

Community Application of Information Technology:

Final Evaluation of the CAIT Initiative.

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Preface

Context and overview of the Evaluation

Introduction

The CAIT Initiative (Community Application of Information Technology) was introduced in spring 2000 by the then Minister for Public Enterprise, Ms Mary O'Rourke, T.D. The aim of CAIT was to address the digital divide, whereby certain groups within the population were being excluded from the Information Society and new information communication technologies (ICTs).

The introduction of CAIT followed the publication of the Information Society Commission report, IT Access for All, which set out a series of recommendations to promote inclusion in the information society. One of those recommendations was that community and voluntary sector organisations should be resourced to bring the benefits of new technologies to their organisations and their constituencies.

Against that backdrop, the CAIT Initiative provided funding to community and voluntary organisations to enable them achieve the following objectives:

- to encourage late adopters to engage with information and communication technologies in a beneficial way;
- to empower communities to harness the benefits of the new technologies;

- to employ information and communications technologies to overcome particular socio-economic barriers which exist for some communities.

Total funding of £4m was allocated to 71 projects throughout the country. These projects operated in the eighteen month period between June 2001 and December 2002.

Evaluating the CAIT Initiative

Against the backdrop of the need to promote inclusion in the information society and continue the development of public policy in this area, this evaluation of the CAIT Initiative attempts to appraise fully the performance and impact of the Initiative. The evaluation explores the extent to which the specific aims of the CAIT Initiative was achieved and in so doing also assesses the extent to which the Initiative:

- provided information and services to hard to reach groups and late adopters
- provided training and educational options to hard to reach groups, or groups experiencing barriers to participation
- enhanced community development infrastructure
- increased the technical competence of community organisations
- developed new models of community development
- promoted social development at the local level
- reinforced and added value to measures to achieve inclusion, counter poverty and promote local development.

Methodology

The evaluation of the CAIT Initiative occurred alongside its implementation. This allowed us to identify performance indicators and data gathering systems at the outset, thus ensuring that appropriate data was available. For cost reasons, most of the data was collected at project level. However, we have attempted to capture some information on the views and experiences of participants.

The methodology comprised the following elements: (see Annex 1 for copies of questionnaires etc).

- 1 *An analysis of the successful applications to the CAIT Initiative.*

- 2 *Project Summary and Forecasting Templates, designed to capture data relating to principle aims, actions and anticipated outcomes.*
- 3 *Quarterly monitoring data, detailing the implementation of projects throughout their lifespan.*
- 4 *Final Project Survey, establishing the final out-turn data.*
- 5 *Detailed case studies of 25 projects.*
- 6 *Survey of just over 100 participants on the projects case studied.*
- 7 *Focus groups with participants on three of these projects.*
- 8 *Interviews with Departmental Officials*

Box 1 presents an overview of the timing and response rates of the various monitoring and evaluation instruments.

Box 1: Overview of Methodology.

	Timing	Responses	% of total
<i>Project proposals</i>	March 01	71	100%
<i>Forecasting Template</i>	August 01	67	94%
<i>Monitoring forms</i>	February 02		
<i>Period 1 (June – Oct 01)</i>		58	82%
<i>Period 2 (Nov 01 – Feb 02)</i>		40	56%
<i>Period 3 (Mar 02 – June 02)</i>		52	73%
<i>Period 4 (July 02 – December 02)</i>		47	66%
<i>Case studies</i>	May – July 02	25	35%
<i>Participant survey</i>	July – August 02	114	Not applicable
<i>Final project survey</i>	December 02	50	70%

The organisations selected for case study were chosen to provide a mix of aims, target groups and locations. They are detailed in Box 2.

Box 2: Overview of Projects selected for Case Studies

Project	Target group	Location
Cumann Iosaef Teo	Marginalised people	Kerry
Bansha / Kilmoyler 2000 Community Group	Rural, elderly, early school leavers	Tipperary
County Wexford Community Workshop	People with disability	Wexford
Telework Ireland Limited	Carers	Monaghan
Comharchumann Forbartha Arann Teo	Irish speaking, islanders	Galway
Wicklow Chamber of Commerce, Navan Chamber of Commerce	Home Makers, lone parents	Wicklow, Navan
Coiste Forbartha na Dromoda	Farming community Irish speakers	Kerry
Galway Chamber of Commerce	Unemployed people	Galway
Loughan House Prison	Prisoners	Cavan
Dungarvan Community Development Project	Disadvantaged people, Traveller Community	Dungarvan
CoAction West Cork	People with disabilities, carers	West Cork
Plearáca Teo & VTOS	Young people	Galway
Midland Regional Authority	Rural community, Farming community.	Tullamore
Cork Anti-Poverty Resource network	Disadvantaged people	Cork city
Enable Ireland Cavan Services	Young people with disabilities	Cavan
Drogheda Partnership	Disadvantaged people	Drogheda
Comharchumann Cumarsaide Pobal Baile Atha Cliath ThoirThuaidh Teo	Lone parents	North Dublin
National Adult Literacy Agency	Staff of organisation People with literacy difficulties	Nationwide
Co Limerick VEC	Rural, elderly	Co Limerick
Disabled People of Clare	People with disabilities	Clare
Brothers of Charity Roscommon Services	People with disability	Roscommon
Louth Rural Development Co & South Down-South Armagh LEADER	Local rural community	Louth, South Down.
Meitheal Mhaigheo	Elderly, Disabled	Mayo
Ballyfermot IT Centre	Unemployed, Lone Parents	Ballyfermot
South East Galway IRD	Rural, people with disabilities, Members of Traveller Community	South east Galway

The various elements of the methodology generated a huge amount of data. Three points about the use of this data should be stressed. The first relates to quantitative data collected from monitoring forms and the postal survey. As noted, each monitoring period and the postal survey produced different response rates. In effect what this means is that we have a slightly different sub-set of projects providing data in each period. Rather than reduce this to a consistent sample, which would have also reduced the response rate, we present the data for each monitoring period in the implementation of CAIT (in Section 2). In presenting and discussion that data we place particular emphasis on the retrospective data generated through the postal survey. The second point relates to the qualitative data collected during the case studies. The case studies were carried out in the months of May – July 2002. Through these studies we sought data to enable us evaluate the CAIT Initiative and to identify learning for policy and practice. We were not evaluating the projects that were case studied. Details of projects presented later in this therefore are present as a priori examples of good practice. Finally, the data collected from participants was sourced from three focus groups, a non-representative survey of participants in some of the case studied projects and opportunistic conversations with participants that occurred during visits to projects. The data from these sources makes absolutely no claim to be representative and is used purely to provide insight from the participant points of view.

The following provides an overview of the report.

Section 1: Social Exclusion and the Information Society. The discussion in this section examines the context and rationale of the CAIT Initiative, as well as its aims and objectives and the management of the Initiative. It also assess the outcome of the application and selection processes and how adequately this outcome corresponded to the objectives of the Initiative. The objective here is to identify how elements of the design and management of CAIT contributed to its impact and the learning this has generated for future initiatives of this sort.

Section 2: Implementing CAIT. This section looks at the experience of organisations in implementing their CAIT projects and highlights examples of good practice in relation to outreach, incentivising and supporting participation. The objective of this section is to highlight

the issues that need to be taken into account in maximising the potential of the community sector to achieve e-inclusion.

Section 3 **Impact of CAIT:** Here we look at the extent to which the Initiative achieved its stated objectives in relation to late adaptors, communities and more broadly, the issue of combating social exclusion. Extensive use of case study data is made in this section in highlighting examples of good practice.

Section 4 **Implications and recommendations:** In this final section, we assess the contribution that CAIT has made to understanding the potential and role of the community sector in promoting inclusion in the information society, and more generally the Initiative's contribution to the development of public policy for such inclusion.

Section 1

Social Exclusion and the Information Society.

1.1 Information Society: Opportunities and Challenges

The onset of the Information Society brings both opportunities and challenges in all aspects of public and private life. From personal communication right through to the practice of government, new information communication technologies (ICTs) have wrought major changes and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. These developments bring exciting new opportunities, opening up access to vast areas of knowledge, breaking down institutional, geographical and physical barriers and enabling a range of services and information resources to be accessed literally at the touch of a switch.

But, the new developments also bring challenges. There is clear and consistent data right across the globe that access to and usage of ICTs is not distributed equally. Those who are most likely to have the opportunities to use these new resources are the same groups that have access to other resources in society and particularly the resources of education and employment. The converse of this is also true: those who experience disadvantage and marginalisation in society generally are also at risk of being excluded from the information society.

The term late adapters has been coined to describe those groups within the population who are consistently shown to have limited access to or usage of ICTs. In Ireland, these include unemployed people, manual workers and people with low skills who do not have access to computers in work, people on low incomes and members

of their households, people with disabilities, people living in rural and particularly isolated areas, ethnic minorities, members of the Traveller community, older people, women, and people experiencing other forms of social and or economic disadvantage.

Exclusion from the information society can have severe social and economic repercussions for the individuals and groups affected, reinforcing their marginalisation. But the digital divide that exclusion leads to also has adverse consequences for society and economy more generally. Social exclusion in the information society undermines equitable social development and social cohesion and sets limits to the human resource potential of local, regional and national economies as they struggle to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Specifically in the Irish context, exclusion from the Information Society has the attendant risks of:

- exacerbating inequality and disadvantage and thus limiting the impact of publicly funded Measures to promote equality and inclusion.
- inhibiting the development of new forms of service delivery including new forms of governance.
- impeding local economic development strategies.

The inverse of this is also true and increasingly recognised. Promoting inclusion in the information society can reinforce the impact of other strategies to combat exclusion and can contribute to other policy agendas including local economic development strategies, anti-poverty strategies, active citizenship measures and strategies to promote e-government.

Reflecting this, measures to promote access for all to the opportunities provided by ICTs are a feature of information society policy at both EU and national levels. Two key dimensions of this are now well established.

- Firstly, there is widespread acceptance that policy for the information society must include a social dimension and that that social dimension must include measures to ensure that social exclusion is not exacerbated within the

information society. This view accepts that the workings of the market will not bring about equality of access to new technologies: late adapters need specific and targeted interventions to ensure that they are brought into the information society and that its potential is used to improve their situation rather than exacerbate their existing level of disadvantage.

- Secondly, there is growing recognition that in developing and delivering interventions and other supports for late adapters, there is a key role for the voluntary and community sector: this sector is perceived as having the capacity to promote, provide and mediate access to the information society for disadvantaged groups and other late adapters and to ensure that the interests and concerns of these groups are reflected in and served by the new technologies.

The role of Social Policy

At EU level, the approach to promoting inclusion in the information society, and the recognition of both the economic and social risks of exclusion, is embodied in the establishment of the High Level Group "Employment and Social Dimension of the Information Society" (ESDIS). The ESDIS has identified a number of ways in which barriers to participation in the information society may be removed. These include

- raising awareness of the opportunities provided by the information society;
- making access to ICTs available and affordable;
- promoting digital literacy for disadvantaged people;
- tackling technical barriers for people with disabilities.

The ESDIS also addressed the capacity of the information society to improve the situation of disadvantaged people. Recommendations in relation to this include:

- developing and monitoring appropriate and targeted online content and services, including public services;
- fostering local communities, especially disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods and less-favoured rural areas, through on-line services and networks; and
- enhancing ICT job opportunities for disadvantaged people through measures such as training and accreditation for low paid workers or

those unemployed or at risk of unemployment, teleworking, and on-line recruitment services

In the Irish context, the role of social policy within the overall framework of information society policy is also clearly acknowledged. The Information Society Commission in its report IT Access for All, argued that a strong social policy direction will be essential to ensure that the main benefits of the Information Age are spread throughout society. The modus operandi of the Information Society Commission also reflected the concern with social inclusion. In particular the Sub Committee on Connected Communities was specifically focused on promoting inclusion in the information society and established the following guiding principles:

- ***Clearly identify the benefits of participation in the information society and make it relevant to people's lives.***
- ***Provide technology, training and technical support tailored to local need.***
- ***Develop IT access initiatives through partnership and focus on:***
 - ***Integrating with the existing community and voluntary sector and support networks:***
 - ***Stimulating the development of local content and the local aspect***
 - ***Learning through shared discovery.***
- ***Promote universal design to all stakeholders as a benefit to all, including people with disabilities***
- ***Ensure that ongoing evaluation forms an integral part of all state-funded projects promoting access to information and communications technology and that best practice is disseminated.***

The Role of the Voluntary Sector

The capacity of voluntary sector organisations, and especially locally based community groups, to meet the needs of disadvantaged and excluded people is well documented. Such groups tend to be close to the issues they deal with (in both social and geographical terms), have greater understanding of the needs and circumstances of the groups they deal with and have greater capacity for flexibility and innovation (Duggan and Ronayne, 1991). Consequently, these groups are in an advantageous position from which to support and promote the uptake of ICTs by disadvantaged people and other later adopters. Examples of good practice in relation to ICTs within the community sector have been highlighted (see for example,

WRC, 2000), and the duality of their role in both promoting access for late adopters and in developing socially progressive uses of the new technologies highlighted.

“...there is a pressing need for social policy to address not just issues of access, although that will remain important for the foreseeable future– but also to promote socially progressive uses of the Internet and to ensure that marginalized groups and those who represent them can play a role as producers and not just consumers within the information society” (Duggan, 2000).

A recent study of role of the voluntary sector in relation to the information society, (O'Donnell 2001) has identified the main dimensions of the sectors role as providing training and employment in the information society, promoting democratic participation and online content, and enhancing social capital and participation for all.

Information Society, Social Policy and the Voluntary Sector in Ireland

The framework for Irish information society policy is set down in the most recent report from the Information Society Commission (ISC, 2000). Community and voluntary organisations are positioned as key players in this framework. Recommendations made by the Commission relating to the involvement of the voluntary sector include the following:

- Providing direct supports for programmes for the community and voluntary sector, including organisations dealing with people with disabilities, to allow them to utilise the technologies themselves, and empower their own constituencies through the use of new technology.
- Supporting the community and voluntary sector to provide pertinent and useful content for their communities
- Developing IT access initiatives through partnership and integrating with the existing community and voluntary sector and support networks and local champions
- Providing government funding for community IT access centres, in partnership with the community and voluntary sector and industry

- Developing an IT support structure for the community and voluntary sector through the government department charged with providing support to the sector
- Continuing to include representation by community and voluntary organisations and bodies representing disadvantaged individuals, on government and policy bodies dealing with the information society.

This comprehensive approach echoes an earlier comment by the Secretary to the Government: *"The resourcing of community groups and those who work with them, therefore, is particularly important. Not just in terms of the physical infrastructure, crucial though that is. Not just in terms of addressing issues of regional disadvantage and distance which clearly can be done. But also in terms of resourcing them to participate in the problem-solving aspect of developing an inclusive information society."* (McCarthy, 1999).

