

Top stories in this newsletter...



Project Update



Digital Ambassadors in Kent



Delivering Tech support in Zeeland and East Flanders

Project Update

In our previous newsletter we shared the first two care models reviewed by the EMPOWERCARE partnership at our virtual site visit in June- Kent County Council's ESTHER model and Conseil Dept Du Nord's Family Conferencing approach.

In September, the EMPOWERCARE Project held another virtual site visit to learn about two more care models being reviewed by the partnership, Zorgzame dorpen (Provincie Antwerpen) and Zeeland Living Room (Solidarity University), which concludes our site visits of all four models. The learning will influence the EMPOWERment strategy as well as support each partner in implementing some (or all of) the models within their own regions. See below an overview of both models:

- **Zeeland Living Room:** The province of Zeeland has set-up technology centres known as 'Living Rooms' which provide older people with the opportunity to trial products that can support them with their frailty and isolation. As well as trialling the tech, they bring together residents and experts to develop innovative solutions e.g. improvements for wheelchair accessibility.



- **Zorgzame dorpen (Caring Villages):** The province of Antwerp supports local authorities to become resilient communities by creating 'caring villages'. Communities that sign-up as a 'caring village' use a support package of detailed local research (geographical, social, environmental) and knowledge from residents to identify the best tools to tackle loneliness within that community e.g. mapping local service centres and identifying the best location for a new centre.



Tech support delivered over dinner in Zeeland

Last Tuesday, EMPOWERCARE partner SWVO based in Zeeland, Netherlands was a guest in the village house in Renesse (municipality of Schouwen-Duiveland). Every month the house offers an open table, offering a three-course menu with fresh soup and ice cream for the enjoyment of the local residents. Manager Janet takes good care of her guests, listening to any issues or problems they may have and volunteering help or referring to support organisations where necessary.



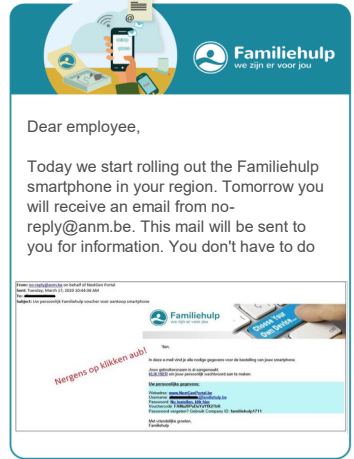
Due to Covid-19 the last session was less crowded than usual, but 22 local people over 65 were still able to attend. During the session SWVO had the opportunity to share the EMPOWERCARE project and the desire to carry out a pilot in Renesse. The pilot will use technology to support older residents of Renesse to be able to live independently at home for as long as possible. By completing a short questionnaire, all 22 participants indicated that they find access to services important in getting older e.g. meeting people, going to a local supermarket, visiting a doctor in the village. These residents are concerned about loneliness, feelings of insecurity and whether care and support will also be sufficient in the future. By increasing digital skills and supporting with the use of devices can help to make a difference.

Familiehulp— Delivering smartphone to the care sector workforce in East Flanders

In order to successfully implement the project's EMPOWERment strategy, it will be necessary for all project partners to adapt their current workforce training to ensure that they can EMPOWER the individual.

For Familiehulp the first step was to make hardware available for their workforce and they have already started rolling out new smartphones to thousands of care workers.

Starting in the Aalst region (in East-Flanders and part of the Interreg 2Seas area), workers in the care sector were the first to receive their smartphones. Other regions will follow in the coming months.



Provincie Antwerpen—‘Buurtgerichte zorg en Zorgzame buurten’ - ‘Community based care and caring neighbourhoods Congress

University of Antwerp partnered with the University of Brussels to deliver a mini congress on the 11th of September on ‘community based care and caring neighbourhoods’. More than 300 interested parties participated including; care professionals and organisations, informal caregivers, policy makers, local authorities and scientific institutions. The congress gave attendees an overview of the community and neighbourhood care landscape in Flanders. Project partner Province of Antwerp had the opportunity to speak at the conference present the project and their regional model ‘caring villages’.

Solidarity University—working with pilot sites over the summer

Solidarity University have been focussing on supporting their pilot sites, arranging several meetings over the summer. Including, two meetings in Sint Maartensdijk (one with village inhabitants and one with professionals). The purpose of these meetings was to gain an understanding of the needs and preferences of individuals within the village. Simultaneously two local volunteers also used the opportunity to have conversations with various people in the pilot site (district police, associations, district nurse, primary care assistant, etc.). All of the information gathered is now being used to map the pilot site to ensure they can respond to local gaps. The same process is taking place in their second pilot site, Schouwen-Duiveland.



Kent County Council—First cohort of Digital Ambassadors

The EMPOWERCARE Team at Kent County Council (KCC) have started training the first cohort of volunteer Digital Ambassadors. Digital Ambassadors will deliver digital skills training to those over 65 (or 50+ with a health condition) in Kent. The training will begin in their pilot site of Folkestone, Hythe and the Romney Marsh over the coming months.

The aim is to utilize technology to reduce social isolation and loneliness by offering training that is tailored to the individuals needs and what matters to them. Focusing on skills which can support with easier communication e.g. video calling and entertainment e.g. online games, as well as more practical uses such as online banking, irrelevant of previous experience or skills level.

All Digital Ambassadors are receiving free training designed by Social Enterprise Kent, to ensure they have the tools they need to deliver the best training to support the individual.

