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Special Needs Care: Bringing Ground-Breaking Behavioural Science to Life

In this case study we share how pioneering behavioural science was translated into a digital product, enriching the lives of both service users and their carers.

Bringing 20 years of behavioural science to life

Based on decades of behavioural science research and best practice, Special Needs Care was adopting Active Support as its model of provision in their supported living homes.

Active Support is a method of enabling people with learning disabilities to live an ordinary life with access to the same meaningful opportunities as other people.

As part of the Active Support rollout, Special Needs Care wanted to build a ground-breaking new digital product that would positively influence the behaviour of care workers and improve quality of life of service users and staff. No 'off-the-shelf system' was available and Zuhlke's experts were bought in to rapidly create a innovative digital platform to enhance independence and opportunity among people with intellectual disabilities by increasing access to, and control over, a range of everyday activities at home and in the community. In addition, it was expected that a simple and intuitive user interface, with optimal user experience, would deliver:

- increases in the amount of time care workers could spend with the service users instead of recording information and transcribing notes
- improvement in the quality and relevance of data collected, creating more accurate datasets for analysis and delivering actionable insights for service managers
- access for managers to real-time data allowing them to propose timely and relevant adjustments to service support with greater confidence,

The platform had to be designed to allow for regular releases and good support, and eventually to be commercially self-sustainable through third-party adoption in the care service sector.

Industry
Adult Social Care

Location
UK

Size
Mid-sized

Benefits and Results

- Industry-first digital product created

- Switching from paper based solutions to a more efficient and attractive digital tool Improved care outcomes and quality of life for service users

- Providing effective support for service users

- Employee satisfaction Real-life data collections for better decision making Implementation of the Active Support Framework

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Solving the challenges of a fragmented system

Although a system had been theorised, applied, and evaluated, some aspects of delivery had become fragmented or overlooked in service environments.Some parts of the system were paper-based and some were not undersatood or fully implemented. Data were not gathered and reviewed. A critical first task for Zuhlke was to work with Special Needs Care to fully understand its existing working methods and its aspirations, taking account of research in the filed, and how this influences behaviour change. Translating this knowledge and digitising it, a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) would then be created and put directly in the hands of the care workers via a tablet to test.

Moving to a digital solution would address several key pain-points:

- the way information was captured was cumbersome, error-prone, effort-intensive, and it interfered with the immediate focus of the care providers
- data entry and review were apt to be time-consuming and inefficient

Collaboration

For the success of the project it was essential that Zuhlke and Special Needs Care to work in a highly collaborative fashion, to take documented theory and translate it into an operationally fit and commercially viable application. Zuhlke believes that open and honest dialogue about business objectives is the best way to understand clien expectations, motives, constraints, and needs.

A workshop helped Zuhlke establish a contextual understanding of the business case, the organisation, and its core values, together with a greater understanding of the needs and motivations of users within the various subgroups and shape a product around them.

Learning how to develop products

Vital elements of the project included sharing with Special Needs Care information about product development and helping them to:

- evaluate user value and how best to adapt to service provider need
- understand Agile practices and apply them in a user experience design process,
- become more knowledgable about product development and delivery, including getting the foundations right
- make good follow-up decisions
- understand why focusing on the users is critical

High Performing
Cross Functional Teams

API & Microservice
Architecture

Digital Cloud Platforms
and DevOps

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Positive outcomes of working holistically

We are delighted to have helped Special Needs Care place effective behavioural support in the hands of front-line staff with a user-friendly, intuitive digital app. The first version MVP of the system has been rolled out and direct user feed-back is being collated in order to enhance the second version later in 2020.

The system is already helping people with intellectual disabilities to take more control and be more involved their own lives by:

- assisting with activity planning and the deployment of staff support in real time
- enabling staff and residents of community homes to identify opportunities for enhancing social and activity engagement
- creating greater consistency in staff support
- providing an efficient recording system for activity engagement
- Improving the way data are collected and analysed, allowing meaningful and timely decisions to be made about service user and staff wellbeing
- improving the accuracy, discretion and speed of data entry

Overall, the effect on staff has been to make activity planning and data recording less effortful and more bountiful. As a component of delivering Active Support, this web-based application extends the prospect of extending an improved quality of life for pupils in special eduation, and their families.

"Working in partnership with Zuhlke has been an instructive and energising experience for us all. Digitising something that appears to be simple and easy to understand reveals just how difficult it can be to master. What we achieved here is testament to the skills, insights, and determination of us all, thank you."

Prof. Sandy Toogood