In the context of the perceived wide-ranging role of the community sector, we have to note that most of the discussion of the potential or actual role of the community sector in inclusion fails to identify the factors that allow the sector to play these roles or to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the sector with regard to these factors. If the community sector is to be properly resourced to play a role in inclusion, it is important to have greater clarity of its relative strengths and weaknesses. Section Two discusses this issue more fully.

1.2 Community Application of Information Technology: the origins and establishment of CAIT

Against the backdrop of the Irish and EU policy impetus in relation to the information society, and specifically in light of the growing concern with social exclusion, the establishment of the CAIT Initiative assumes considerable significance.

- As the first major Exchequer funded programme to promote community application of new technologies, the impact of CAIT and the learning it generates will set down a marker for future endeavours in this area and contribute to the development of effective social policy for the Information Society in Ireland.

- CAIT is also unique in the EU context, and as such, can contribute to learning in relation to the development of European policy to promote inclusion in the information society.
- Some CAIT funded projects will also make a direct contribution to other areas of public policy in Ireland, including local development policy, rural development policy, policy on disability and employment policy, thus demonstrating the direct links between inclusion in the information society and more equitable social and economic development.
- CAIT projects can also illustrate the potential of the ICTs to be exploited in the fight against social exclusion, as has been recognised by the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (2001).

As the first publicly funded initiative to promote the use of ICTs at community level, the manner in which CAIT was conceived, designed and implemented at the level of the Department and individual projects is of particular relevance. In this section we examine two aspects of this: a) the design and management of CAIT and b) the shape and content of the Initiative following the selection process.

The Design and Management of CAIT

The core rationale behind the CAIT Initiative was to contribute to combating the digital divide and to developing an inclusive Information Society. Of particular concern was the possibility that the digital divide would result in some social groups becoming excluded from the developing processes of eGovernment. The CAIT Initiative also reflected the Department of Public Enterprise's desire to add a social dimension to its work in promoting ICTs thereby making the development of ICT infrastructure relevant to the community sector and complimenting its involvement in e-commerce.

This rationale was reflected in the objectives of CAIT. As already noted, these are: firstly, to encourage late adopters to engage with information and communication technologies in a beneficial way, secondly to empower communities to harness the benefits of the new technologies and finally to employ information and communications technologies to overcome particular socio-economic barriers which exist for some communities.

These are particularly interesting objectives in that they explicitly recognise the fact that the potential of ICTs with regard to exclusion is not confined to issues of access and skill but embraces also issues of appropriate and progressive usage. This was an important dimension of CAIT and, as we will see later, although access and skill issues were the predominant actions taken under the Initiative, a substantial amount of good practice in relation to progressive usage was also developed. In line with this, we can also see these objectives as a hierarchy involving different levels at which impact could be achieved – at the level of individuals (objective 1), at the level of the community sector (objective 2) and at the level of the local society and economy (objective 3)

Late adopters were identified as including: the unemployed, elderly people, manual workers, adult literacy groups, the farming community, homemakers, people with disabilities, the Traveller community, early school leavers, low income groups, people residing in remote rural areas and islands. Explicitly excluded from the target groups for CAIT were two categories that were seen to be catered for by other Initiatives or measures. These were commercial enterprises and school going children.

It was envisaged that the initial funding of 3.17 million Euro would allow for the funding of 25 projects, expected to be commissioned by June 2001. In order to ensure a regional balance in the portfolio of projects, it was intended that at least one project would be funded in each of the eight regional authority geographical areas. Ultimately additional funding was made available to the Initiative, allowing 71 projects, located throughout the country to be funded.

Management of CAIT

At its establishment, the CAIT Initiative was managed by the Communications (Development) Division of the Department of Public Enterprise. Personnel in this Division were the main point of contact with CAIT projects and were responsible for visiting projects, overseeing payments to projects and promoting awareness of CAIT. In mid 2002, responsibility for CAIT and the personnel involved in its management were transferred to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

An Inter-Departmental Steering Committee was established to provide guidance to the Initiative in relation to strategic issues. This Committee was chaired by the Department of Public Enterprise and included representatives from the Departments

of Education and Science, Social, Community and Family Affairs, Health and Children, Enterprise Trade and Employment. The Information Society Commission was also represented on the Steering Committee, as was Accenture.

Financial management of the Initiative was contracted to Chapman, Flood Mazers and the monitoring and evaluation role was undertaken by WRC Social and Economic Consultants. Both were appointed in early 2001, prior to the final selection of the CAIT projects. A decision was taken however, not to make centralised resources available to projects – for example, technical support.

Application and Selection Process.

The call for proposals under CAIT was issued in November 2000, advertised in three national newspapers and circulated to libraries, Social Partner organisations, Government Departments, regional and local authorities, community groups, Chambers of commerce and other interested parties.

The Application Form for funding under the Initiative outlined the context and rationale for CAIT. It requested information in relation to (a) the organisation making the application (b) the main sources of funding to the organisation (c) details of the proposed project and (d) details of project costs.

Information provided with the Application Form outlined the criteria on which proposals would be assessed. This criteria included reference to the manner in which the proposed project addressed the following issues in respect of its identified target group or groups:

- promoting / encouraging use of information and communication technology.
- making information and communication technology relevant
- overcoming particular barriers

The evaluation criteria also referred to the feasibility of the project from a technical, organisational and financial standpoint and the issue of value for money was also considered.

In addition to the Application Form, the Department of Public Enterprise sought to resource the application process in a number of other ways. Contact information for Departmental personnel was provided as was relevant website addresses. A public

information seminar was held on January 8th 2001 in Bundoran at which 350 people attended and a number of smaller information events were held in various locations throughout the country.

Two features that were not factored into the selection phase are worth noting here. Firstly, the issue of sustainability, in terms of project survival or durable outcomes for participants, was not a key issue at this stage. This was a deliberate and strategic decision at the time although as subsequent sections show, it is difficult to fully discuss the impact of CAIT without referring to the issue of sustainability. Secondly, the call for proposals did not attempt to direct organisations towards addressing specific themes or undertaking specific actions. CAIT was, in consequence, a genuinely 'bottom-up' Initiative. This was a very valuable dimension in that it allowed the real potential of the community sector, in terms of vision, design and delivery of projects to promote e-inclusion, to be assessed.

Assessment Process

The impact of the dissemination process was reflected in the volume of applications to the Initiative. In total, 453 applications were received by the closing date of February 15th 2001. This was far in excess of what was anticipated and had implications for the assessment and selection process. It had been intended to establish a sub-group of the Interdepartmental Steering Committee to assess the applications, but the numbers made this impossible. Instead, three members of Department of Public Enterprise staff were deployed to assess the proposals, based on the evaluation criteria outlined above. Projects were rated on each criterion and their key merits were noted separately, along with key concerns or matters requiring clarification.

A shortlist of 112 projects was developed on this basis, and was sent to the Interdepartmental Steering Committee for approval. Subsequently, all shortlisted projects were visited by Departmental personnel and following this, these personnel in conjunction with two members of the Interdepartmental Steering Committee who had read all 112 proposals, ranked the projects in order of merit. This ranking was then used to allocate funding. Initially a total of 25 projects had been envisaged. However, an additional £1.5m was made available to the Initiative and this allowed 71 of the 112 projects to be funded.

Some adjustments to project budgets were made, but approximately 60 per cent of projects received at least 95 per cent of the funding they had sought. Budget cuts were made in order to standardise costs across proposals and to eliminate what was perceived as unnecessary spending. In fact, many organisations had under-budgeted in the original proposal and later experienced some difficulties in fully implementing their projects.

In June, 2001, organisations were notified of the outcome of the selection process and on June 25th the Initiative was launched in Athlone by then Minister for Public Enterprise, Ms Mary O'Rourke, T.D. The successful projects were subsequently invited to attend at one of two seminars held in Dublin in July and August, 2001. At these seminars, the projects were provided with an overview of CAIT and advised on a number of technical and reporting requirements. These included a presentation on the financial reporting requirements of CAIT by Chapman Flood Mazar and a presentation on the evaluation requirements by WRC Social and Economic Consultants. The latter highlighted the methodology and timeframe for monitoring and evaluating the CAIT Initiative and distributed the Project Summary and Forecasting Templates (Annex 1).

1.3 Shaping CAIT: the outcome of the selection process

The outcome of the selection process was the funding of 71 community organisations to deliver projects within the framework of CAIT, demonstrating clearly that the strategy of funding the community sector to provide IT opportunities for late adopters is feasible in practical terms. However, the extent to which the overall objectives of CAIT would be achieved depended firstly on the extent to which the objectives of the selected projects reflected the specific aims of the Initiative and secondly on the extent to which the projects could deliver the actions and achieve the outcomes specified in their proposals. In the following paragraphs we assess the first of these issues (the second issue is looked at in later sections). This assessment is based on an analysis of the proposals for funding submitted by the 71 funded projects and on an analysis of forecasting templates completed by 65 of these. This data is looked at under the headings of geographic location, aims, number and type of beneficiaries, specific activities and anticipated outcomes. This analysis reveals the breadth and depth of the CAIT Initiative that resulted from the selection process, but also some limitations.

Geographic location

The initial expectation that each regional authority area would have at least one project funded was overwhelmingly surpassed. Instead, CAIT achieved nationwide implementation.

Table 1.1: Regional and County Distribution of CAIT Projects

Region	Counties	Number of Projects
Dublin Region <i>Total Projects: 9*</i>	Dublin	9
Border Region <i>Total projects: 12*</i>	Cavan	3
	Donegal	3
	Leitrim	1
	Louth	3
	Monaghan	1
	Sligo	1
Mid-East Region <i>Total Projects: 4*</i>	Kildare	2
	Meath	1
	Wicklow	1
Midlands Region <i>Total Projects: 6</i>	Laoise	1
	Longford	1
	Offaly	2
	Westmeath	2
Mid-West Region <i>Total Projects: 8</i>	Clare	4
	Limerick	1
	Tipperary N. R	3
South-East Region <i>Total Projects: 8</i>	Kilkenny	1
	Carlow	1
	Wexford	2
	Waterford	2
	Tipperary S. R	2
South-West Region <i>Total Projects: 11*</i>	Cork	6
	Kerry	5
West Region <i>Total Projects: 13</i>	Galway	7
	Mayo	4
	Roscommon	2

*Includes projects operating nationwide. There are five such projects, two in the Dublin Region and one each in the Border, Mid-East and South West Regions.

While all counties are represented, some in the west and southwest regions fared particularly well, notably Galway, Cork and Kerry. The border region also has a large number of projects. This geographic spread is particularly noteworthy as it is not

always achieved by funding Initiatives such as CAIT. However, the large number of projects supported from a relatively small fund raises the question as to whether CAIT resources were spread too thinly

Target Groups and Beneficiaries

A key part of the rationale for the CAIT Initiative was to bring the benefits of ICTs to those target groups that were shown to have low levels of access and usage, the so-called late adopters. The target groups that were to be included in the Initiative were: the Traveller community, the elderly, the farming community, the unemployed, people with disabilities, early school leavers, prisoners, childcare providers, Irish-speaking communities, children at risk, lone parents, people with literacy difficulties, homemakers, rural and island communities, refugees and carers. In order to ensure that CAIT did reach these categories, the target groups that projects intended to work with were a key part of the assessment and selection procedure.

Table 1.2: Anticipated CAIT Participants by Target Group

Target Group	Number
Members of the Traveller Community	567
Older People	2446
Farming community	3874
Unemployed people	5321
Disabled people	1636
Early School Leavers	1508
Lone Parents	1413
Home makers	4001
People with literacy difficulties*	660
Rural dwellers	5686
Refugees	277
Prisoners and ex-offenders	139
Children at risk	277
Carers	614
Childcare workers	237
Others	2246
Total	30902

Note: Figures refer to planned targets. Gender breakdown by target group unavailable.

The analysis of the Forecasting Templates revealed the anticipated number of beneficiaries in each target group (Table 1.2). While overall, the projects anticipated catering for very diverse target groups, some late adopter groups were better represented than others among the anticipated beneficiaries. Groups with the highest level of expected representation were rural dwellers, unemployed people and older people. Groups that are far less well represented include carers, refugees, and members of the Traveller community.

We should note here, however, that the target groups listed above are not mutually exclusive. Depending on their circumstances, for example, individuals could be accurately identified as unemployed, as rural dwellers or as home-makers. Indeed, the large number of rural dwellers is due, in part, to the tendency for access type projects in rural areas to classify their target groups simply as rural dwellers rather than allocating them to more specific groups. These data, therefore, should be interpreted as indicating the potential reach of the CAIT Initiative into late adaptor groups generally, rather than as a quantification of the extent to which it would cater for any one. Overall, just over 30,000 participants were anticipated by the funded projects, with roughly equal proportions of men and women. The actual out-turn is discussed in later sections. However, we can note here that an estimated 70 per cent of overall throughput targets were reached, although with considerable variation across target groups. More significant was the unexpected gender imbalance, with 60 per cent of participants being female.

Broad Aims

The analysis of the 71 project proposals carried out by the Department developed a classification of the main interventions proposed by projects. These included the following:

- Developing access centres,
- Providing training programmes,
- Providing education and literacy programmes,
- Undertaking outreach programmes
- Facilitating independent living,
- Promoting community enterprise,
- Establishing communication and advocacy networks,
- Undertaking information dissemination and research,
- Promoting environmental awareness,
- Developing communities on line,
- Providing mentoring supports

On the basis of an analysis of the forecasting templates (65 projects) these interventions were regrouped into five categories. Tables 1.3 shows the outcome of this in terms of the numbers of projects in each regrouped category and also show the main characteristics of the projects in these categories.

Three noteworthy features are evident from Table 1.3. Firstly, the bulk of projects were involved (a) in providing access centres, (b) in delivering training or (c) in a combination of both, sometimes also including other activities. Forty five of the sixty five (69%) projects that completed the forecasting template were in one of these categories. As is discussed in more detail later, this resulted in a predominance of actions to promote access / competence in the Initiative rather than to promote socially progressive uses of ICTs.

Secondly and related to the above, is the fact that many projects were process driven rather than outcome driven. That is, they stated their objectives in terms of the main actions they would undertake, rather than in terms of the desired outcomes. This was largely because projects sought to provide to their target groups the opportunities and skills to use ICTs without determining what these skills would be used for: training and access were perceived as ends in themselves rather than as means to ends.

Thirdly, although less evident in the table, CAIT projects fell broadly into two types: institutional based projects that provided services to their own members or client groups and community based projects that provided services either to the community generally or to specific target groups within the community. The community projects catering for the community generally, anticipated larger number of beneficiaries and more diverse groups of beneficiaries. Institutional projects anticipated smaller numbers of beneficiaries and were focused on single target groups. To illustrate, a community access centre could cater for 4,000 people over the life of the project and these could include most of the CAIT target groups. In contrast, a day care centre for the elderly will cater for a much smaller number drawn exclusively from its own target group or membership. Community and institutional based projects also vary in relation to the development of good practice, and by extension of good policy, an issue we will return to later.

