interreg Projects, CIP Projects, FP7 Project and is currently involved in the following projects: CLIPS ICT-PSP, FP7 Project Silver, SeNS Interreg NWE IV Programme and Cities In Balance NWE IV Programme and more recently Ambient Assistive Living projects as well as Horizon 2020 with Project Mario. We have also been involved with

Fig. 1. The Stockport Council

Grundtvig/Leonardo programmes and closely involved in the EU Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity and the connected development of European Innovation Partnerships where we took part in the Age Friendly Cities pilot.We are also members of the ECH Alliance and AgeingWell Networks. Latterly our role has grown to become active members of the EIP-AHA and Coral Networks. In 2016 Stockport became one of the founding members of the Covenant on Demographic Change and also signed up to a commitment for the EIP-AHA on Age Friendly Environments. We are also a key part part of Greater Manchesters 3 star EIP-AHA reference site (see also figure 2 and 3).

3 Use of Technology

Stockport has been involved in two key robotics projects with European partners and added to that have developed award winning IT solutions for Social Care for Seniors.

3.1 Project Silver

This was a really successful pre commercial procurement programme funded by the EUs 7th Framework Programme to set up a successful PCP process for procurers of robotic assistance for older people to stay independent longer (see also figure 4).

Such was the success of Project Silver the start up is now not only growing but is ready to hit the market with a unique and versatile robot that will really help older people preventing falls and maintaining independence in the community (see also figure 5).

Fig. 2. The Stockport Council activities in Europe

Fig. 3. Ageing Statistics Stockport

Fig. 4. Project Silver

Fig. 5. Stockport Activities in Project Silver

3.2 Project Mario

Project Mario is another robotics project that is using the latest develoments in robotics and a bespoke software platform targetting people living with Dementia in the UK, Italy and Ireland.

It is testing the idea of whether people living with dementia can tolerate a companion robot and whether it could be useful to target isolation.

Funded by Horizon 2020 this project brings together partners from across Europe to develop one of the first robotics products targetting dementia and will see the area of voice recognition and AI tested (see figure 6).

Fig. 6. The Project Mario

We are testing Mario in Stockport in community groups and in one to one sesions as well as with staff and carers. We are surprised by the level of interest not only from within these groups but also in the national press about this although it is a concern to manage expectation in both areas as this is a prototype (see also figure 7).

It has also been a new area for us to act as ethics lead in our area as well as working with the local health organisations to organise testing as well as with dementia drop ins and support groups but most important with people living with dementia driving the user specification and the types of testing themselves.

Accessing new technology with user input right at the beginning is crucial in Stockport and is central to our efforts around co production of services for people by people in Stockport. An example of this is My Care My Choice which was the Councils award winning Social Care platform (see also figure 8).

Fig. 7. The Stockport activities in the Mario Project

Fig. 8. Results from the Mario Project

3.3 Coproduction my care my choice

My Care my Choice was a web portal for people for all their social care needs and information that was planned and designed by people from Stockport who use the services themselves in a coproduced manner (see also figure 9).

Fig. 9. Connected Smart Cities - My Care My Choice

The idea is to have a service designed by the people who will use it to find information and manage their own care. It has been now adopted by other municipalities in the UK. Its design and look were created by and tested by service users in Stockport.

Acknowledgment

Fig. 10. My Care My Choice - Webpage