

Looking Local Case Study

DigiTV – Looking Local: Kirklees Council

Why use digital TV?

Kirklees Council is interested in delivering services to the community via a range of different channels, as this helps us to meet our customers' varied needs. We have been advocates of digital interactive TV for several years. Our local digital TV site, called 'INtouch kirklees', has enabled more people to access services and information electronically, which has helped to create front line service efficiencies.

The site has also had some subtler benefits for the residents of Kirklees, such as the increased skills and confidence brought about by encouraging local people to learn and to share their own experiences. We believe that the relevance and usefulness of digital TV for our customers will only increase as digital switchover draws closer.

Our main reasons for using DigiTV - Looking Local are:

- To give universal e-access to citizens, particularly those without Internet access or PC skills.
- To offer services electronically at no additional cost to our customers - accessing services on DiTV is free for existing subscribers.
- To offer a range of self-service, 24/7 channels that meet our customers' individual needs.
- To increase social and digital inclusion by making use of the familiar technology of television.
- To build confidence and increase participation by encouraging people to create their own content and showing that we value their contribution.
- To promote community cohesion and involvement by encouraging discussion between people who wouldn't otherwise meet.
- To offer real time, end-to-end transactions by integrating existing databases and applications.
- To operate two important technical channels (digital TV and mobile) from one solution.
- To have the freedom to develop the content, information and services that our customers value the most - the flexibility of the DigiTV content management system allows us to do this.
- To create front line efficiency savings.
- To be able to offer the additional services that Looking Local brings to the DiTV and mobile platforms - for example, access to the Jobcentre Plus and Transport Direct databases.
- To share knowledge and experience with our partners and have a strong, collective voice with which to negotiate with commercial service providers and help improve the technology for the benefit of all our customers.

Who is our customer?

The INtouch kirklees digital TV site is available to all Virgin TV and Sky digital subscribers, and to anyone with a Netgem set top box or broadband Freeview. However, the site has had the greatest impact for those people who are in some sense isolated and therefore 'excluded' from the community. This applies to those people who are elderly or have mobility problems, those who do not have PCs at home and find it difficult to make use of community IT facilities due to childcare or other caring

commitments, and those who are so wary of new technologies that they do not have the confidence to use a computer. INtouch has been able to remove the barriers between these residents and IT, helping people to take part in their communities regardless of their circumstances.

In those areas of Kirklees that are considered to be disadvantaged, the take-up of digital television is proportionately high. This means that digital TV often gives us a good opportunity to reach those citizens who need to use council services and information the most. We also offer content from partner services and voluntary organisations, which greatly extends the range of relevant information that we can give to our customers. We take care to present all our information in plain language, as many of our users have lower literacy levels, and many are not familiar with the kind of Internet-jargon that others take for granted.

The INtouch mobile service is available to anyone with an Internet-enabled mobile phone. Our mobile site uses the Looking Local portal and the same DigiTV technology, so we can share content easily across the different platforms. However, there is a dedicated mobile audience who prefer this type of technology, and we aim to offer a service that takes their different needs into account. There is a unique set of transactions that people require on the move for quick and easy access, and on our mobile site we give these services more prominence.

The digital switchover and the increasing convergence between web and DiTV technologies mean that more and more people are becoming aware of the interactive services offered by digital TV. We believe that the reach of Looking Local will continue to grow over the next few years, beyond those who don't have other forms of e-access. For a greater number of users, DiTV could become a complementary channel to the web.

Background

The INtouch kirklees site was first made available on ntl (now Virgin Media) in July 2002. During this pilot project, we worked closely with local organisations and volunteers. We concentrated on five neighbourhoods that were considered to be disadvantaged, and we recruited 'community consultants' from within each area. It was the consultants' role to introduce their neighbours to the project, tell us what was relevant for their area, and encourage people to share their own stories and information to be published on INtouch.

This early work helped us to understand who our audience is and what they want from digital TV. It showed us the great potential of the technology to reach people from excluded groups, to improve access to services, and to create virtual communities of interest that can offer each other support. We also learnt how difficult and expensive it was at that time for any single council to maintain a digital TV site, and how complex it would be dealing with the multiple commercial platform providers.