Table 1. 3: Classification of Aims, Main Characteristics and no. of Projects involved

Category	Main characteristics	Number of projects
Providing access centres	<i>Community based access centres, serving all the community, and consequently having diverse target groups.</i>	6
Providing training programmes	<i>Includes both community based training projects offering training to all community members, and institutional-based training programmes catering for members / clients and consequently having specific target groups.</i>	19
Combined access and training with other interventions such as outreach and advocacy	<i>Includes both community based access and training projects offering training to all community members, and institutional based access and training programmes catering for specific target groups.</i>	21
Provision of training to support other interventions (not access)	<i>Comprising projects that are community based and providing training in conjunction with other activities such as promoting on-line communities and projects that are institutional based and providing training along with activities such as outreach, or facilitating independent living. A key feature of these projects is that training is a means to achieve a wider end, rather than being an end in itself.</i>	10
Promoting the use of ICTs in literacy programmes	<i>These projects are promoting the use of ICTs in education and literacy provision through measures such as the development of web-sites, and projects using ICTs to deliver education and literacy programmes. Outreach sometimes features.</i>	4
Independent living, advocacy, outreach, mentoring solo or in combination	<i>Projects targeted at people in institutions, in the community or in their own homes, seeking to promote their social and economic well-being through ICTs. Training in ICTs is a feature but not the dominant one.</i>	7

The analysis of the case studies indicates other key areas of variation across organisations funded by CAIT:

Main focus and objectives.

The institutional / community dichotomy was reflected in the case studies, with some of the organisations studied being single issue institutions while others were more general community development organisations.

Catchment Area and local networks

The catchment areas range from localised housing estates, to large areas of towns and counties.

Organisational capacity.

Some of the organisations have a very high level of capacity at an organisational level, reflected in factors such as the number of staff, the adequacy of buildings, equipment and so on. Other organisations have very limited capacity in this regard. .

Prior Experience of Information Technology

A number of the projects had very good prior experience of using information technology and of providing training and other resources to their client group. For these, who were very much a minority, implementing the CAIT project added value to existing activities or skills. For projects that did not have this degree of experience, and these were the majority, CAIT represented a fairly steep learning curve.

Understanding of ICTs and the Information Society.

This is in part linked to the above issue and is also very variable. Most of the projects are fully aware of the fact that their own target groups are late adopters to ICTs and can identify the specific barriers they face in relation to this. Most also identified quite appropriate ways to address these barriers. However, the more innovative or strategic potential of ICTs was not well captured by many of the projects, as table 1.3 also reflects.

When the target groups are looked at in conjunction with category of project, (Table 1.4) no particular pattern emerges, although rural dwellers tend to be concentrated in access centres and education and literacy interventions.

Table 1.4: Anticipated Number in each Target Groups by Project Type

	Access Centres	Training programmes	Access + Training programmes	Training programmes + outreach etc	Education & Literacy	Independent living etc	Totals
Members of the Traveller Community	67	170	131	159	40	0	567
Older people	360	251	741	439	100	555	2446
Farming community	246	122	2554	252	700	0	3874
Unemployed people	397	392	3101	529	824	78	5321
Disabled people	94	76	388	441	300	337	1636
Early School Leavers	404	90	269	94	640	11	1508
Lone Parents	250	93	793	117	160	0	1413
Home makers	604	251	2410	346	390	0	4001
People with literacy difficulties	0	70	190	30	265	105	660
Rural dwellers	758	1040	1670	18	2000	200	5686
Refugees	138	11	71	57	0	0	277
Prisoners and ex-offenders	0	125	14	0	0	0	139
Children at risk	0	30	232	15	0	0	277
Carers	0	15	236	63	250	50	614
Childcare workers	0	0	197	18	20	2	237
Others	650	276	550	251	29	490	2246
Total	3968	3012	13547	2829	5718	1828	30902

Potential Outcomes for Participants

The forecasting templates indicated that the majority of participants on CAIT projects would receive training. An assessment of the planned outcomes for participants (Table 1.5) shows that a minority, albeit a substantial minority, of these would also receive accreditation as a result of participating in the CAIT project, and a somewhat larger number were expected to progress to further training subsequent to the project. Again, what is reflected in these figures, is the emphasis on basic or introductory training that characterised many CAIT projects.

Over and above the provision of training, almost 6,000 participants were expected to benefit from other services delivered by the CAIT projects.

Table 1.5: Anticipated Outcomes by Project Type

	Total Beneficiaries	Numbers receiving accreditation	Numbers progressing to further training	Numbers benefiting from new services
Access Centres	3968	0	381	500
Training programmes	3012	309	552	101
Access + Training programmes	13547	3130	3695	3920
Training + outreach etc	2829	1254	1215	748
Education & Literacy	5718*	200	90	400
Independent living	1828	44	55	195
Totals	30902	4937	5988	5864

Conclusions

The establishment of the CAIT Initiative was obviously a well-judged and timely development. The volume of applications for funding indicates both the level of interest in ICTs in the community sector and also the level of need. It also indicates that the activities carried out by the Department to promote awareness of CAIT were highly effective.

The technical assessment and selection processes were rigorous and transparent, albeit time-consuming. Despite this, the initial timeframe whereby it was hoped to have projects commissioned by June 2001 was achieved. Departmental visits to the short listed projects appear to have been a particularly valuable exercise, enabling a greater depth of understanding of projects and also providing insights into the

capacity of the organisations to engage with information society issues. These visits were also useful for projects, enabling them become familiar with the Department personnel. Case study data show that interaction with the Department was both welcomed and well-received by projects.

The interdepartmental committee also appears to be an especially valuable dimension of the Initiative, both in terms of steering the Initiative and in terms of providing some opportunities for the Departments represented on it to be aware of and potentially absorb the learning from CAIT projects.

The bottom up approach utilised by CAIT was also extremely valuable in that it allowed for community sector involvement in e-inclusion, unmediated with constraints and preferences of a Government Department. However, the result of the bottom up approach was an emphasis on lower level objectives among the funded projects. Despite this, the outcome of the selection process was positive in terms of the targeting of late adopters and in terms of the range of activities to be undertaken to promote e-inclusion. Nonetheless, future initiatives such as CAIT should seek to ensure that a better balance between issues of access and issues of progressive usage is achieved.

The outcome of the selection process was also positive in terms of the geographical coverage of the Initiative, although, it meant that the relatively small amount of funding available to CAIT was spread very thinly.

Finally, we note here that CAIT was developed to be a learning instrument and part of the learning it generated concerns the design of initiatives to resource the community sector bring the benefits of ICTs to their clients. Two issues are relevant here, both of which are addressed in more detail later. These are firstly the need to address the fact that many community organisations do not the technical competence to allow them maximise their potential to promote ICTs. Future Initiatives should take account of this and ensure a level of technical support is provided to projects. Secondly, while the issue of sustainability was not a consideration for CAIT, it should be taken into account in developing strategies for e-inclusion at local level.

Section 2

Implementing CAIT Projects

2.1 Introduction

In this section, we examine the implementation of CAIT projects with a view to identifying the issues that arose for organisations as they sought to bring the benefits of ICTs to their target groups and communities. In doing so we focus on the main actions that were undertaken by projects, under the following headings: preliminary or start-up actions; recruiting staff; developing and delivering training programmes and services; recruiting and supporting participants.

As a preface to this discussion, we must reiterate the considerable variation amongst CAIT projects regarding their prior experience of ICTs or of delivering ICT based projects. A small number of organisations had significant levels of experience of ICTs and also had the necessary equipment, or much of it, to deliver the CAIT projects. Most projects had no experience or had very limited experience, such as for example, the provision of very basic training for small numbers of people. Finally, there was also a small number of organisations which did not even have adequate computer facilities or expertise for their own administration.

The low level of competence overall demonstrates clearly the need for a programme such as CAIT, but it also had consequences for the implementation of the Initiative.

Firstly, as few organisations had the infrastructure and equipment necessary to deliver the CAIT project, CAIT had to bear the costs (or much of the costs) of equipping organisations and adapting venues for the projects. Secondly, few organisations had the technical competence to identify and source the most appropriate ICTs equipment for the project or their client group. This was the most frequently experienced difficulty and one consequence is that some projects made inappropriate and costly decisions when purchasing hardware and software. Both of these issues are looked at in more detail later.

NB: In the following discussion we use a combination of data drawn from the four monitoring forms and the Final Project Survey. As all five of these had different response rates, (see Table i), we are dealing with a slightly different sub-set or projects in each monitoring period and in relation to the Final Survey. For this reason we emphasis, in the following discussion, the data pertaining to actions that occurred “at any time” during the life of the projects rather than those pertaining to actions that occurred during a particular period. This data is drawn from all five data sources and provides the largest sample of projects (66 projects or 93% of total). We must stress that because of the varying response rates the data for each monitoring period underestimates the real level of involvement of CAIT projects in the actions examined.

2.2 Start-up Phase

CAIT projects were informed of the outcome of the selection process in June 2001. Between then and end October 2001, the majority of projects became operational. Most of the remainder became operational in the period November 2001 - February 2002, with just a small number starting up at a later date. The preliminary or early start-up phase was characterised by some difficulties, many relating to preparing premises or as already noted to purchasing equipment.

Refurbishment / adaptation of building and vehicles.

Physical adaptation of buildings or vehicles was an issue for a minority of projects, mainly those seeking to cater for people with disabilities or establishing a new premises for the CAIT project. Overall, just 24 per cent of organisations (16) had to undertake some refurbishment or adaptation. Most of this occurred in the early stages of the Initiative, that is in Period 1.

Table 2.1: Involvement in Adapting Buildings and / or Vehicles

<i>Physical adaptation of buildings or vehicles</i>	At any time (N=66)	Period 1 (N=58)	Period 2 (N=40)	Period 3 (N=52)	Period 4 (N=47)
Number of projects involved	16	14	8	5	3

Key issues: Most of the difficulties that arose here reflected poor community development infrastructure rather than a specific IT or CAIT related issue. Specific examples of the difficulties that arose were:

- *Inadequate / unsafe wiring having to be replaced to accommodate computers.*
- *Areas not served by isdn lines.*
- *Delays in having necessary refurbishment undertaken.*

These problems were overcome, but they caused delays to some projects, adding to costs and frustrating the achievement of objectives. This issue highlights some of the considerations that need to be borne in mind if the potential of the community and voluntary sector to promote e-inclusion is to be realised.

Purchasing hardware, software and assistive technologies

The vast majority of projects (85%) had to purchase hardware and software and some projects purchased substantial amounts of hardware. Fifty four per cent of projects had also to purchase assistive technologies. Purchasing software and assistive technologies tended to be an ongoing activity over the life of the project as organisations attempted to meet the new or developing needs of participants. (See Annex 3 for full list of hardware, software and assistive technologies purchased)

Table 2.2: Involvement in sourcing Hardware, Software and Assistive Technologies

	Any time (N=66)	Period 1 (N=58)	Period 2 (N=40)	Period 3 (N=52)	Period 4 (N=47)
<i>No of Projects that purchased hardware / software</i>	56	44	25	18	13
<i>No of Projects that purchased assistive technologies</i>	36	24	17	15	5

Key issues: This was one of the most difficult areas for projects to deal with and one that many would have wished to have been better resourced for. Most of the problems that arose here were due to the lack of experience of ICTs on the part of projects. Many project personnel were not familiar with the technical requirements, capabilities or compatibilities of computers, printers, scanners and other hardware. Similarly, most were unaware of the existence, appropriateness or adequacy of various software and assistive technologies. The software / assistive technology issue was the more problematic, particularly for projects catering for people with disabilities or with literacy difficulties. A small number of projects did have expertise on these issues, some also recruited key personnel prior to purchasing equipment and some sought expert help locally. Most, however, did experience some problems, including:

- *Under-budgeting for the cost of equipment*
- *Buying more equipment than was necessary*
- *Deciding to purchase second hand computers without good advice*
- *Unaware that some software companies offer discounts to organisations with charitable status.*
- *Reliance on retailers to provide advice on project needs*
- *Reliance on a small number of local retailers, minimising price competition, although also facilitating better after-sales service.*
- *Buying equipment that proved incompatible with existing equipment.*
- *Cutting corners – trying to get up-to-date software to run on old computers.*
- *Buying software that was inappropriate or inadequate to the task*
- *Running software on inadequate computers consequently not reaping the full benefit.*

Again, most of these difficulties were ironed out over the life of the project, but it raises an issue as to whether or not the best value for money was achieved by the Initiative overall and whether the most appropriate software and assistive technologies were deployed for the benefit of participants. Resourcing projects on these issues could have been done relatively cheaply and would have represented good value for money for the Initiative overall. That this wasn't done is one of the few weaknesses in the design and delivery of CAIT.

2.3 Recruiting Project Personnel

The issue of personnel is obviously important for any innovative Initiative but had particular significance for the CAIT Initiative, given the general lack of experience among projects in dealing with ICTs. Finding appropriate staff did not prove a major problem for projects and did enable them address the technical competence issue.

A substantial proportion of personnel were in place by the end of October 2001 (Period 1), with the numbers working on CAIT projects reaching a maximum during the months of March, April, May and June 2001 (Period 3). Final data for personnel working on CAIT projects from 49 projects shows a total of 402 people deployed directly on these projects. That suggests a total labour commitment approximately 580 on CAIT funded actions over the life of the Initiative. Staff were predominantly female.

Table 2.3 Staffing Levels

	Males	Females	Total
Period 1 (n= 58)	30	81	116
Period 2 (n=40)	75	123	200
Period 3 (n=52)	71	176	247
Period 4 (n=47)	68	162	230
Postal survey (n=49)	136	266	402
Estimated total (N=71)			580

Table 2.4 shows the pattern of recruitment onto CAIT projects and reveals some interesting data. Firstly, thirty per cent of those working on CAIT projects were volunteers. Most were in the tutor category and were involved on a sessional basis. A similar proportion were existing staff of the organisation, reassigned on a part-time or full time basis to the CAIT project. Forty per cent of those working on CAIT projects were recruited into the organisation specifically to deliver the project. The majority of new recruitment occurred in the tutor / trainer category.

Few of the staff employed on CAIT were full time. Just 13 per cent of personnel involved in delivering the project were full-time employees, with 52 per cent being part-time. A further 35 per cent of those involved were classified as sessional workers, that is providing inputs on an irregular basis.

