Inclusive technology: Sector readiness and implications for training and application

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The purpose of this research project is twofold. First, it contributes to the body of knowledge of sector readiness to the take-up of technology. Second, it addresses the training needs of service coordinators, planners and support workers required to assist people living with disability.

Earlier research, undertaken by Stretchy Tech, explored the value of technology for people living with disability and their training needs. During this research, individuals expressed frustration that some of their support workers were not ready to support people in this new environment, and that some workers struggled to understand their changing role and what it means to support a person who uses inclusive technology.

This raises the question: what training is available for support workers and service planners to enable them to understand inclusive technology? How should we assist workers to understand the technology and grow their capacity to provide good support in this new environment?

This second research project explored these questions. The project was designed and delivered by Stretchy Tech, an external consultant and a co-design group who were playing a fundamental part in the design and development of the training.

The research methodology included establishing a co-design group, which included representation from people living with disability who use inclusive technology, support worker agencies, academics and funding bodies. Interviews were conducted with participants about their technology and with support staff and a practice/literature review was undertaken to determine current evidence about the types of training and the associated outcomes for service planners/support personnel. Stretchy Tech developed and created an online training module through in-depth discussion with key stakeholders, participant interviews and engaging an expert.

After identifying support worker agencies and service planners to test the initial training content and delivery method, a trial of the training was undertaken during the month of July 2019, and feedback was collected through surveys and interviews. A review of the feedback captured during the trial was undertaken in August–October 2019 and the training content was adapted post the trial review, and the revised content was trialed with key stakeholders and relevant participants in March 2020.

This research project demonstrated the impact of an educational module for support personnel and service providers. Through this project an innovative online training module has been developed. This module has the potential to be widely used by support worker agencies and insurance-based funding schemes as part of their employee induction process. People living with disability can also directly use the program to introduce their workers to technology. They can now do this via an existing product rather than spending their time and energy trying to create and deliver their own worker induction content.

The concept has been highly valued by trial participants. Funding for this research enabled an initial concept to move to development, content testing and trial.

A range of agencies outside of the co-design group have expressed an interest in their workers having access to it.

The online training model enables agencies and workers to access training in a cost-effective manner. Given the lack of worker content available on this topic, internationally, this product makes a significant contribution to advancing the life chances of people living with disability. Stretchy Tech will now endeavor to sustain the project outcomes by operationalizing the training through a social enterprise model.