DigiTV - Looking Local was set up to share this knowledge and experience with other local authorities, and to solve the problems of technical complexity and affordability. We now pay £12,000 a year to make INtouch kirklees available via the Looking Local portal, on DiTV and mobile. This is a huge improvement on the £40,000+ in hosting fees that we previously paid as a stand-alone site on a single DiTV platform. By using collective bargaining power, DigiTV has helped to make the technology affordable for all local authorities, and has given us the ability to publish to several different platforms using one technical solution. This new flexibility really helped to sell the idea of DiTV as a mainstream service for Kirklees Council, as it more than trebled our potential audience.

We became a DigiTV customer in 2004, when we began making a new version of INtouch kirklees for the Looking Local portal. Our editors attended a two-day DigiTV training course to learn how to use the content management system. It took just a few days to create our basic site, and since going live we have continued to develop new content in response to our users' needs. By using simple templates, we are able to edit existing content and add new pages to our site quickly and easily. As the content management system is web-based, it is accessible from any location, not just our council-



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networked PCs. This has made our working practices more flexible, and importantly has enabled us to make our system available to community volunteers who wish to edit their own content.

In addition to our day-to-day content management, we have also been able to develop a series of technical plug-ins that draw information directly from existing databases. This helps us to offer more time-sensitive content, such as job vacancies, which would be time-consuming to publish manually. DigiTV have supported our technical developers throughout this process, providing development guidelines and an online forum for raising and discussing issues with other plug-in developers around the country.

Customer Experience

What the customer sees on INtouch kirklees:



INtouch kirklees offers over 5,000 pages of information from Kirklees Council, other public sector organisations, voluntary groups and Kirklees residents. Our main content areas are:

- Advice and information - users can find out about a wide range of topics including the environment, money, employment, transport and learning.
- Services - users can request waste collections, report graffiti and street problems, join a credit union, renew their library items and use many other services.

- Have your say - users can contact their councillor, see live local election results, take part in consultations and comment on council and other services.
- My community - users can contribute their own information, including creative writing, memories and personal stories, messages to a loved one and recipe ideas.
- Reading Circle - users can participate in a virtual reading and creative writing group, run by a volunteer, and use related library services and information.
- Searchable databases - users can search for jobs from Jobcentre Plus and Kirklees Council, bus times from YourNextBus and legal advisers from Community Legal Advice.
- A to Z - users can view an index of the site, from abandoned vehicles to youth offending and all the services and information in between.

What the customer sees on INtouch mobile:



INtouch mobile highlights the services and information that mobile users want the most. However, mobile users also have access to the full INtouch site if they wish to use it.

Partnership Working

Digital TV in Kirklees has been a partnership from the outset. Although our site is maintained by Kirklees Council, INtouch kirklees is a community site to which many local organisations and individuals contribute. The integration of council content with information from other sources is a key part of our content philosophy - we aim to encourage participation by valuing all contributions equally. We want to strengthen these partnerships, and to build new ones, as INtouch kirklees develops.

Public sector content partners

Other public sector organisations have been content providers for INtouch kirklees since the site began. We structure our site by subject area, rather than by service or department titles, as this is what makes sense to local people. Our research showed that often users don't know (or care) who the provider is for a particular service, so integrating content from different sources helps people to find what they're looking for more easily. Our public sector partners include: West Yorkshire Police, Kirklees Primary Care Trust, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Kirklees Active Leisure and Metro.

National partners from DigiTV

DigiTV have national partnerships with Jobcentre Plus, Transport Direct and Community Legal Service, who each offer access to their citizen facing databases. Users of INtouch can search for a job, look up bus times and find local legal help. These partnerships significantly add to our offering, as this is useful content which is updated regularly. This brings users back to our site more frequently than they otherwise might visit.