Table 2.4: Recruitment Pattern by Job Title

	Existing Employee	New Recruit	Volunteer	Total
Tutor / trainer	58	116	70	244
Co-ordinator	22	16	2	40
Manager / trainer	9	5	1	15
Director	3			3
Facilitator	2	4		6
Secretary	2	7	1	10
Administrator	13	2		15
Other	7	10	33	50
Total				

Key Issues:

The extent of recruitment into CAIT projects represents a significant resourcing of the community sector. That most of this occurred in the tutor / trainer area also means that the lack of ICT capacity among many projects was addressed to some extent through CAIT. The sustainability of this level of resourcing in the longer term remains an issue, nonetheless, this is an important outcome from CAIT funding.

In so far as we could determine, all tutors had relevant qualifications, although the overall level of these varied quite a bit as did the previous experience of tutors. What proved at least equally important was that tutors were skilled in working with adults and in working with adults experiencing exclusion or disadvantage of various forms. As a result, these personnel were familiar with community based learning and adult education ethos. This proved a hugely significant factor in the success of the CAIT projects and was recognised by both project co-ordinators and participants.

“The tutors were fabulous – really supportive and kept us going” (Participant)

“Everything was at our own pace, if you missed a day, they went back over it for you” (Participant).

Project co-ordinators also played a key role in delivering projects and their skills and competences were crucial to the smooth implementation of actions. An important issue here is that co-ordinators need to be well resourced and supported. Rolling out

new programmes such as those funded by CAIT can be more time-consuming and more costly than anticipated and some projects found themselves overstretched in both personnel and financial terms. Project co-ordinators were usually the ones responsible for dealing with the implications of this.

The level of volunteer involvement with CAIT projects and particularly with a training role within them, is also important and suggests a potential reservoir of skills has been generated within the sector outside of formal employment. Some organisations were also involved in training their participants to become tutors and involving these in the ongoing delivery of the project, again pointing to a ripple effect.

2.4 Developing and Delivering Training

By definition, CAIT projects were reaching out to those not currently accessing ICTs. The factors which contribute to lack of access are varied. As well as financial costs, they include lack of confidence generally, fear of new technology and literacy difficulties as well as issues associated with disability. In providing training and other resources for late adaptors, therefore, CAIT projects had to address these factors. That they did so, is reflected in the data in Table 2.5. From this table we can see that while almost all projects (80%) used existing training courses to meet the needs of their target group, the overwhelming majority (73%) also adapted these training courses and developed their own courses, to better cater for the needs of their target group. The extent to which projects responded to the needs of their target groups is also reflected in the fact that this was an ongoing activity, not confined to the start up phase.

Table 2.5: Involvement in Sourcing, adapting or developing training courses

	Any time (N=66)	Period 1 (N=58)	Period 2 (N=40)	Period 3 (N=52)	Period 4 (N=47)
Sourcing existing training courses appropriate for the target group	53	31	26	30	18
Adapting training courses to better meet the needs of the target group	48	22	24	35	25
Developing own training courses and resources	48	29	24	31	29

Key Issues: The problems with software noted earlier impinged to some extent on the sourcing of training packages, but only in a limited way. In general, this was not a problematic issue, primarily because key project personnel had been recruited by the time training courses were being established and would have had sufficient expertise to identify or adapt the best options for their participants.

A wide variety of training courses were put in place by CAIT project:

- *Basic IT*
- *NETG*
- *ECDL*
- *E-Cert*
- *Introduction to PC*
- *Micro-Soft word Excel*
- *Internet and email*
- *Literacy courses*
- *Spreadsheets*
- *Pitman*
- *Exam*
- *Intermediate*
- *Web design*
- *Training of trainers courses*
- *Accountancy*
- *Equal Skills*

Sourcing accreditation

Although most projects were providing training, not all provided accreditation. This is primarily because many projects, as already noted, sought to introduce participants to ICTs at a basic level, rather than putting them onto the qualification pathway. Overall, just 37 projects (56%) sought accreditation for participants. Forms of accreditation included: ECDL; FETAC; JEB; NETG; E-Cert, and as is to be expected, this activity intensified over the lifetime of the Initiative.

Table 2.6: Involvement in Securing Accreditation

	Any time (N=66)	Period 1 (N=58)	Period 2 (N=40)	Period 3 (N=52)	Period 4 (N=47)
Securing accreditation	37	12	17	24	20

Key Issues: Few projects referred to serious difficulty in sourcing accreditation. This was due mainly to the fact that they offered training courses with built in accreditation mechanisms. Problems did arise however, for some projects that had under-estimated the costs associated with accreditation.

Developing New Services

While providing training was obviously a major feature of CAIT projects, most were also involved in developing and delivering new ICT based services to participants, client groups or the wider community. The full extent of these can be seen from the following list:

- *Personal development supports*
- *Mentoring*
- *Advocacy measures*
- *Independent living supports*
- *Drop – in access*
- *Internet café*
- *Support for enterprise development*
- *Support for employment in IT sector*
- *Support for employment generally*
- *Online employment centres*
- *Internet research*
- *Community website*

Some of the services developed were new, ICT based services, for example developing community websites. Others reflected the incorporation of ICTs into the existing services of the organisation, for example in relation to mentoring or advocacy measures.

Table 2.7 provides an overview of the roll out of specific training programmes across projects over the duration of the Initiative while Table 2.8 shows the number of projects involved in delivering new services.

Table 2.7: Project Involvement in Delivering Training

	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	At any Time
Basic IT	13	24	37	38	43
NETG	1	1	1	0	2
ECDL	5	12	15	12	24
Microsoft Office	5	15	16	15	34
Internet / Email	4	19	17	14	39
Web design	0	5	6	6	10
Digital Media	0	4	12	11	12
Equal Skills	4	13	20	18	20
Spreadsheets	0	8	10	15	20
Other	5	4	11	9	9
Accountancy software	0	2	3	5	5

Table 2. 8. Project involvement in Delivering New Services

	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	At any time
Mentoring	6	9	14	8	21
Personal supports	11	18	24	21	33
Advocacy	3	8	10	5	15
Independent living supports	3	8	6	5	11
Support for enterprise development	3	7	7	6	14
Support for entry to employment in IT sector	7	13	19	15	27
Support for entry to employment generally	10	15	22	18	29
Other (3e)	2	3	4	9	10

Key Issues: The ongoing delivery of project actions presented some difficulties for projects, but these tended to be small scale and relatively easily remedied. Among these difficulties were:

- Problems arising from under-budgeting, leading to difficult decisions having to be made.
- Unanticipated costs arising associated with accreditation, insurance etc
- Ongoing problems with having no access to ISDN lines, in particular frustrating for Net based training and interventions.

Most of these difficulties were eventually resolved and did not cause serious impediments to delivering the project or achieving the objectives. The extent to which projects were themselves satisfied with their overall performance is evident from responses to the Postal Survey of projects. A total of 47 projects responded to this survey. When asked if they had experienced any difficulties in reaching their objectives, just 4.2 per cent said they had experienced no difficulties, 85 per cent experienced 'some minor difficulties' and 10 per cent experienced 'major difficulties'.

When asked if the project had achieved its objectives, 53 per cent said their project had achieved all its objectives and 47 per cent said it had achieved at least some of its objectives.

2.5 Engaging Late Adopters

Introducing late adopters or other hard to reach groups to training programmes such as those provided by CAIT projects, requires a specific ethos and philosophy that understands the needs, fears and circumstances of the target groups and has a capacity to be flexible in responding to these. At the core of this is the recognition that motivating participation is not confined to recruitment, but is an ongoing activity involving the provision of supports at all stages of participation. This is an area in which community and voluntary organisations have a high level of expertise and is, implicitly, the reason they have such a contribution to make to inclusion. Here we examine how projects engaged and recruited participants.

Outreach

The specific forms of outreach – bearing in mind that the target groups, by definition, included the hard to reach – were varied. The following provides an overview of the most frequently used methods and the circumstances of their use.

Method	Context
Word of mouth	Projects in rural areas Projects recruiting from among current client group
Newsletters	Larger organisations, covering large catchment area
Fliers	Larger organisations, covering large catchment area
Shop windows	Projects located in small towns
Local media	Widespread
Door to door recruitment	Projects located in specific areas (eg housing estates), with very specific and hard to reach target groups
Information meetings	Widespread
Priest at mass	Projects in rural areas
Via representative bodies (e.g., ICA)	Projects targeting specific groups.

Projects tended to use a number of different approaches appropriate to their circumstances and the groups they hoped to attract. For example, the recruitment campaign of Pleacara in Rosmuc consisted of placing posters in local shops and schools, having announcements made at mass, advertising in their own newsletter, advertising on Radio na Gaeltacht, and distributing flyers to peoples homes, and using participants to pass on information to family and friends. This type of varied approach was common amongst projects, as was the practice of using different outreach mechanisms to reach different target groups.

Recruitment

A large number of CAIT projects operated on a continual intake basis. Consequently, outreach and recruitment practices were undertaken throughout the life of the project. This is reflected in Table 2.9 which looks at project involvement in outreach, recruitment and screening activities over the course of the Initiative.

Table 2.9: Recruitment of Participants

	Any time (N=66)	Period 1 (N=58)	Period 2 (N=40)	Period 3 (N=52)	Period 4 (N=47)
Providing information on project	56	42	34	40	40
Recruiting participants	56	36	30	36	35
Selecting / screening participants	35	19	20	21	20

The ongoing recruitment also reflects the fact that some projects (particularly training projects), had built in progression options to their training programmes, allowing participants on one course in one period to become new recruits to a more advanced course in a subsequent period.

The different types of interaction beneficiaries would have with projects was clear from project proposals. For these reason we categorised participants in three categories, and this system was used to collect data over the course of the initiative. The categories were:

- **Trainees:** Individuals who avail of structured training programmes, usually having been formally recruited.

- **Service users:** these are people who use the services of the project, without undergoing formal training or enrolling in the project. People dropping into an Internet café, for example, would be service users, so too would members of a community using an access centre to source information etc.
- **Trainers being trained:** Beneficiaries whose involvement in the project equips them to seek employment as trainers or to upgrade their skills in their existing employment.

The following Table looks at the participation rates of each group over the duration of the Initiative.

Table 2.10. Ongoing Participation on CAIT Projects

	Trainees	Service users	Trainers trained	Total	% Female
Period 1 (N=58)	2748	838	109	3695	54
Period 2 (N=40)	5002	760	200	5962	67
Period 3 (N=52)	6572	796	197	7562	59
Period 4 (N=47)	4954	780	98	5832	62
Total Throughput (N=49)	12547	3060	348	15955	66
Estimated throughput (N=71)	18180	4433	504	23118	66

In each monitoring period, the number of beneficiaries in each category grew steadily, until the final monitoring period when some projects began to wind down. Overall, an estimated 23,118 beneficiaries were directly involved in CAIT projects. That represents just over 70 per cent of anticipated throughput. Given that quite a number of projects would have had difficulty estimating their likely throughput and may have over-estimated, this is a very good result.

Key issues: If difficulties in the preliminary phase reflected the infrastructural weakness in the community sector, the recruitment of participants reflected the strengths of the community sector in reaching excluded groups. In total, an estimated 23,000 participants were recruited onto CAIT projects over the life of the Initiative.

In general, there was little or no difficulty for projects in recruiting participants. Among the 25 case studies carried out, just two projects identified some difficulty in interesting their target groups in becoming involved in the project. In a very small number of instances, CAIT projects found themselves competing for participants from the same pool.

The most problematic issue encountered in relation to recruitment was the gender imbalance. At the outset, it was anticipated that about half of all participants would be female. In fact, the actual proportion was 66 per cent and difficulties in attracting male participants were cited by many projects. This gender breakdown is interesting from a number of perspectives, not least of which is the fact that most publicly funded initiatives are concerned to ensure at least equal numbers of women among participants, rather than having this concern in relation to men.

A number of projects made specific attempts to attract men, organising classes for specific groups of men and building content around certain interests, such as sport. These, in general, had mixed results. Projects had varied opinions as to why men were slow to come forward for training, and some noted that by and large the majority of users of the services of community groups are female. However, recent research into learning styles of men and women suggests different motivations for learning on the part of men and women in that men are more highly motivated when the outcome is vocational oriented whereas women are more prepared to explore wider options (King et al, 2002). Additionally, men experience peer culture as a form of social control, making them reluctant to engage in personal disclosure or questioning. Women, in contrast, are more likely to support each other in learning, to engage in the wider learning environment and to perceive adult education as a more holistic developmental exercise.

An additional issue that arose for some projects was difficulties in balancing the need to provide the personal supports that many target groups require in order to participate in training such as provided by CAIT, and the desire to extend training to as great a number of people as possible. This is a quantity versus quality issues and raises a question as to exactly what we mean by the term inclusion; that is what level of skill or usage can be considered indicative of inclusion in the information society. We return to this issue later.

One final issue relates to screening. Most projects either did no screening at all, or else just very preliminary screening, focused mainly on establishing the level of support and training that participants would require, rather than on establishing that they were 'late adopters' as understood within the rationale of CAIT. While by definition, many participants were late adopters, in some instances concerns were raised as to whether recruitment processes did indeed ensure that the most needy target groups were reached.

2.6 Interacting with Participants

For community and voluntary organisations, outreaching to potential participants is often just the first step in a longer-term process of engagement. This was true of CAIT projects, which recognised that in enabling people engage with ICTs it would be necessary to ensure that training was delivered in an appropriate manner and that participants would be supported in various ways.

Allaying fears

Initially, addressing the fears that many later adopters experience, either of new situations generally or more specifically of new technology, was a priority for projects as they set about engaging with their target groups. In advertising their projects, some organisations acknowledged this fear directly. Louth Leader for example advertised its training course as 'Computers for the Terrified'.

More generally, organisations rolled out the training slowly in the initial stages, allowing a social dimension to evolve, introducing games as a mechanism to familiarise people with computers or using as 'hooks' content that would both attract the target group and provide a non-intimidating focus for the training.

The AquaNet project, in County Limerick provides an interesting example of using a hook. This project focused on local environmental issues and sought to enable people become involved in actively engaging with their local environment. Two groups of up to fifteen individuals were catered for initially. The course was structured as a series of field trips, each focusing on different aspect of the local environment, during which participants would take photographs using digital cameras, and make notes which they later transcribed using Word. Gaps in their research

were filled by using the Internet. Eventually, the participants having used PCs to document their research and to download digital images from the Cameras, posted it on the Internet.

Meeting real needs

In general, there was awareness amongst CAIT projects that making assumptions about people's needs would not be a useful approach and that instead people should be facilitated to identify their own needs, to which the project would then seek to respond. In some cases, organisations had prior information about the specific barriers to the Information Technology that their target group experienced and developed the CAIT project on this basis. For example, the Disabled People of Clare project placed computers in people's homes having previously learnt that training courses were less effective if participants could not practice between classes.

Meeting the needs of participants was also reflected in the types of provisions made. Earlier we saw that 73 per cent organisations were involved in adapting or developing courses specifically for their participants. In very many cases, what was involved here was building in provisions to ensure that the specific target group could engage with the technologies. One project used the game 'solitaire' to familiarise people with severe literacy difficulties with using the keyboard, the mouse, opening files etc.

