

The logo for AbilityNet features the company name in a serif font, with a green arc above the 'i' and 'l' and another green arc below the 'y' and 'e'.

AbilityNet

Adapting Technology ■ Changing Lives

AbilityNet Impact Report 2006

A thick, solid green horizontal bar with rounded ends, positioned at the bottom of the page.

Our impact on individuals

At the heart of our work is our **direct day to day contact** with people with a disability to help identify access to a computer. We help individuals to achieve whatever aspirations they have through technology. In 2006 we maintained our delivery of intensive support whilst increasing the scope of our services to assist those who can to help themselves.

Our **website** was fully updated in 2006 allowing more people to find the resources they needed – both factsheets, skill sheets and the AbilityNet “My Computer My Way” resource. The My Way resource was then made available to a wider community through the award winning BBC “My Web My Way” at www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility. With the support of the ICT Hub we introduced a database of low cost software designed to support individuals with a disability.

In 2006 we undertook to fundraise to match this provision of self help resources with an even more intensive service for those in greatest need. **AbilityNet SOS** (Supported One Stop) was launched in December 2006 with the first beneficiaries receiving a total service in January 2007. Although this service is limited by available funding it provides a unique safety net to those for whom all other routes for funding have been unsuccessful. In 2007 AbilityNet SOS will seek to provide a total package of assessment, training, support and the supply of equipment to successful applicants.

Bridging the gap between self help and intensive intervention is the role filled by our **barrier free service delivery**. Initiated in Scotland through funding from the Big Lottery fund and Scottish LearnDirect, these services have increased their scope to include London and other parts of the UK. Delivered through internet connectivity, and utilising screen sharing and video calls coupled with a loan bank of key equipment for users to trial, this highly cost effective service has met the needs of significant numbers of disabled people in 2006 and looks to grow further in 2007.

Activity with individual disabled people in 2006

Enquiries	6,877
New Contacts	884
Total Assessments	1,089
of which: Education	178
Employment	420
Individual	476
Other	15
Total 1 to 1 Training Sessions	174
Total Personal Installations	38
Total Support Calls	768
Total Individual Systems	71

“With the ability to view the problem, rather than attempt to relay the information over the phone this proved invaluable in overcoming the difficulty we incurred”

“Pleased with responses I've had from you. looking forward to receiving the devices and trial lap top.”

“Very impressive”

Customer feedback on remote assessment

Liz says.....

"Being able to study later on in life is a huge bonus for me. I didn't have the opportunities when I was younger and now I want to be able to play an active role in broadening my own knowledge and widening my horizons. After obtaining my GCSEs an 'A' Level, I moved on to a course in Youth Work and subsequently a diploma in Theology. I never dreamed I'd be doing an MA!

"TextHelp is such a help – it is much easier for me to correct my work if I hear the error rather than if I search for it on screen. The OCR software has been even more liberating – it allows me to scan all my textbooks into the computer so that I can hear the words when I'm reading. With this program I can also cut and paste parts of my text into my work which saves me a lot of time. The classical literature CD, which came as part of the package has been a lovely bonus – I enjoy listening to classical works, especially poetry, which I find very relaxing.

"For someone with speech problems like me, full access to a PC means that I can communicate effectively via the Internet and e-mail, without straining to be understood – which can be tiring, embarrassing and extremely frustrating! My computer enables me to be the same as everyone else and I'd be lost without it.

"AbilityNet has always been there for me when I've needed help. With their professional, friendly service, I know I can always turn to AbilityNet when I have a problem."



"AbilityNet's impartial, one-to-one help, combined with the opportunity they offer to try out a wide variety of different solutions in a relaxed and un-pressurised environment is a unique service, indispensable to someone who works in an office and wants to use his home PC."

"My computer is my connection to the world – with my PC I can go shopping, watch films, listen to the radio, make phone calls and write to my friends, family and colleagues – like anyone else. AbilityNet's help in making the most of the technology at my disposal is invaluable."



Mayo (33), a wheelchair user, lives independently with the help of Personal Assistants and works three days a week for a charity recruiting Personal Assistants for other people.