Voluntary and community sector partners

Community groups and voluntary organisations are also important partners. Our community content providers include: the Reading Circle, the Alzheimer's Society, credit unions, local nature reserves and Victim Support. The Kirklees local organisations database will soon be available via a plug-in to our site, and this will give users access to information from around 3,000 local groups.

Local people

The people who live in Kirklees are our key partners. We have consistently encouraged users to contribute their own information to INtouch kirklees, and we want to do a lot more of this kind of work in the future. Our research shows that content which is written by local people is the biggest draw for other users - people are genuinely interested in finding out what others have to say. We never forget the contribution that local residents have made (and continue to make) to our site.

Public Value

Better access to services

INtouch kirklees gives access to local information and services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Users benefit from being able to use the site at a time that is convenient to them, from their home TV or on their mobile phone. This puts the user in control of their access to services, and removes many of the barriers to digital inclusion.

Improved skills and confidence

Being able to use services and share information via the familiar medium of television helps our participants to feel more confident in their own abilities. Users also gain confidence by seeing that their own content is valued, both by the editors and by other users of the site. There are some real social benefits of INtouch kirklees, and the site has been most valuable for those who are in some way isolated, who previously felt 'left out' and 'left behind'.

INtouch participant - Carol Lawrence (who first used DiTV at age 74):

"When you live by yourself (and I don't get out all that much actually), it's contact. You feel that you're with people. Well, it opened up a whole new world for me, doing things that I never would have done in a million years... not just a resource centre, it's a sort of a club, and it gives people a voice – it can empower people as well."

Mobile content

DigiTV has given us the ability to generate content in a format that suits mobile users. We have created a mobile specific site which concentrates more on the transactional content that users need to access on the move. This edited version of INtouch kirklees is also more relevant to the screen size and behaviour of mobile devices, which has improved the viewing experience for our users.

Digital Switchover

Digital switchover has already begun and our area is set to switch to digital by 2011. By this time, all homes in the Kirklees area will be digital, and many more residents will be able to benefit from our well-established digital TV site. INtouch kirklees will help new users to see the benefits of DiTV, by providing a new way to access local services and information. This could improve confidence in the digital switchover and help new DiTV users to feel supported throughout the process.



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Many residents are choosing the Freeview (non-interactive) option when they switch to digital TV, which means that they aren't able to use services interactively. However, already 56% of our homes can interact and improvements in the technology are very likely. By 2011 we anticipate that many of the Freeview boxes being bought will actually be able to interact, as they will be fitted with a broadband connection. We will make INtouch kirklees available on Freeview when this happens.

Organisational Value

Self-service delivery

Our digital TV site has helped Kirklees Council to extend the range of self-service delivery channels we offer. This has improved access to council services and helped us to engage hard to reach groups.

Front Line Savings

On average the INtouch kirklees site receives 264 sessions per week (average of 2008) via DiTV. Based on research, we are aware that these residents would have otherwise come into our contact centres or called us for their needs, both of which are more expensive channels.

Using the National Audit Office's call centre average unit cost rate, we can confirm these savings:

Average sessions per week	264
Annual sessions	13,728
Average cost of a call centre call	£3.68
Front line savings per week	£972
Front line savings per year (gross)	£50,519
Cost of DigiTV Starter Kit	£12,000
Front line savings per year (net)	£38,519

Kirklees experienced a 32% increase in usage from 2007 to 2008 and already in 2009 we are seeing usage increase even further.

So far in 2009 INtouch kirklees sessions have increased 36% on 2008 figures and up to April 2009 the weekly average has been 361 sessions, which if they continue will lead to the following savings:

Average sessions per week	361
Annual sessions	18,772
Average cost of a call centre call	£3.68
Front line savings per week	£1,328
Front line savings per year (gross)	£69,081
Cost of DigiTV Starter Kit	£12,000
Front line savings per year (net)	£57,081

Empowerment

DiTV has helped us to offer services in new ways, and has given our citizens direct involvement in the process of service delivery. By giving our customers the opportunity to use this technology in the way that is most relevant to them, we have together discovered new ways of providing services and sharing information.