If we can identify a generic model of engagement with late adopters, it comprised the following elements: find out what people need, provide it and support them to avail of it. This model was a more notable feature among projects catering for smaller numbers and projects catering for very disadvantaged people and people with disability. Assistive technology was a key feature of the latter and again it must be stressed that without proper assistive technology assessment and provision, people with disabilities will not have equal access to ICTs regardless of their location or general accessibility.

Structure of Training

It is a well recognised feature of community education provision that part of its attraction to participants is a result of the delivery mechanisms and structures. This

was reflected in CAIT also. Training programmes were located in local venues, often ones that people were already familiar and comfortable with. The timing and duration of training was attuned to the circumstances of participants and varied to accommodate different groups. Training programmes sought to include a social dimension, important in helping people draw support from each other. Different types of courses were developed or modified to make them more appropriate for different groups of people. Importantly, the ongoing provision of support throughout training was also a feature. Overall, the CAIT projects reflected the desire to address the real needs and circumstances of the target group.

The project delivered by the Roscommon Brothers of Charity included a focus on providing training to children with disability in their own homes. Tutors travelled to the children's homes showing them how to use computers and ensuring adequate assistive technologies were available. An invaluable aspect of this approach was that the siblings of the children could be involved and these provided ongoing encouragement and support to the main participant.

Educational Ethos

The value of an adult education ethos, as noted in the last section, was a key element in the successful delivery of the CAIT projects (see also Morey, 2002) This was reflected in both the inter-personal skills of tutors and other key personnel as well as in the more general structure and delivery of the project. This ethos was also commented on by Focus Group participants, who identified the following elements of project implementation that were considered especially valuable:

- Training offered in their own locality,
- Training offered at times that suited,
- Training pitched at the right level
- Induction courses helped overcome early concerns
- Tutors were very important - friendly, supportive
- Allowed to progress at their own level
- Learning with people at similar level, in similar circumstances

Conclusion

The implementation of the CAIT Initiative, at project level, has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the community sector as a mechanism to bring the benefits of ICTs to late adopters. The strengths of the sector, which are reflected in the large numbers recruited and catered for, include the capacity to reach marginalised people and encourage their participation, the adult education ethos which incorporates ongoing support, and the personnel employed in the sector who had both the technical skills and the communication and personal skills to work with late adopters.

The weaknesses include the inadequacy of community development infrastructure in some areas, lack of experience of ICTs which is reflected both in limited technical competence but also, in some instances, in limited vision and a more general underfunding of the sector which can cause stresses in delivering specific projects such as those funded by CAIT. CAIT has also highlighted however, that weaknesses in relation to technical competence can be addressed.

In relation to the ongoing implementation of the projects, the following were key issues identified:

- Participant drop out did not emerge as a major issue, where it did, transport, childcare and lack of confidence were the most frequently cited reasons.
- The issue of people progressing at different rates within the one class caused some difficulties
- The ongoing need to assess people with disabilities for assistive technologies was underestimated by some projects
- Lack of confidence in progressing, dislike of on-line training, lack of keyboard skills, literacy issues, particularly in projects not dealing with literacy, caused some difficulties.
- Finding the right balancing between quality of intervention and quantity of participants proved challenging.
- Many projects expressed a desire to have had more contact with other projects doing similar work in the Initiative.

On the basis of the experience of CAIT, we can identify the following key areas of learning:

- 1 The community sector clearly is competent to play a major role in promoting inclusion. Any measures put in place to support it do this must ensure that the strengths of the sector are harnessed and that the weaknesses are addressed. This latter can be achieved through proper resources being provided.
- 2 These resources must extend beyond funding for delivering programmes and should include measures to increase the competence of the sector in relation to using ICTS *and* the vision of the sector in terms of socially progressive uses to benefit its client groups.
- 3 Future initiatives should seek to ensure a greater balance is achieved between issues of access and issues of usage.
- 4 Finally, the low rate of participation by men needs to be further investigated and mechanisms to reach men developed.

Section 3

Impact of the CAIT Initiative,

In this section, we assess the impact of the CAIT Initiative in terms of the extent to which it achieved its three objectives. Those objectives, it will be recalled, were:

- to encourage late adopters to engage with information and communication technologies in a beneficial way;
- to empower communities to harness the benefits of the new technologies;
- to employ information and communications technologies to overcome particular socio-economic barriers which exist for some communities.

The setting of these objectives was a particularly valuable dimension of CAIT at the outset, in that they clearly recognise that the potential of ICTs for late adopters is not limited to ensuring access and competence, but extends also to socially progressive uses of the technologies. What is also interesting is that while the three objectives are obviously separate, they also encompass a hierarchy within which they can be seen as accumulative. That is, each objective reached contributes to the achievement of subsequent ones: encouraging late adopters to engage with ICTs can also help to empower communities to harness the benefits of new technologies; likewise, achieving the latter objective will help to ensure that ICTs are used to overcome socio-economic barriers. Thus the impact indicators for each objective extends from impact at the level of individuals, to impacts at the level of the community sector and finally to impacts at the local socio-economic level. Figure 3.1 overviews these levels and the indicators appropriate to each.

Objective	Levels of Impact			Indicators
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
To encourage late adopters to engage with ICTs	Individual participants			Number of late adopters reached Specific target groups reached Training and services provided Benefits derived
To empower communities to harness the benefits of the new technologies	Individual participants	Community Organisations/ Community sector		<i>As above plus:</i> New infrastructure in place New services / resources developed New approaches to community development.
To employ ICTs to overcome particular socio-economic barriers .	Individual participants	Community Organisations/ Community sector	Local community, economy, society	<i>As above plus:</i> Added value to other measures including, local development measures, social inclusion, and anti-poverty strategies.

In the following paragraphs, we look at the extent to which CAIT achieved this hierarchy of objectives by looking in turn at the impact it achieved at each of the three levels. Given the predominance of access / competence actions among CAIT projects, it is to be expected that the achievement of impacts at the level of individuals is the most widespread feature of the Initiative, and this indeed is the case. However, considerable learning for practice and policy has been generated at all three levels.

3.1 Encouraging late adopters to engage with information and communication technologies in a beneficial way.

Late adopters, the digital divide and exclusion from the information society are commonplace features of the development and implementation of new ICTs. Consequently, e-inclusion, as already noted, has emerged as a major policy concern. The actual barriers to participation in the information society are not fully understood, but they are perceived to include the following: fear of new technologies; lack of confidence; cost-factors; lack of opportunity to access ICTs, physical disability and geographic distance.

We have already seen in the last section that CAIT projects reached an estimated 23,000 people or about two thirds of what is arguably a very high target figure. In this section, and against the backdrop of known barriers, we look more closely at the way that CAIT projects brought the benefits of ICTs to late adopters. The assessment of CAIT presented here is based on the indicators listed below.

- *Number of participants on CAIT projects*
- *Gender breakdown of participants*
- *Target categories catered for*
- *Types of training availed of by participants*
- *Other services / supports availed of by participants*
- *Benefits derived by participants*

Number of people catered for by CAIT projects.

On the basis of Forecasting Templates, total anticipated throughput for CAIT projects was estimated at just over 33,000. Actual out-turn figures, based on 49 projects,

suggest that approximately 23,000 participants were catered for, or 70 per cent of anticipated throughput.

Table 3.1. Anticipated and Actual Throughput on CAIT Projects

	Based on Responses	Estimated for Initiative
Anticipated throughput (65 responses)	30,920	33,774
Actual throughput (49 responses)	15,995	23,176

While falling somewhat short of the anticipated number of beneficiaries, CAIT projects nonetheless succeeded in reaching a very substantial number of people. The shortfall is attributable to a number of factors. Firstly, projects estimated the numbers they would cater for before they had begun the process of recruitment and this may have resulted in overestimates. Secondly, the delays at the start-up phase meant some projects operated for a shorter time than originally planned and for those with a continual intake of participants this meant they could cater for fewer people. Finally, from case study data, it is also clear that projects found that some participants, and particularly the most disadvantaged, required more support than initially anticipated resulting in more resources having to be provided to these, at the expense of taking on new recruits.

Overall, however, very substantial numbers of people were reached by CAIT projects. One result of this is exceedingly low per capita costs for the Initiative and again raises the issue as to whether CAIT spread its resources too thinly. A second consequence of the large numbers catered for was the inclusion of a wide range of late adopter groups among the beneficiaries of CAIT. Table 3.2 looks at the anticipated number of beneficiaries by target group among 67 projects that completed the Forecasting Template and the anticipated and actual throughput among a subset of 47 projects that completed both the Forecasting template and the postal survey. Again, here we have to stress the following two points. Firstly, the original specification of target groups occurred at a time when projects, especially those catering for large numbers within their communities, could only provide an estimate not only of the numbers they might cater for, but also of the target groups from which they would be drawn. Secondly, the target groups are not mutually exclusive, and with some exceptions therefore, any one could be under-estimated in the following table.

Table 3.2: Anticipated and Actual Throughput by Target Group

Target Groups	Anticipated (N=67)	Anticipated (N=47)	Actual (N=47)	% of anticipated (N=47)
<i>Traveller community</i>	567	417	337	81
<i>The elderly</i>	2446	2099	2645	126
<i>Farming community</i>	3874	3649	1367	37
<i>Unemployed people</i>	5321	4726	1021	22
<i>People with disabilities</i>	1636	1086	1697	156
<i>Early school leavers</i>	1508	1311	318	24
<i>Children at risk</i>	277	125	286	228
<i>Lone parents</i>	1413	1088	441	40
<i>Those with literacy difficulties</i>	660	565	231	41
<i>Homemakers</i>	4001	3841	2124	55
<i>Rural / island communities</i>	5686	4596	1750	38
<i>Refugees</i>	277	125	207	165
<i>Carers</i>	614	548	219	40
<i>Childcare workers</i>	237	57	91	160
<i>Others</i>	2246	1426	2158	151
Total Beneficiaries	30902	25424	15173	60

Noting these provisos, two things are clear. Firstly, CAIT projects catered for a very wide range of target groups including very disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Secondly in terms of numbers, some target groups were better catered for than others, both in actual terms and relative to anticipated targets. In general, target groups with large numbers of anticipated beneficiaries tended to fare less well than those with smaller anticipated numbers. This suggests that the original targets were indeed over optimistic. However, it is also possible that there are real issues here in terms of reaching some groups. Case study data bears this out especially with regard to men in certain circumstances (for example, farmers). From Table 3.2, we can also see that the unemployed, early school leavers and rural island communities are under-represented among participants. Overall, we can conclude that while CAIT projects did succeed in reaching both late adopters generally and very marginalised groups among those, close monitoring of beneficiaries must be a feature in future initiatives.

Returning to the issue of gender, Table 3.3 looks at the proportion of men among all target groups.

Table 3.3: Proportion of Males among Target Groups.

Target Groups	Total	% Male
<i>Traveller community</i>	337	39
<i>The elderly</i>	2645	30
<i>Farming community</i>	1367	42
<i>Unemployed people</i>	1021	37
<i>People with disabilities</i>	1697	46
<i>Early school leavers</i>	318	44
<i>Children at risk</i>	286	100
<i>Lone parents</i>	441	10
<i>Those with literacy difficulties</i>	231	36
<i>Homemakers</i>	2124	6
<i>Rural / island communities</i>	1750	39
<i>Refugees</i>	207	51
<i>Carers</i>	219	15
<i>Childcare workers</i>	91	.01
<i>Others</i>	2158	37
Total Beneficiaries	15173	34

In categories such as home makers and childcare workers the exceedingly low proportion of men reflects the fact that these categories are predominantly female and the same is largely true of lone parents. However, among all other categories, with the exception of prisoners and refugees, women also predominate among the beneficiaries. Only among the farming community, people with disabilities or early school leavers, were significant proportions of men involved.

Moving on to look at the types of training that beneficiaries received reveals the following pattern. Very substantial numbers availed of basic IT training, Internet and email training and training in packages such as Word and Excel. Equal Skills training and spread sheets and data base training were also availed of by reasonably large numbers. What we might call higher end training, however, was availed of by far fewer participants.

Table 3.4: Participation in ICT Training

Level	Programmes	Total Participants
Basic software training	Basic IT	7110
	ECDL	893
	Microsoft Word/Excel	4393
	Equal Skills	1929
Internet / digital media training	Internet and Email	5647
	Internet research	1259
	Web design	186
	Digital Media	695
Specialised training packages	Spreadsheets and database training	1497
	Specialised training packages	489
Other	Misc.	927

In interpreting this data, we need to bear a couple of things in mind. Firstly, we need to be mindful of the fact that a substantial proportion of CAIT participants experienced significant disadvantage in regard to participating in training. These included learning difficulties, severe literacy difficulties and complete unfamiliarity with either training or IT environments. Secondly, as we saw earlier, a substantial number of CAIT projects set out to provide basic training and familiarisation programmes to their target group. Thirdly, although we cannot quantify the figure, case study data suggests that a substantial number of participants accessed CAIT projects purely to get very basic skills.

The high level of basic training and low level of high-end training therefore does not necessarily raise issues in relation to the impact of CAIT – overall it appears that what was set out to be achieved, was achieved or was at least mostly achieved. Moreover, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that for some participants, CAIT was just the first step.

I knew nothing before I started. This course was ideal, close to me and not expensive. The tutor was fantastic, really friendly and warm and helped be to build confidence. I learnt loads. I am going back for more training in the autumn and I feel I will soon have enough computer skills to look for a job. Participant, Louth Leader.

However, the prevalence of using CAIT as a first step to further training has not been possible to determine, and overall, the durability or long-term relevance of benefits conferred by CAIT remain an issue. This in turn highlights another important question that the implementation of CAIT gives rise to, and that we signalled earlier: what exactly is meant by e-inclusion? What level of competence, skill, access and opportunity, at individual and community level, is required before we can be confident that inclusion in the information society has been achieved? These are the type of questions that CAIT set out to raise, not answer, and we highlight them here to emphasise the need to address such issues if a comprehensive strategy for inclusion is to be developed.

Data on the level of interaction between late adopters and the services provided by CAIT projects, shows a more even level of involvement than exists for training. Beneficiaries availed of drop-in access as well as various supports, including personal support, mentoring and support for entry to employment. Online networking with other organisations also features. This data suggests that as well as accessing the training provided by community organisations, late adopters are also keen to use other services provided by these organisations. This has obvious implications for policy that we look at later, including the potential of the community sector to support e-government at community level.