His AbilityNet consultant introduced him to the latest version of 'Dragon Naturally Speaking' – which enables the end user to exercise a much greater degree of control and achieve improved productivity.

He was also supplied with tips and hints for getting the most out of this type of package as well as advice on upgrading his PC to better accommodate the new software.

These changes to Mayo's PC set up have improved his comfort and ease of use tremendously.

Our impact on organisations

Delivering accessible solutions in the workplace, school, college or online centre requires more than just working with the individual. AbilityNet understand the need to work with employers and supporters to make sure that an organisation understands the need and has the capacity to meet that need. In 2006 AbilityNet were able to offer a total service to organisations combining training, consultancy, and specially designed equipment kits.

In 2006 we extended our operations supporting organisations by joining the Government funded ICT hub establishing accessibility champions in 9 English regions, and through this, reaching out to support disabled people through the Voluntary and Community Sector. The combination of training and advice has proven a huge success and helps the sector become more inclusive for the future.

"This is one of the most helpful courses of its type that I have ever attended – not at all threatening. I would recommend it to anxious colleagues!" Senior Lecturer, FE College.

"Good delivery, mix of presentation, demonstration, explanation and hands-on. Knowledgeable staff, good pace and relaxed atmosphere". Head of Programme, Fife College.

"The course will help me to increase the variety of strategies available to make teaching more interesting". SEN Co-ordinator, Stratford School

"It was very interesting and the free software valuable to know about as money is tight". Special Needs Teacher Prep School

"Very informative – well presented and appropriate to own need/workplace/client group. Hands-on means a lot more confident re applying new techniques on return to workplace". Occupational Therapist, day centre

"I was amazed at the applications built in to existing packages". OH Advisor NHS

"Useful to see what can be used on computers already and also equipment available. Case studies very useful to make me think of options". Senior OT Spinal Injuries Unit

Course Attendees Feedback 2006

Activity	2006	2005
Course attendees	5,675	2,973
Of which: Paid	729	753
Consultancy days	516	195
Total Kit Sales	90	n/k
Total CD sales	277	n/k

Accessibility Services

Our web and software accessibility services have gone from strength to strength in 2006. In that time we developed our services to respond to the need for users and organisations to know if their IT systems were **DDA compliant**. Those procuring systems were given essential information as to the capacity of current or future systems to support the needs of disabled people, and could thus be used as the basis of reasonable adjustment. This reduces the impact of poor decisions and frees up resources to support a more inclusive workforce.

This audit service has impacted on many disabled people through access to the web and we have seen **significant improvements in website accessibility** across a number of sectors including leisure, retail, and voluntary sector information services.

Our audits have included regular “**State of the eNation**” reports on business sectors.

These audits have generated significant press coverage and have enhanced the profile of web accessibility across both the developer and purchaser community.

Audits are however only one part of the total solution we offer. Direct **consultancy** not only on existing provision but also on planning an inclusive web strategy for the future has been important – we have provided training and validation of suppliers for organisations including regional museums libraries and archives. In addition we have extended our reach into **Europe** via EC funded projects to support the needs of disabled people in Italy, Belgium, Ireland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Latvia.

It has been important to also produce **resources** to assist web developers to create accessible sites. In 2006 we secured the rights to distribute the leading web accessibility materials from the states – WebAim – and simultaneously created 10,000 booklets and CD’s on accessible design for the voluntary sector which were distributed via the ICT Hub.

eNation— Supermarkets July 2006.



Tesco is the only on-line supermarket which exceeds minimum accessibility standards for disabled users, a revisit to the top five food retailers’ websites, originally reviewed in the summer of 2004.