Political Value

As digital switchover begins locally, residents may well ask why it is happening and what the added benefits (other than extra TV channels) are. Having a DiTV service that allows people to interact with their council, its partners and the community as a whole, all for free, is a significant benefit which can be cited. It also shows that Kirklees Council is making good use of the technologies available to make access to services as easy as possible.

Capacity

After digital switchover, more people will use their TV for more than just entertainment, being invited to 'press the red button' and engage further with interactive content. Correspondingly, more users will be able to access INtouch kirklees, and greater efficiency savings will be made via channel migration.

Over 90% of the adult population own a mobile phone, and the number who have the capacity to browse the Internet is growing. The INtouch mobile site will be increasingly used by residents who want to find the relevant information on the move.

Sector Learning

Our involvement with DiTV has improved our understanding of how to deliver e-services effectively. Some of the key lessons we'd like to share are:

- Remember that content is key - the best way to encourage usage of your site is to provide relevant content, and the only people who know what is relevant are your users themselves.
- Value all contributions equally - give users a real stake in your site, and encourage participation by showing that you value and respect what your users have to say.
- Use plain language - it is essential that all your content should be written in plain, easy to understand language.
- Engage other content providers - don't just concentrate on council content. Aim to provide content about anything that is relevant to your users, regardless of who the content owner is.
- Keep your site lively - users will only come back if your content is refreshed regularly. The DigiTV plug-ins for jobs, travel information etc are an excellent way to encourage more usage.

Next Steps

Focus group participant (from INtouch final evaluation report, Smith and Webster):

"It does have a lot of potential and I hope it carries on and grows..."

We will continue to develop INtouch kirklees and INtouch mobile to provide more of the content that our users want, and to find new and more efficient ways of generating and conveying this content. We will also continue to use our experience of DiTV to improve our other e-channels.

We are working on a plug-in to make our corporate events and local organisations databases available via digital TV and mobile. Both these databases can be edited directly by users of our council web site (www.kirklees.gov.uk), so the new plug-in will bring more community content to INtouch kirklees. In our research, events information was one of the key content areas that our users said they'd like to see more of on our site, and we are keen to respond to this demand.

We are considering other plug-ins, including an open source discussion forum and integration with other web-based systems such as our bin collections database. We also aim to get a better understanding of what new services our mobile users would like us to offer, and start developing some mobile-specific content in response.

DigiTV have been approached to provide some video content for a pilot with Virgin On Demand. We are interested in participating in this new service, and we are researching appropriate content. We'd particularly like to feature video content created by community groups or individuals, and we are looking for partners to get involved.

Additional information on the INtouch mobile site:



Kirklees new mobile service

Kirklees Council have launched the first 'dedicated' mobile service using the DigiTV starter kit, ensuring that they take full advantage of this versatile channel. The INtouch mobile service which can be accessed via any mobile device capable of browsing takes a fresh look at how services may be best delivered on this platform. It also fully embraces today's technology by introducing a texting service for customers. By texting the word 'mobile' to 0780 000 2221 users can then receive a link straight into the mobile site, this of course also bypasses any traditional geographical menu navigation. What's more is that Kirklees Council plan to promote this service with a focus on GP appointments.

Editor of INtouch kirklees - Diane Sims:

"Local people have given us lots of feedback to help us develop INtouch on digital TV. However, we didn't want to presume that mobile users want exactly the same things. We've made the most popular services for mobile users more prominent on the INtouch mobile site. We've also created mobile-friendly page layouts, by taking advantage of the vertical scrolling on mobile displays. With DigiTV's help, we have created a relevant and easy-to-use mobile site, which helps us to meet our users' needs more quickly".

Please enter this link into any mobile device to view the INtouch mobile service - www.intouchkirklees.mobi

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Links

To view the INtouch kirklees digital TV site via your PC, please visit:

www.digitv.gov.uk/digitv/cds/INtouch/Netgem/home

To view the INtouch mobile site, please visit:

www.intouchkirklees.mobi

To find out more about INtouch kirklees, please visit:

www.kirklees.gov.uk/intouch