Table 3.5: Participation in New Services / Supports

Type of Service / Support	Total Participants
<i>Mentoring</i>	1019
<i>Personal supports</i>	1254
<i>Advocacy</i>	287
<i>Independent living supports</i>	530
<i>Online employment services</i>	252
<i>Support for enterprise development</i>	74
<i>Support for entry to employment in IT sector</i>	594
<i>Support for entry to employment generally</i>	1218
<i>Drop in access to ICTs</i>	2771
<i>Internet café</i>	838
<i>Development of community websites</i>	244
<i>Online networking with other organisations</i>	1138
<i>Other</i>	1206

Benefits to participants

Finally, we conclude this section by looking at feedback from participants on CAIT projects. Data for this discussion is derived from the Focus Groups and from the Participant Survey, as well as from conversations with participants facilitated by project visits. As noted earlier, this data makes no claim to be comprehensive or representative. We present it here, by way of providing insight into the experience and view of participants.

The participant survey involved 113 participants drawn from 12 projects. Respondents to the survey had the following socio-demographic profile.

- 68 per cent were female and 32 per cent male
- 75 per cent were over 25 years, 44 per cent aged between 25 and 44.
- 46 per cent left school before the age of 16 and 61 per cent before the age of 17
- 28 per cent were employed, 30 per cent were home-makers, 16 per cent were unemployed, 11 per cent were students and 15 per cent were classed as 'other'.
- 51 per cent had a PC at home and 31 per cent were connected to the Internet.

The average number of weeks spent on the project was 12.6, with an average number of hours per week of 6.7.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had derived specified benefits from participation on the project and what the main benefited derived was. The responses are detailed in Table 3.6. The vast majority of respondents said participation on CAIT had helped them overcome their fear of new technology, and for almost three in ten this was the main benefit derived. Basic PC training also featured prominently, and so too did advanced PC training. In terms of durability of benefits accruing to participants, we can note that 24 per cent of respondents indicated that their involvement in the project had given them confidence to continue using information technology, 7.4 per cent said they had the confidence to continue training in IT and 70 per cent indicated both.

Table 3.5: Benefits Derived by Participants on CAIT Projects

Identified Benefit	% who achieved this benefit	% indicating main benefit
Overcame fear of new technology	81.8	29.2
Availed of basic PC training	86.8	15.0
Availed of advanced PC training	54.5	10.6
High level PC Training	19.8	1.8
Availed of Internet training	58.7	9.7
Can now use ICTs in work	29.8	11.5
Use Internet for research	41.3	4.4
Email training	61.2	4.4
Website development	10.7	2.7
New access to PCs	52.9	1.8
New access to Internet.	48.8	1.8
Use ICTs to improve quality of life.	33.9	7.1

These data were echoed in focus groups conducted in Drogheda, Portumna and Borris, Co Carlow. Participants in these went on to use ICTs in small businesses and in self employment. Some had gained confidence to look for work or to advance in their existing work. Refugees had used CAIT training to becoming IT literate, thus enhancing their existing qualifications. The pursuit of personal interests and volunteering were also mentioned by focus group participants.

Conclusion.

In terms of achieving the objective of engaging late adopters with ICTs, we can conclude that CAIT was extremely successful. A very substantial number of people benefited and a wide range of late adopter groups were involved, some to a greater extent than others. While much of the training was at basic or slightly higher levels, it did begin the process of addressing needs at community level. The extent to which new services were also availed of shows how CAIT was catering for a wide range of needs.

Issues of deadweight and displacement could not be examined, due to the lack of comprehensive data at participant level. Given the target groups catered for it is likely that neither (and particularly deadweight) existed to any significant extent.

Likewise, the issue of durability of benefits for participants is impossible to determine. We have some evidence from case studies and focus groups to suggest that for some participants (and perhaps a significant number), CAIT has provided them with sufficient skills or sufficient confidence to continue to participate in the information society in various ways. Additionally, those beneficiaries who availed of institutional projects are likely to have ongoing access to the technologies and in other community settings, access will also continue at least in the short term. However, we also have to acknowledge that without ongoing funding to continue training, some participants will undoubtedly slip back.

What this highlights is that providing training without also providing ongoing opportunities for use is a lop-sided strategy. This brings us to the second CAIT objective, or how community organisations harnessed the benefits of ICTs for their constituencies.

3.2 Empowering communities to harness the benefits of the new technologies

Empowering communities to harness the benefits of new technologies is, as noted earlier, a higher level objective than engaging late adopters. Empowering communities to harness the benefits of these technologies is likely to have more durable impact in terms of developing IT infrastructure at local level and in terms of developing social capital in relation to this. Achieving this impact, therefore, will have long term benefits both for excluded groups and the communities they live in but also in terms of contributing to other policy objectives, such as local development. Empowering communities impinges not just on issues of access to new technologies or technical competence to use them, but on socially progressive uses of ICTs. The generation of good practice and policy in this area is hugely important, therefore, if really participative e-inclusion strategies are to be developed.

Empowering communities to harness the benefits of new technologies, as we have already seen, requires actions at two levels, that of individuals (or communities of individuals) and that of community organisations or the community sector. At the level of late adopters within communities, it requires the transmission of skills and the opportunities to use those in socially progressive ways. It may also require that a

certain critical mass is achieved at community level, although we cannot explore this issue here. At the level of community organisations and sector, it requires that infrastructure is in place, that the community sector is technically competent in using the infrastructure and that it uses it to develop socially progressive models.

We have already seen how the CAIT projects transmitted skills to late adopters. We have also looked at the level of resourcing and infrastructure at community level put in place through the CAIT Initiative, including the opportunity to recruit technically skilled people. This aspect of CAIT has enhanced the capacity of the community sector to bring the benefits of ICTs to excluded groups. New access centres have been developed round the country, often in disadvantaged urban and rural areas, over 500 personnel were directly involved in delivering the projects, many bringing new skills and expertise to the sector and enhancing its technical competence. Without ongoing funding, some fall back in this situation in inevitable. But the skills, experience and learning generated by CAIT at the level of the sector will have at least a medium term impact.

In this section, we explore how this level of resourcing has enabled organisations to harness the benefits of ICTs for their communities and the models they developed to do this. The focus of our discussion here is how community organisations assimilate new technologies into their services and practices on behalf of their client groups.

Assimilating New Technologies

Earlier, we noted that harnessing the benefits of new technologies required impacts at two levels, at participant level and at organisational level. From both the overview of projects presented in Section 1 and the data looked at in Section 2 it is clear that projects were better equipped to produce an impact at individual level. Consequently, in line with the overall emphasis on access / competence issues, most projects assimilated new technologies in a way that focused on participants rather than their own organisations. Consequently, we can identify a typology of approaches to the assimilation of ICTs into the ongoing activities of CAIT projects, as follows:

- **Target group focused:** Adding training in ICTs to existing training programmes

- **Process focused:** Using ICTs to deliver existing programmes in new ways

Target Group Focused Approaches

As we saw earlier, 69 percent of projects funded by CAIT were either providing access centres, providing training or engaged in a combination of both. Participant data also shows the large numbers involved in training, and particularly basic level training. The data collected through case studies further indicates that projects delivering training or access in this way, were using their funding from CAIT to extend the services to their client group to include an ICT dimension. In some cases, where the project previously had very limited or no experience of ICTs, this meant developing completely new forms of provision. In other cases it involved adapting and extending IT training programmes to meet the needs of late adopters. When projects also engaged in outreach delivery mechanisms, it allowed them to address issue of rural isolation, or the spatial dimension of exclusion. Each of these three approaches is looked at below.

Extend the range of services to target groups.

As the data suggests, incorporating ICTs into ongoing provision, and thereby extending the range of services to target groups was a widespread activity among CAIT projects. This reflected the awareness amongst community organisations that their client group were at risk of exclusion within the information society, and their desire to respond to that. Again, it also reflects the extension of an adult education ethos to bringing new technologies to late adopters. Projects either developed new programmes to provide IT training or incorporated new IT modules into existing programmes. In both approaches, a key feature is the tailoring of the content and process to the needs and circumstances of participants.

Dungarvan Community Development Project

The Dungarvan CDP was set up in 1999 and seeks to provide opportunities for groups who are socially and economically disadvantaged within the Dungarvan / Abbeyside region. A major focus is on the local authority housing estates in the area, which are characterised by high levels of long-term unemployment, low levels of literacy and other features associated with exclusion from the Information Society.

Dungarvan CDP works with a wide range of target groups including lone parents, members of the Traveller Community, people from economically disadvantaged urban areas, people with poor literacy skills and the unemployed. The CDP runs three support groups: Women's

Support Group, Men's Support Group and the Education Women's Group. These groups tackle literacy issues and promote personal development. The Project also caters for participants in the Youth Service projects and the County Waterford community based Drugs Initiative.

Because of the various socio-economic disadvantages they experience, the target groups catered for by the CDP experience a high level of exclusion from the Information Society. For this reason, the CDP sought funding from the CAIT Initiative to integrate IT training into the programmes it delivers. Its approach is based on delivering training within the safe and supported environment that already exists within the CDP. Recognising that introducing IT training to very disadvantaged groups requires a considerable amount of sensitivity and support, the IT training was embedded within the support groups run by the CDP and was preceded by a substantial amount of pre-training support, including literacy support and confidence building. This allowed them identify individual needs, arrange participants into specific classes and, on that basis, design courses suitable to their needs.

County Wexford Community Workshop

County Wexford Community Workshop (CWCW) was established in 1975 and caters for people with learning disabilities, many of whom also have physical disabilities. Funded by the Health Board, it is one of a number of stand-alone community workshops throughout the country and caters for a wide catchment area incorporating the area between Kilkenny town, Graigueamanagh, Carlow town and Wexford town. In New Ross, where the CAIT project is located, it provides four main services.

- **Training centre:** A day centre focusing on those among the target group with high potential. Trainees receiving training in skills such as sewing, carpentry and trophy making, prior to entering sheltered employment.
- **Activation Centre:** A day centre catering for older members of the target group who are not expected to enter employment. The Centre provides stimulation interventions in a non-stressed environment and caters for about 40 people.
- **Residential Unit:** A small residential unit is maintained for clients in need of this.
- **Independent Living Apartments.** Specially provided apartments where people can live independently but with appropriate backup as needed.

The CAIT activities are focused in the Training Centre and the Activation Centre. In the training centre, which already housed a large computer training facility, CAIT funding was used to provide a customised PC with assistive technologies and special software to enable participants with physical disabilities to participate in the computer training. The Activation

Centre caters for people who are older than those in the training workshops, some of whom may have previously been in sheltered employment. The Centre addresses their need for ongoing activity and intellectual stimuli to promote their personal wellbeing. The Centre caters for these needs in a variety of ways, including physical activities (swimming, bowling, yoga, gardening), craft activities (pottery, needlework, dancing), and home skills (cooking, sewing, laundry).

With CAIT funding, the organisation has now added computer skills to this range of activities and has equipped the Activation Centre with computers, special software and assistive technologies to facilitate this. Participants have access to computers and can opt to use them on a self-select basis. Tutors were available two days a week to spend time with clients, showing them how to use the computers and generally providing support. The benefits to participants were identified as increased self-confidence, a sense of participation in the information society and an increased sense of integration more generally.

Extending the target group.

Community organisations, almost by definition, cater for people who cannot avail of other forms of provision whether provided by the market or the state. Within that constituency, however, there are varying levels of need and different levels of resources required to meet those needs. Quite often, therefore such organisations will have identified groups, or even individuals, who have not been reached by their existing provision.

This was evident among CAIT projects, where some organisations which already had experience of promoting e-inclusion recognised wider groups within their communities who had not benefited from IT training or other services. For a number of organisations, this formed the rationale for their CAIT project: to extend IT training to groups that had previously not benefited. Included here were Chambers of Commerce who used the resources provided by CAIT to work with unemployed people in their localities as well as community organisations targeting more intensive provision on certain target groups.

For example, the Chambers of Commerce in Navan and Wicklow, worked jointly on a CAIT funded project. The aim of the project was to bring the benefits of ICTs to groups in both towns who were perceived to be excluded. These included homemakers, the elderly, lone parents, carers and early retirees. The project

provided training to participants and also facilitated work placements. In this way, both project participants, and the more traditional client group of the Chambers – local businesses – benefited. The project delivered by Comharchumann Forbartha Arann Teo provides an example.

Comharchumann Forbartha Arann Teo

Comharchumann Forbartha Arann Teo is a community development co-operative located on the island of Inishmore. Its main objective is to promote the social and economic development of the island. It works closely with FAS and the local Partnership Company in delivering various programmes and services to its client group, which comprises the entire population of the Island, approximately 800 people.

In 1999 the Comharchumann first addressed the issue of e-inclusion, when with funding from Cumas Teo, it established a 'cyber room' in its offices, equipped with three PCs. Over the past few years also, the VEC and Muinteras ran beginners IT courses and ECDL courses on the island. These were irregular, however, and the Comharchumann recognised that certain groups among the population were not benefiting from this training and that the cyber room was inadequate to cater for the real level of need.

The Comharchumann applied to CAIT for funding to develop an e-inclusion strategy for the island, focused on providing tailor made training to specific groups. These groups were selected on the basis of both not having availed of training in the past and potentially standing to benefit from ICT training. For example, local fishermen were targeted because ICT training would prove beneficial in terms of equipping them to get better use from their onboard computers for weather forecasts and course plotting. Likewise, older people most of whom had relatives abroad, were targeted for training that would allow them use the internet to keep in touch with friends and family. Another group that was targeted, although for different reasons, were secondary school teachers on the island, who were trained in website development.

With funding from CAIT, fourteen PCs were purchased along with printers, scanners, web cams, CD writers, digital projector and cameras. The equipment is housed in a dis-used factory, specially refurbished by Udaras na Gaeltach, to house the CAIT project. Training courses, attuned to the needs and circumstances of the various target groups, were developed and delivered.

Addressing spatial dimension of exclusion

The final element of this model concerns approaches to engaging with the target groups that, through its delivery mechanism, addresses the issue of the spatial dimension of exclusion, both generally and from the information society. This was a feature of projects based in rural areas, where often the main barrier to accessing ICTs was rural isolation. But this approach is also valuable to people with disabilities, and particularly mobility related disabilities.

One of the issues facing organisations catering for rural areas are the high relative costs of establishing infrastructure in localities with small populations. This results in a situation whereby training and other services tend to be delivered from a central area, usually a town, to which people must travel. People without transport, those with caring responsibilities, those with disabilities or people simply lacking the time (or the confidence) to make these journeys, are thereby excluded. Moreover, the location of training within participants own communities, as we have seen, is the preferred option for many among the late adopter categories.

The centralisation of service provision is an issue that affects almost all training providers, but given the high establishment costs of IT training, together with the lack of cabling and other requirements, it is a particularly salient issue for inclusion strategies. Some CAIT projects however developed useful and replicable ways of overcoming the difficulty. A project delivered Louth Leader in conjunction with South Armagh provides an example of this.