The survey looked at both usability and accessibility. As in 2004 report, only www.tesco.com can be easily accessed by people with a vision impairment, dyslexia or physical disability making mouse use difficult, and gains a four-star rating

Just one other site passes the basic three-star accessibility rating - www.morrisons.co.uk - which has improved significantly from its original one-star score; but as an information only site, visitors cannot purchase goods

Throughout 2006 we have developed and resourced our own website whilst maintaining the highest levels of accessibility. The value of the content and the design is reflected in the phenomenal growth in usage in 2006. The skills learnt in developing the site have been utilised in providing as design and build service for other organisations including www.Gateway2AT.org

Activity	2006	2005
Web		
User sessions	837,744	470,170
Factsheet downloads	280,529	158,152
Ave sessions / day	1,773	1,287
Ave session length	00:08:20	00:12:45

Working with Government

AbilityNet recognises the importance of working closely with government to deliver high quality services to people with a disability. AbilityNet hold contracts with the **Department for Works and Pensions** to deliver Access to Work assessments in a number of UK regions. In 2006 AbilityNet were one of the first organisations to be accredited as an ATW supplier recognising the quality of the work we do.

Finding a solution to anyone's needs is critical to helping them achieve their aspirations. Finding a solution for a child opens up opportunities for increased independence, qualifications and enhanced employment prospects. In 2006 AbilityNet helped over 400 children. Much of this work was done in the first quarter through the **DfES** funded CAP programme, but when that project finished we continued to work with the DfES to identify solutions for children on the waiting list and created a model of service level agreements for local authorities and schools under the banner of "Local CAPacity."

Local CAPacity is a new way to allow educational professionals to get the support they need combining loan equipment, resources, assessments and training. Local CAPacity demonstrates our ongoing commitment to early intervention for children with disabilities. In addition AbilityNet have become actively involved in supporting the government programme for refurbishing school – Building Schools for the Future. The strategy is to ensure that where opportunities exist for supporting and enhancing provision for all children, AbilityNet will seek to ensure that the needs of those with a disability are considered.

Also in 2006 the government announced the "Digital Challenge" this scheme challenged local authorities to identify new ways to bridge the digital divide. AbilityNet was able to support many of the bids from authorities to ensure that should they win the challenge people, with disabilities would be high on the agenda.



Partnership Working

AbilityNet took great pride in establishing the principles of partnership across its activities in 2006. Led by the development of accessibility champions within the **ICT Hub** and the **DSGI Switched on Communities** programme, AbilityNet have supported disabled people through the voluntary sector. Partners have been established throughout the English regions but also in Scotland and Wales. These partners are leading the way in providing direct support to both individuals and organisations within their remit.

Partnership also took on a new direction with the development of a reciprocal agreement with the US based AT vendor EnableMart. As EnableMart established its European presence under the banner of "**TechReady**" AbilityNet supported the new company to achieve its remit of reducing prices and finding the easiest ways possible for people to get the AT they need.

	Accessibility Awareness courses and services Promoted to regional organisations	Directly Supported Individuals and Organisations
April-June	7693	343
July- September	5648	264
October- December	11151	241
Total	24492	848

Examples of direct support delivered as reported by Accessibility Champions

Part of the aim of our partnership approach is to build capacity across the UK through our **accreditation schemes** for advisors and assessors. In 2006 30 people enrolled in the scheme demonstrating real interest in providing that independent validation of competence. Organisations enrolled include Enable Ireland, Hammersmith and Fulham Disability Action, University of Wales Swansea and Gloucester County Council

"It was actually initiated by my Manager at the time as a good learning tool for me and my colleague. I feel that it has helped back up and in a way prove the information I had learnt through experience. Acknowledgment that I am experienced in knowing the accessibility options and equipment available as well as more understanding. I found the whole Module fairly straight forward to follow, the units are split accordingly and sufficiently detailed to know what is expected."

Individual assessments and equipment (trackerballs, keyboards, sticki-keys) utilised by members of Second Chance, Wakefield. This is a rehabilitation and support centre for people who have suffered head injuries and brain trauma. The group have benefited from using the equipment and their learning has improved significantly.

We demonstrated the kind of adaptive equipment available, and have offered training, further demonstration and loan of equipment. An initial accessibility assessment was carried out with one potential learner, using a head switch to access the computer. We provided and discussed the Easy and Web guides.

The champion re-wrote the training materials and reference manual specifically for the client, ensuring it worked with Windows Eyes which is the client's preferred speech software. As a result The client has expanded his knowledge of using IT and is able to take on more varied work other than answering phones. His confidence has increased and he is enjoying using his new found skills.