If you would like to know more or would be interested in signing up for a future cohort, please contact: empowercare@kent.gov.uk



VITO— Expanding EMPOWERCARE in Flanders

Making new partnerships:

Project partner VITO have just established their EMPOWERCARE cooperation with the Flemish syndicate of general practitioners (Domus Medica) and a living lab group, LiCalab. Together they will be able to extend EMPOWERCARE’s reach within their region: from people wanting to test their self-management tools to care providers helping them to implement medical advice.

Improving their technology:

VITO have also expanded their app portfolio to support staff during the pandemic. When launching a tool in preventive health care, especially in the current health climate, it’s imperative to include COVID-19 and its implications. With support from the Flemish government (Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship) VITO have added a motivational chatbot and a personal COVID 19 risk score to the BIBopp action plan.

Attending Conferences:

- On September 28th, VITO also shared their EMPOWERCARE plans with over 100 Flemish innovators and data scientists, at a symposium on the SOLID-technology organized by Informatie Vlaanderen— “We were very proud to present our work in a session, introduced by the Flemish Prime Minister and Sir Tim Berners-Lee himself.”
- On October 12th, we were able to share our story with participants at The Digital Leaders Conference in the UK.

If you are interested in learning more about VITO’s technology contact: Nathalie.lambrechts@vito.be

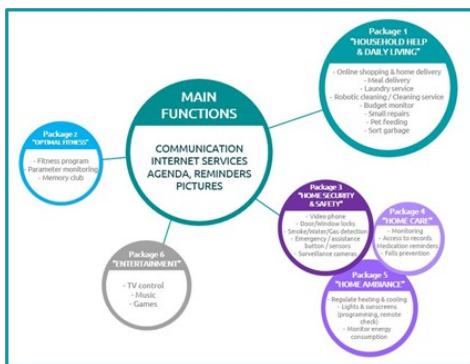
The VIZIER Project

EMPOWERCARE Project Partner Familiehulp is also a project partner in the AAL project VIZIER.

Vizier develops a technological solution for the elderly home environment gathering and sharing information from different sources, including sensitive personal information and information related to operational processes of enterprise software.

Vizier proposes a modular and extendable “open architecture” hardware and software solution that includes a home system composed of a range of sensors, IoT appliances, a social companion (presented as Christina, a virtual human) and a set of applications to allow the elderly to access existing popular but difficult to use (online) technologies and IoT technologies.

Vizier has been built solely with the users in mind benefiting from the co-creation approach, which is a strong user-centric methodology where users are involved in every step of the product development. Together with the end-users, the project aims to identify popular online services and affordable IoT appliances that can help the elderly in their daily life, and develop an innovative solution aiming at making these technologies accessible to the elderly to better their life quality.



Canterbury Christ Church University—Working through Covid-19

Much of the life of the EMPOWERCARE project has been set against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. In late March 2020, the Covid-19 lockdown saw the University campus buildings close. The University re-opened its campuses in mid-September in a re-organised way for the start of the academic term's teaching. In line with government and University guidance, the CCCU project staff have worked remotely from home during this period but have remained busy and responsive to the needs of the project.

Highly relevant to the project, in June 2020 Public Health England (PHE) published the report identifying older adults as one of the groups at far greater risk from the disease, along with people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and people living with long-term conditions.

During the summer period, project partners, working at the frontline, documented their learning from the Covid-19 crisis. Using data from that document, the CCCU team wrote a news piece blog that was published in early July on the University website summarising the partners' learning. The news piece can be accessed [here](#). The CCCU team now have around 180 followers on Twitter @CCCUEMPOWERCARE, and the University's local EMPOWERCARE webpage can be viewed [here](#).

The CCCU project team planned several activities to disseminate information about the project. Part of our plan was to inform our prospective students during Open Days. The University held such events both virtually and in-person when permitted. The Faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Care Open Day took place on 17th and 18th October 2020, during the event the project was promoted through the easy read project leaflet and project banner display.

Team member Dr Toni Wright has been attending a number of webinars over the summer, led by experts in their field, to help inform the evaluation strategy in the Covid-19 context. The webinars included:

- June 8, International Long-term Care Policy Network's LTC Covid-19 webinar. [VID-1people living with dementia](#)
- June 12, University College Dublin's webinar;
- September 3, Methods North West Methods' webinar.

Dr Ann Price, one of our team's Expert Advisors, presented at the British Association of Critical Care Nurses (BACCN) virtual conference on 14th September 2020. Dr Price talked about Nurses' perspectives on spiritual care in intensive care units (ICU), sharing results from UK survey data. The data showed a diverse set of views on spirituality and that most intensive care (ICU) nurses had not received training in spiritual care. The provision of spiritual care is generally regarded as of high importance within the ICU environment.

With a strong link to the EMPOWERCARE project, recommended reading from the CCCU team is written by Sara Hendren and published by Riverhead. Looking at the design of the built world and with an emphasis on assistive technologies (AT), Hendren uses a series of case studies to dismantle how the built world excludes disabled and bodies considered non-normative. Her questioning of the principles and values informing engineering through a compelling read helps us to imagine alternative relationships with technology and more.

We've attended virtual events:

- ⇒ **SEHTA Conference:** On the 28th September EMPOWERCARE Partner Kent County Council took part in SEHTA's virtual 'International MedTech Expo and [Conference](#)'. KCC shared a short video interview with EMPOWERCARE Project Manager, Laura Pritchard, about the project in Kent. [View the video here](#).
- ⇒ **DigiLeaders Week:** In October EMPOWERCARE took part in virtual '[Digital Leaders Week](#)'. This years theme was 'big ideas and answers that will help business, government and charities to digitally transform and respond to the pandemic'. In response to this EMPOWERCARE gave a virtual session that demonstrated the explored technology across the EMPOWERCARE partnership and how this technology will help to achieve positive outcomes for older people.