South Armagh / Louth Leader

Louth Leader is an organisation established with funding from the Leader programme. Its remit includes job creation, rural enterprise, rural tourism and community development. It pursues its objectives in these areas in a range of ways, including skilling up the local population. The catchment area of Louth Leader includes a large rural hinterland and on foot of previous experience of delivering IT training, the organisation was acutely aware of both a high level of need in the outlying areas and a lack of local infrastructure.

To address this, Louth Leader successfully applied for CAIT funding to deliver IT training from its centre in Ardee town and to establish an outreach dimension to bring training to the more outlying areas. The Ardee centre already had a computer training facility established with Leader funding. CAIT funding paid for trainers for the centre and also equipped and funded the outreach dimension.

Outreach is delivered in two ways. Firstly, through bringing the PCs purchased with CAIT funding to areas where they are needed. This service caters for remote rural areas, but is also available to wheelchair users, if required. Louth Leader has worked with the Irish Wheelchair Organisation and local disability groups to identify individuals and groups that can benefit from this.

The second form of outreach is the use of a specially equipped mobile unit, contracted commercially, to provide access and training opportunities to communities in remote areas. The mobile unit offered accredited courses, of twenty weeks duration, with training delivered one day a week. This allowed the mobile unit to move from area to area more or less continually. Up to 24 people could be accommodated in each location, in three classes of 8 to a class.

In summary, participant focused approaches extended the remit of community organisations in terms of new programme content, new target groups, new locations. In all cases, identifiable good practice contributed to the achievement of objectives. This good practice can be summarised as using the good auspices of community organisations, the practices of adult education to reach, engage and incentivise hard to reach groups and to provide tailored provision to meet their real needs in relation to ICTs.

2 Process focused Approaches: Using ICTs to deliver existing provision.

Using ICTs to deliver existing provision essentially means bedding down ICTs within the processes and practices of the organisation. In this approach, organisations have assimilated ICTs into their delivery mechanisms and in doing so also ensure that the skills necessary to interact with new technologies are transmitted to their staff and to their target groups.

This approach to using ICTs at organisational level was not as prevalent among CAIT projects as the participant focussed approach. However, it is particularly valuable in that it both increases the capacity of the organisation, bringing about a qualitative change in how it operates, while also reinforcing the value of the programmes delivered. The case studies revealed a number of different models in relation to this. Here we present two quite different approaches. In the first, a community based project used ICTs to provide information services to the community

generally, and to enhance its literacy programmes for specific target groups. In the second, an institutional project, catering for people with disabilities, incorporated ICTs into its services for its client group.

Cork Anti-Poverty Network

Knocknaheeny is situated on the north side of Cork city centre. The area adjoins other public housing estates in Cork including Churchfield, Gurrabraher, Hollyhill, Upper Fairhill and Blarney Street. The entire area is extremely socio-economically disadvantaged, with high levels of illiteracy, unemployment, and lone parenthood.

The Cork anti-poverty resource network has been working in these areas since 1976 when it was first funded as an EU project under the Poverty Programme. The main aim of the Cork anti-poverty Network is to combat poverty in all its forms through empowering disadvantaged marginalized groups to gain better resources within their local areas and take more control of their own lives and their communities. The main area of work the Network deals with is assisting disadvantaged people to participate in local development.

The CAIT project has been absorbed into the overall work of the Network to combat poverty in the North cork area. The Network perceives the lack of IT skills on the part of the disadvantaged groups in the area as contributing to their poverty and social exclusion. Specifically this happens because they cannot avail of the benefits of the information society: they cannot use ICTs to interact with government services at local or national level, they cannot apply for certain jobs that require IT skills, and they cannot fully participate in local development.

Against this backdrop, the Cork Anti Poverty Network project sees the potential of ICTs to promote greater capacity amongst the target groups to participate in local development and to become more involved in decision making. Ultimately, the Network perceives, disadvantaged people could become true participants in the Information Society and begin to directly get involved with the direction of their lives and their neighbourhoods. Such interaction would also give rise to debate regarding solutions to problems in areas such as Knocknaheeny and thus contribute to a dialogue between the state and the community.

This vision of the potential of ICTs forms the backdrop for the Knocknaheeny project, however, the specific focus is finely tuned to the immediate needs of the target groups. The project is located in two centres in Knocknaheeny, one in Ardmore and one in Churchfield Avenue. Each centre has a slightly different focus and set of objectives. Ardmore purchased seven PCs with CAIT funding provided an on-line information resource for the community, across a range of areas. These include government services, including welfare, education

and health. There was also information provided on domestic violence and abuse, adult literacy and women's rights.

The Churchfield Ave centre also used ICTs to reinforce its own practice as a community provider, in this instance in relation to literacy programmes. Churchfield Avenue is an education rights resource centre and provides literacy courses for a number of different target groups. The tutors on these literacy courses were taught basic computer skills plus literacy packages. When trained, they offered training to the participants of the above courses. This started with basic IT training before progressing to literacy through the special literacy packages.

Roscommon Brothers of Charity.

The Brothers of Charity are the main service providers for people with learning difficulties in Roscommon County. They cater for people with all levels of learning difficulties, ranging from moderate to severe / profound and attempt to meet the needs of these people over their entire life-time. The services are delivered within a range of settings and are provided on a multi-disciplinary basis. A good deal of this work focuses on maximising the potential of the people using their services and promoting their personal development. Staff of the organisation were aware that their work could be supported by new technologies. Consequently, the Brothers of Charity sought funding from CAIT to introduce relevant IT practices into all areas of its operations. Through this, it intended that the use of computers and other appropriate equipment would be integrated into the full range of services provided by the Brothers of Charity.

The services provided by the Brothers of Charity are targeted at three main age groups. The integration of ICTs into these services is outlined below.

Early Childhood Provision: Day Centre; two Preschools and In-home supports.

CAIT provided equipment and training to staff to enable them assess and meet the need for assistive technologies, promote communication abilities among children with autism, and promote literacy and numeracy abilities. ICTs will also help forge common interests between children in the centres and those in more mainstream settings.

Provision for School going Children: Two day centres for after school care and support; Special school, Support for children in mainstream school, In-home support for children and their families

The project enabled children in these settings to use the Internet as a medium of communication and a source of information, and supported their numeracy and literacy learning. Staff were trained to support this and CAIT funded activities took place in the

children's homes, in day centres and in the residential group home. The children's parents and siblings are also involved to reinforce the child's use of ICTS and provide support.

Provision for Adults: Three community training centres, Day centres, Residential group homes, Respite service and an Advocacy group

As with the school age group, the objective of CAIT activity for adults is to integrate the use of computers in the full range of services provided for this age group. A number of people aged over 50 who are users of the Day Centres, were provided with email addresses and supported in using email, to facilitate them communicate with others. This group have also been provided with and shown how to use leisure / entertainment CD Roms. In one of the day care centres, which caters for adults and supported employment, a key-worker was trained and now supports the clients of the centre who are participating in a rehabilitative course, all of whom are now using computers, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy supports. In a second day centre, which caters for people with severe / profound learning difficulties most of whom are late teens to adult, staff have also been trained to support the introduction and use of computers in the ongoing activities of the centre, mainly to support personal development programmes. Members of advocacy group, who are distributed throughout the country and can meet only infrequently, will use the Internet to provide a central forum and enable members to communicate more easily and more frequently. It was also envisaged that the group could establish its own web-site and through this develop linkages with other advocacy groups nationally. In the future it is also intended to integrate IT skills into the Individual Personal Planning programmes implemented by the organisation..

Using ICTs to deliver existing provision is a valuable strategy for community organisations to pursue, with benefits extending to target groups, the organisations themselves and to the sector more generally. However, it is a strategy that is demanding in terms of resources and in terms of the time frame required for its implementation. For these reasons, this strategy is one that is easier to implement in institutional settings than in community settings.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has assessed the extent to which the second objective of CAIT was achieved. This focused on two dimensions: the extent to which CAIT enhanced the capacity of community organisations to bring ICTs to late adopters and the extent to which they harnessed the capacity of ICTS in promoting community development. We have argued that CAIT made a substantial contribution to the former dimension, providing a high level of resources and enabling organisations bring the benefits of new technologies to their client groups. Notwithstanding

concerns about having spread its resources too thinly, all the evidence suggests that the organisations participating in CAIT experienced a significant degree of capacity building in relation to new technologies. In relation to the second objective, a much lower level impact was achieved. Case study data suggests that fewer than 15 per cent of projects sought to assimilate new technologies into their community development practices. This is not a weakness in CAIT per se, in that it reflects the aims of the projects themselves, but it does highlight the need to ensure that future Initiatives maintain a broad focus on combating e-exclusion. We can also note here, that models of assimilation within institutional settings point to the relevance of mainstreaming these models into the core-funding of these institutions.

3.3 Employing ICTs to overcome particular socio-economic barriers which exist for some communities.

In this final section we turn our attention to the third objective of CAIT: to use ICTs to overcome the socio-economic barriers experienced by some communities. Figure 3.1 overviewed the different levels at which the achievement of this objective could be. To recap, these were at the level of individuals (participants), at the level of community organisations or at the level of the local economy and society. At each level, different impacts are essential to the achievement of this overall objective. Figure 3.2 elaborates on this.

Level	Necessary Impacts
Individual level	Raising skill levels Enabling individuals access further training or employment
Organisation level	Increased organisational competence New training programmes delivered New services developed
Socio-economic level	Reinforcing the work of local agencies promoting socio-economic development Value added to existing measures to promote inclusion New strategies to overcome socio-economic disadvantage

In the following paragraphs we focus on the impact of CAIT on the socio-economic level. But we preface that by looking firstly, at socio-economic impacts at the level of the individual. In terms of numbers catered for by CAIT and in terms of target groups reached, we identified an impressive impact at this level. We also noted, however, a lower impact in terms of the level of skill imparted and in terms of critical mass achieved and raised the issue of what level of learning for both individuals and communities constitutes e-inclusion.

We have presented some evidence to suggest that at least a proportion of individuals among CAIT participants have potentially increased their socio-economic well being through availing of training and services relating to labour market entry. The participant survey, while unrepresentative, also showed that participants believed their employment situation to have been improved following participation on CAIT projects, and the focus groups also bore this out. On this basis, we can conclude that to what is a probably significant, although unquantifiable extent, participants on CAIT projects benefited in ways directly related to their socio-economic well-being.

What is less certain is that critical mass was achieved at community level. This was not an objective of CAIT per se, rather it is one of the areas in which the implementation of CAIT has drawn attention to issues previously unacknowledged. What was an objective of CAIT was to resource the community sector itself and we have seen that the impact here was considerable. Throughout the country, community organisations were resourced in terms of equipment and personnel and in turn translated those resources into new opportunities, new training and new services for their client groups. The cessation of CAIT funding will mean that most of the activity carried out under the Initiative will also cease. However, most of the organisations case studied were actively exploring alternative sources of funding to continue their activities. This, together with the repository of skill and equipment made available to the community sector by CAIT will help to ensure that some durable outcomes at least are achieved.

In the last section, we also looked at how community organisations used these resources for the benefits of their client groups. For the most part they focused on delivering training rather than on assimilating ICTs into new models of community development. Additional, in focusing on training, the emphasis was on basic level with the provision of training being an end in itself, rather than a means to an end.

However, from the case study data, it appears that a minority of CAIT projects, perhaps as high as 25 per cent, did put in place more strategic models of using ICTs to overcome socio-economic barriers. In the following discussion, we present three different approaches to this. These are:

- Developing synergy at local level
- Employment strategies for specific groups
- Reinforcing local development measures.

Developing synergy at local level

Within the array of projects funded by CAIT, there were a substantial number delivered by two or more organisations acting together. We have already referred to the project delivered by Louth Leader and South Armagh Leader, and that delivered jointly by the Chambers of Commerce in Wicklow and Navan. Other examples are the Disabled People of Clare project in which three organisations participated, the Aquanet project in Limerick, managed by the VEC but with inputs from a range of community organisations, the Drogheda project in Drogheda, discussed in more detail later and the project, also discussed below, implemented by Telework Ireland and the Newry and Mourne Carers Association.

The benefits of these partnerships are wide-ranging. But most significantly from the point of view of addressing socio-economic barriers, they enable constructive synergies to be developed at local level, adding value both to the implementation of CAIT and to the ongoing work of these organisations. In this way, CAIT has achieved an element of mutual reinforcement with the aims of these organisations. Most of these organisations are focused on improving the socio-economic circumstances of their client groups in one way or another. The most common types of organisations were: ABPCs, Leader Companies, IRDs and CDPs. Statutory providers also featured, including VTOS, VEC, FAS, LES etc.

Formal partnerships, therefore, was a common feature of the Initiative. But a further way in which constructive synergies could be achieved at local level was through the development of relationships between CAIT projects and other local organisations over the course of the project. Again, this had the same impact as more formal

arrangements, allowing the efforts to promote socio-economic inclusion of all organisations involved to be reinforced.

For example, with CAIT funding, the Galway Chamber of Commerce implemented a project focused on reconciling the skill levels of unemployed people with the IT needs of the local economy. Skills shortages had been identified at basic entry level and at high end level. Short, intensive training courses in these areas was contracted from private providers. Participants were recruited through contact with the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs. The Chamber provided companies in the area, and particularly larger companies, with details of those who had completed training. An interesting aspect of the project was the liaison that developed between the Chamber of Commerce and the local Jobs Centre. The Chamber identified companies that were willing to sponsor the Centre's IT capabilities and is also involved in delivering training in interview skills to the clients of the Centre.

In concluding here, it is worth noting that many of the CAIT projects case studied would have welcomed the opportunity to have greater contact with similar projects in the Initiative. That this did not happen means that an opportunity for synergy within CAIT was lost.

Employment Strategies for Specific Groups

This was not a prevalent aim amongst projects supported by CAIT, but the model developed by Telework Ireland provides an interesting example of using ICTS to overcome socio-economic barriers through a targeted employment strategy.

Telework Ireland (TI) is the Association of Teleworkers in Ireland. It is a cross-border organisation with a membership of approximately 200 comprising those already involved in teleworking, those who have an interest in becoming involved and corporate bodies with a commercial interest in developing teleworking. The Newry and Mourne Carers Association, is a representative association of carers in the catchment areas. Telework Ireland and NMCA had previously worked together to establish the feasibility of pursuing teleworking as a possible source of employment or self-employment for carers. Research established that it would be feasible, provided carers were equipped with the relevant technical skills and business skills. TI and MNCA subsequently sought funding from CAIT to deliver training in

teleworking for carers in Monaghan and in Newry and Mourne. The training course had three levels. Level 1 provided basic skills and was designed to bring carers in Monaghan to the same level as those in Newry and Mourne who had previously been trained. Level 2 provided training in teleworking per se. Level 3 provided business development skills. The expectation was that at least four carers from each catchment area would progress through three levels of training.

Reinforcing Local Development Strategies.