14 individuals involved with voluntary sector organisations have benefited directly from low cost no cost advice. Accessibility has been introduced into a voluntary sector ICT development tool called RuralNet which has national potential, identifying the needs of people with disabilities as primary stakeholders when planning ICT.

Influence and Reach

The ongoing challenge for AbilityNet is to achieve breadth and depth of intervention in provision. Our direct services influence provision for individuals but in addition we work openly with government and the public agenda to maintain the status of issues centred on the digital divide.

During 2006 AbilityNet has vigorously promoted issues of accessibility at many levels. Direct influence on government initiatives was achieved through involvement in Building Schools for the Future, Digital Challenge and Capacity Builders. In addition work with the BBC and other public agencies including UFI and LSC helped develop skills and knowledge to support people with disabilities.

Our Press office has successfully worked with the mainstream and specialist press to promote our core message and to respond to new ideas, and our ongoing eNation campaign has been instrumental in raising the profile of web accessibility in the private and public sectors.

AbilityNet is proud of its non partisan nature and continues to engage at all levels to ensure that our mission and vision are achieved

“As the largest Irish national provider of services to people with physical and multiple disabilities, we turned to AbilityNet to advise, support and train us at a time when we were embarking on the establishment of our own National AT service. Since then, our joint achievements have been many, and are marked by their diversity:

117 graduates of our Certified AT Course

Shadowing and peer mentoring of Enable Ireland’s AT staff in a range of AbilityNet locations

Design and Development of an AT CD ROM: ‘Assistive Technology For Living’

Design and Development of the Gateway Website: www.gateway2at.org, targeting students entering/already in further education, guidance counselors and employers. This partnership work included partners from Ireland, UK, Slovenia, Slovakia and Belgium.

AT Assessment of our National Advocacy Council members

National AT Seminar: focused on the use of AbilityNet’s AT Assessment Kits

Enrolment in AbilityNet’s AT Assessor Accreditation programme”

Siobhan Long – Enable Ireland

Meeting our objectives 2006

To provide a level of direct services that meet individual needs, inform our learning and ensure that our knowledge is grounded in practical experience

To achieve this in 2006 we :-

- Launched AbilityNet SOS
- Maintained our Level of assessments
- Maintained our level of advice sessions

To establish and promote national quality standards for advice and information and assessments so that ICT disabled people can obtain quality assured support

To achieve this in 2006 we :-

- Extended our Accreditation Scheme for Assessors
- Launched an Advisor accreditation scheme through ICT Hub
- Collaborated with RNIB to see our web certification recognised

To lead the market in promoting the delivery of usable and accessible websites to ensure all ICT disabled people have full access to resources on the internet

To achieve this in 2006 we:-

- Delivered 4 e-Nation reports
- Contributed to BBC Click accessibility feature
- Contributed to Microsoft Accessibility event
- Created Gateway2AT website
- Offered advice on market leading websites including channel 4 Big Brother

To create cost efficient support and resources for professionals working with disabled people to ensure they receive affordable solutions with the minimum of delay

To achieve this in 2006 we :-

- Launched our new website including the Self assessment portal
- Established an online Shareware database
- Implemented Barrier free services for assessments
- Collaborated with TechReady to create an online shop for AT

To be the information and training resource for people with limiting conditions using ICT

To achieve this in 2006 we :-

- Increased Website usage
- Implemented My Web My Way and garnered BIMA Award
- Delivered increased Training for partners
- Collaborated on Digital challenge bids
- Produced ICT Hub guides & CD's

To develop a national network of community based organisations to ensure disabled people have better access to local services

To achieve this in 2006 we :-

- Created accessibility champions with the ICT Hub
- Established first phase of Switched on Communities
- Worked with schools and local authorities under Local CAPacity

Summary

2006 was a year of success and innovation for AbilityNet. Our key objectives were successfully delivered with the support of our funders and friends. 2007 offers fresh challenges that we are well established to meet.

David Banes
Director of Operations
June 2007