

Looking Local - NHS Sefton; Interactive Health Services by Digital TV and Mobile Phone.

a. Strap line

Interactive health services by Digital TV and mobile phone.

Summary

A service which enables those otherwise excluded from the digital revolution, particularly the elderly and those with ill health, to access information at any time through their TV. This is provided through an NHS Sefton microsite on the Looking Local service.

Looking Local is accessible by anyone with cable (Virgin Media) or Sky TV as well as on web-enabled mobile phones and over the internet. It is easy to use and can be navigated using the TV remote or keypad. It is designed to be easily used by anyone, even those with little confidence with new technology.

It empowers people to educate themselves, and provides information for people with long term health conditions in order to help them manage their conditions independently. It also informs about the range of services available in the area, and is a channel through which people can communicate with NHS Sefton.

b. What is the issue?

Nationally, 16m people have no home internet access, while more and more information is being disseminated online. This is creating a digital divide, which includes inequity in the availability of health-related information and advice on health services.

University of Birmingham research states 'Many groups that tend not to use the internet are also least well served by current services and, therefore, have the greatest need for reliable health information. There is a risk that making more information available via the internet will reinforce existing patterns of information seeking- and increase health inequalities...' (Ellins & McIvor, 2009)

In deprived wards of Sefton home internet access is below 50%. Mosaic marketing categories for Sefton suggests that people in these wards are likely to be heavy TV viewers, receptive to TV messages but unreceptive to the internet.

Moreover, with older people more likely to have long term conditions such as heart and lung disease, and also more likely to spend long periods of time at home, the people who could benefit substantially from internet-type technology are - in demographic terms- least likely to have it (IPSOS Mori, 2009).

Addressing health inequalities between different demographic groups is a pressing issue. The growing focus on the internet exacerbates this inequality, and so new information channels are needed which are accessible by the whole population.

c. The Innovation Solution

Looking Local is mainly used by local authorities (around 80). It has had a positive reception, enabling users to access lots of local information as well as contacting their local authorities, filling in forms etc. all using the TV remote.

The site offers a selection of plug-ins. These are universally accessible features that link to existing internet services, such as JobCentre Plus job search, Transport Direct travel info, NHS Choices Health A-Z and many more. NHS Sefton's site combines these national plug-ins with information specific to the local area. This includes information about third sector organisations in Sefton, who are happy to have their information and contact details on the site.

For people with long-term health conditions, we are working with the British Lung Foundation, the British Heart Foundation and Diabetes UK to work with us to produce useful, condition-specific content.

d. Partnerships and Delivery Team

The site is managed by one Project Support Officer based in the Communications Team of NHS Sefton, with help from specialists within the PCT and additional support from third sector organisations in Sefton.

e. Key Benefits

The main benefit of the service is the way it extends the service that NHS Sefton provides; combating digital exclusion, empowering people with information and providing them with the tools for better self management.

The resulting health benefits are hard to quantify, as the technology cannot identify individual site users. Overall, we expect to see a reduction in costlier contacts such as phone calls or GP visits as a result of this alternative method of finding information, booking GP appointments and requesting repeat prescriptions.

We will be carrying out an evaluation of the service which will give some qualitative indications of the benefits that it is offering Sefton residents.

f. Funding/Return on Investment/Savings

The £13,751.93 RIF funding was used to employ a part-time Project Support Officer for 12 months to develop the site, promote it, evaluate it and bring it to a sustainable point. NHS Sefton funded the cost of the license, £12,000 p/a. So far the project is on target and promotional efforts have seen visitor rates go up; however it is not possible to calculate a financial ROI as it's hard to determine to what extent these visits prevent costlier contacts.

g. Potential to Scale and Strategy for Sustainability

The 12 month period should be sufficient to develop content, generate a local awareness of the site and build-up regular users. After this initial 12-month period, the task of keeping the site up-to-date

will be taken over by the communications team, and Looking Local will be updated along with the PCT's internet and intranet sites.

As NHS Sefton is the first PCT to use the service, it will enable other PCT's to look at the impact that the service has and consider it as an information channel. With the NHS undergoing considerable changes, Looking Local may be a desirable information platform for whatever body replaces the PCT.

h. Name and Contact Details

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