Developing synergies at local level has been a positive outcome of CAIT and most of those synergies have reinforced the work of organisations promoting the socio-economic wellbeing of groups within the local population, most of whom would also be late adopters. However, a specific model of synergy is that developed by the DROGNET project in Drogheda, which also embedded the CAIT project within the broader local development agenda of the Area Based Partnership Company.

DROGHEDA PARTNERSHIP CONSORTIUM

The Drogheda Partnership is the lead agency in the Consortium and draws on both its experience in delivering IT training and its understanding of the potential of ICTs in the context of social exclusion. The Partnership believes that ICTs are an essential component in promoting equality within society and it has considerable experience of providing training in relation to this. The rationale for the CAIT project emerged from the experience of the Partnership in delivering IT training and particularly the awareness that demand for training far outstripped supply, while at the same time there was also under-utilised potential on the supply side. Many of the community groups operating in the area had IT equipment in their centres, used mainly for administrative purpose. These groups did not have the funds to get connected to the Internet nor did they have the capacity to enable their client groups access the IT equipment. Against this backdrop, funding was sought from the CAIT Initiative to enable the Partnership in conjunction with the community groups to provide IT training to disadvantaged people in the catchment areas. The target groups for the project consist of lone parents, disadvantaged people in the community, people with disabilities, Travellers, long term unemployed, low income families, refugees, asylum seekers and early school leavers.

With funding from the CAIT Initiative, this project delivered an integrated, community wide set of interventions with three distinct, but interrelated, levels of activity.

Level One is essentially an outreach and information strategy. This is achieved through designating a number of community groups in disadvantaged areas to act as outreach and information points. Within these groups, personnel provide information on training available at Level Two and Level Three, to people on a drop-in basis. These personnel are also trained to assess the level of ICT competence of individuals wishing to participate in training and to discuss their options with regard to training. This service is available to all members of the local community who meet the target group criteria.

At Level Two, the community based projects that have IT resources act as preliminary points of access to training. A key part of the rationale for this, is to bring the training into settings that people are familiar with and comfortable within. In each of the community groups, a tutor has been trained to deliver various training programs on site. These training programmes cover beginners and intermediate classes in IT applications, Internet and email training and Database, Desktop Publishing and Mail Merge. Should an individual require more intermediate level training that cannot be facilitated at Level Two, tutors from the Telework Development Centre (Level Three) call to the Access centre to provide this training. A suite of laptops, purchased with CAIT funding, can also be used in these centres if their IT equipment is not adequate in a particular instance.

Level Two centres also provide information on courses available in Level Three, partly through developing a website to provide information on the full range of training provided under the CAIT project. The website, called DROGNET, gives details of all the courses and training available at Level Two and Level Three. The Local Employment Service's various outreach centres have also agreed to become DROGNET information centres and tutors in these centres have also been trained in assessing competence levels.

Level Three is located within the Telework Development Centre. This centre is staffed and run by the Drogheda Partnership with funding from the Territorial Employment Pact. The Telework Development Centre has 15-networked PCs on ISDN lines using Microsoft back office. Here, specific IT training programmes are run on a timetabled schedule. Courses available include specialised and general training incorporating Web Design, computer maintenance, Keyboard Skills training, Desktop Publishing, Web wise, DAWN, Intermediate WERRC, Mail merge, Intermediate course in IT, Tele-services, call services courses and teachers training courses. In addition to general training, specialised courses for Travellers and for people with disability will also be provided.

Conclusion

As noted at the outset of this section, the three objectives established for the CAIT Initiative were both wide-ranging and hierarchical in relation to the concerns they

embodied. This evaluation of CAIT has demonstrated that the Initiative was successful in meeting these objectives and in demonstrating the feasibility of using the community sector as a vehicle to bring the benefits of ICTs to late adopters.

It is particularly demonstrated by CAIT that the community sector has considerable capacity, if properly resourced, to provide access to new technologies for late adopters and to provide at least basic to intermediate level training. It is important to stress adequate resourcing here and to emphasise this relates not just to the provision of sufficient funding to enable effective projects to be delivered, but ideally also, to a level of technical support to address this area of weakness in many community organisations. CAIT has also demonstrated that community organisations can also develop more advanced and more progressive uses of ICTs on behalf of their client groups, but that this capacity is less prevalent. Consequently, we can see from the implementation of the Initiative that while higher level objectives were addressed and examples of good practice developed, it was in relation to access and basic training that the greatest impact was achieved.

Section 4

Recommendations

This report has provided an overview of the implementation and impact of the CAIT Initiative. Previous sections have highlighted the extent to which CAIT met its objectives, the overall achievements of the Initiative and the examples of good practice it has facilitated. The earlier discussion also drew attention to some of the limitations of the Initiative as well as to a number of issues that need to be borne in mind if late adopters are to be brought into the information society and e-inclusion to be achieved. In this final section, we assess the implications of the learning generated by CAIT for e-inclusion generally and in particular the contribution CAIT has made to understanding the potential and role of the community sector in promoting inclusion in the information society. On this basis a number of recommendations for policy and practice in promoting e-inclusion are made.

1 Supporting the Community Sector's role in the Information Society

1.a Earlier we noted the fact that the three objectives of CAIT were both comprehensive and wide-ranging, targeting outcomes at different levels and encompassing a broad approach to bringing the benefits of ICTs to excluded groups. We also discussed the extent to which CAIT was a genuinely bottom-up Initiative, which did not attempt to predetermine the actions or objectives of projects. On the positive side, the benefits of this approach was reflected in the large number of applications to the Initiative, in the large number of projects funded and in the diversity of organisations involved in implementing CAIT projects. The less positive side of the bottom-up approach is reflected in the tendency for organisations funded under the Initiative to focus on providing

opportunities for access and training rather than exploring ways to use ICTs to promote socially progressive agendas.

While issues of access and training are crucial and necessary to underpin more progressive uses of the new technologies, the broader objective of e-inclusion at community level is better served by a more balanced approach to achieving the wide ranging objectives identified at the outset.

Recommendation: Future CAIT or similar Initiatives should combine wide ranging objectives with a strategic approach to project selection, in order to ensure an appropriate balance in relation to actions to achieve all objectives.

1.b The predominant emphasis on providing access and basic training evidenced among CAIT projects is to a great extent indicative of the limited capacity of many of the organisations in the area of ICTs. While some of the organisations involved in implementing CAIT projects had substantial experience, capacity and vision in relation to using ICTs for the benefit of their target groups, there was also considerable weakness in this area.

This weakness became manifest in the difficulties encountered by many projects in the early stages of implementation, in the limited envisioning of what could be achieved through ICTs for the target groups, and in many cases, in the failure to provide or identify progression routes for participants, subsequent to basic training.

This highlights the need to ensure that the community sector is properly equipped to play a role in promoting e-inclusion and in particular in insuring that late adopters and other marginalised groups can play a role in the problem-solving aspects of developing an inclusive information society.

Recommendation: Measures to support the community sector's role in promoting equality in the information society must differentiate between facilitating the sector provide training and other opportunities for its client group, and resourcing the sector to be an effective user of ICTs itself.

1c Amongst the projects funded by CAIT, the limited IT capacity was addressed through CAIT itself, through the provision of funding, staffing and equipment. As the earlier discussion has shown, however, these resources did not entirely prevent the experience of difficulty at the early stages of implementing the projects.

Consequently, organisations funded by CAIT were not always in the best position to make good decisions regarding hardware and software requirements. Expensive mistakes were made and there was an over-reliance on retailers to provide advice. Moreover, the Initiative did not provide any mechanism to enable projects develop synergies or learn from each others experiences.

Recommendation: Future Measures to support the Community sector promote inclusion should be accompanied by the provision of Technical Support, with particular emphasis on promoting awareness of hardware and software, infrastructural requirements, and providing opportunities for networking between projects.

1d The area of ICTs was one in which community organisations displayed a weakness. However, many strengths were also in evidence and these contributed significantly to the success of the projects, and by extension, to the success of the CAIT Initiative. Among these strengths were the proximity of the organisations, both socially and geographically, to the target groups, their credibility with the target groups, and their adult education ethos, reflected in such areas as outreach mechanisms, the structure of training, sensitivity on the part of tutors and the provision of ongoing support.

These are the features that enable the community sector to play a valuable role in bringing the benefits of new technologies to late adopters. It is important that they are recognised as such. It is also important that the costs associated with these features are fully acknowledged and reflected in the funding made available to community organisations. In the absence of adequate funding, community organisations will be placed in a situation where they effectively subsidise ICT measures by pulling resources from other areas of activities.

Equally, it is important that all hidden costs associated with ICT interventions are reflected in the level of resourcing available.

Recommendation: Community sector organisations should be facilitated to identify the full costs associated with delivering Information Society interventions and that the budgets made available to them be adequate to fund all of the required inputs.

1e Despite some difficulties and limitations, CAIT projects were successful in terms of meeting their own objectives and in terms of contributing to the overall objectives of CAIT. Substantial numbers of late adopters were reached, training and other opportunities were provided and new services were developed. Simultaneously, the capacity of the community sector in relation to ICTS was enhanced and a reservoir of skills and experience within the sector was developed.

Providing training and services to late adopters and enhancing the capacity of the sector is a positive outcome from CAIT and demonstrates the effectiveness of measures such as this. However, in the longer term, the durability of these benefits must be queried. Without ongoing opportunities for using new skills and competencies, both on the part of late adopters and on the part of community organisations, the longer-term impact of CAIT may be reduced.

Recommendation: Future initiatives to promote e-inclusion through community sector organisations should address the potential for sustainability either at project level or at local level, through enhanced provision for projects funded under the initiatives or through parallel and complimentary strategies.

2 Reaching late adopters

2a From data presented in earlier sections of this report, it is abundantly clear that CAIT projects succeeded in reaching late adopters. Substantial numbers in all target groups were reached and recruited by projects and, at a minimum, received basic training. In terms of promoting e-inclusion among late

adopters, therefore, the Initiative has generated learning at both the level of organisations and the level of overall strategies.

However, we earlier raised the issue as to whether the outreach, screening and other processes implemented by some projects were sufficient to ensure that those most at risk of exclusion from the information society were catered for. The objective of CAIT was to reach late adopters per se, not necessarily the most at risk amongst them. Nevertheless, community interventions to promote e-inclusion must avoid reinforcing disadvantage through inadvertently or otherwise failing to ensure that those most excluded from the information society are adequately represented among participants on ICT measures.

Recommendation: Initiatives to reach late adopters should embody outreach, screening and, in particular, appropriate monitoring mechanisms to ensure that those most at risk from exclusion in the information society are adequately catered for.

2b A second issue in relation to recruitment onto CAIT projects was the disproportionately small numbers of men. This was an unanticipated but widespread phenomenon across the overall Initiative and prevailed despite specific efforts being made to reach and recruit men. Recent research into learning styles of men and women throws some light on this issue and among its more significant findings was that once engaged in the learning process, the needs of men and women are strikingly similar, pivoting on a learner-centred approach. The full implications of this research for community based adult education have yet to be worked out but will, obviously, have relevance for e-inclusion interventions.

Recommendation: All measures to bring the benefits of e-inclusion to late adopters should be gender proofed, that special efforts be made to reach men, through such mechanisms recommended in King et al (2002), for example, providing opportunities in locations most likely to be used by men, including sports clubs and trade union centres and considering single gender provision, at least in the early stages of engagement.

2c At the level of individual members of the target groups, most CAIT projects provided access and / or basic level training for participants and there is some evidence that this served as an initial first step in the process of e-inclusion, a first step, which could potentially be built on subsequently. While we do not know the extent to which this actually occurred, or will occur, the more significant issue here is what exactly we mean by the concept of e-inclusion and what level of access to and usage of ICTs at the level of the individual – or his or her household – constitutes e-inclusion?

Recommendation: Clear guidelines should be developed operationalising the concept of e-inclusion at individual level and these guidelines should be used in the formulation and review of policy instruments to promote equality.

3 Promoting E-inclusion in the longer term.

3a The projects funded by CAIT fell into one of two categories: community based projects catering for the local population or groups within the local population; and, institutional based projects catering for a specific and generally small client group. The issue of outreach and recruitment of participants was obviously quite different between these two types of projects, as was volume of participants catered for.

A more significant difference, however, relates to the manner in which ICTs could be incorporated into routine or day to day activities in both types of projects. The opportunity and potential for this was much greater in the institutional-based projects, where the introduction to ICTs could be meshed into the ongoing interventions or activities of the institutions. Consequently, we found, the practice of using ICTs to deliver the existing services of the organisation was much more prevalent amongst institutional-based projects than among community based projects.

In turn, this means that issues of sustainability are also different across community based and institutional based models, as are issues of progression. The embeddedness of ICTS within some institutions that has occurred under

CAIT, through for example, training of key staff in their usage in and in supporting usage by clients, will ensure that the benefits are sustainable in the longer term and that clients can progress in their usage over time.

Recommendation: Where those groups known to be amongst late adopters are catered for in institutional settings, including residential institutions, those institutions should have an ICT function integrated into their activities and ICT funding incorporated into their core budgets.

3b At the collective or community level, it is clear that CAIT projects succeeded in introducing large numbers of late adopters to ICTs, and in many cases this meant large numbers among the population of disadvantaged urban and rural communities were catered for. We have also seen how the models of good practice in relation to e-inclusion that were developed included community wide strategies, embedded in community infrastructure.

An issue that arises here, however, is what level of critical mass is required at community level to ensure e-inclusion? This is a strategic question that arises from the implementation and impact of CAIT and that needs to be given consideration in the development of policy to promote equality in the information society.

Recommendation: Clear guidelines should be developed operationalising the concept of e-inclusion at community level and these guidelines should be used in the formulation and review of policy instruments to promote equality.

3c A further relevant issue is the extent to which CAIT has demonstrated the capacity for measures to promote e-inclusion to develop synergies with and add value to other measures to promote social inclusion. This includes measures aimed at labour market re-integration, local development measures and anti-poverty measures as well as measures associated with the reform of local government.

These synergies demonstrate both the capacity for e-inclusion measures to add value to other measures and the capacity for those other measures to provide the

infrastructure (including premises, personnel, strategies etc) to facilitate e-inclusion measures.

Recommendation: that the potential to add ICT and e-inclusion dimensions to measures to promote inclusion more generally, including local government measures, local development measures and anti-poverty measures, be explored with a view to mainstreaming the learning generated by CAIT.

3.d A final over-arching point relates to the necessity to ensure a coherent strategy is developed in relation to promoting e-inclusion at community level and through the community sector and that value for money is achieved. For this, it will be important to avoid ad hoc funding which would dissipate efforts without securing outcomes.

Recommendation: that inter-linked community wide strategies be developed and linked to other local, county-wide and regional development strategies and reflected in such key documents as the county development strategies. Such strategies should entail clearly defined objectives, roles, resources and identified outcomes.

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