



## Nutshell Communications

An innovative tool to help health professionals to see what life is like for service users

### About the Project

Gill Phillips, Director of Nutshell Communications, had already developed the 'Whose Shoes?' board game and was intent on taking it further.

The game was borne of frustration. In 2007, the Government published a report called *Putting People First*, outlining a vision to make the social care system more personal, allowing individual users greater control and choice. Gill, who had worked in social care for 30 years, was excited about the possibilities, but saw many barriers and challenges. In particular, she noticed how the discourse around personalisation was based on charts, graphs and business speak rather than people, stories and understanding.

And so Gill developed 'Whose Shoes?', a game that let people sit down together and talk, to imagine what life is like for others, and to open dialogue that would hopefully lead to positive, constructive change. The game includes 160 scenarios and four different packs of cards, with situations that apply to managers, front-line staff, people who need support, carers, care providers and commissioners. Players move around the board using little shoes as counters, with the cards used to trigger conversations and inspire ideas.

The game was proving successful, with care

organisations across the UK using it for staff training as well as customer engagement to gather information and make specific changes to improve their service.

However, there was one question Gill kept being asked: where is the digital version? While the board game has the advantage of physicality, necessitating people sitting around a table and talking, a digital version would be more responsive and easier to adapt for specific circumstances. An audio version would also be available, allowing people to read the messages in their own time and comfort.

### Benefits of Funding

At a Later Life conference in London, Gill spoke to Sue Dunkerton, the business manager at TWI/Health Technologies KTN, who referred Gill to CIKTN's Experience-Led Innovation Champion Gus Desbarats, as he was able to better advise on the most relevant funding competition. Gus suggested the 'Independence Matters' call and gave pointers, stressing the most important factors of the application.

Gill then set out her proposal to develop new content around those areas, with a core theme of independence, control over healthcare and joined-up thinking. The project won Phase 1 funding, and she was able to work on the electronic version of the game, run ten focus

### Fast Facts

**Sectors:** Software, Gaming, Health

**Funding Source:** TSB DALLAS

'Independence Matters: Home and Away'

**Total Project Value:** £20k

**Duration:** June - September 2011

**Market Impact:** Game developed in liaison with focus groups; further development currently underway at national level.

**Creative Industries KTN input:** Experience-Led Innovation Champion Gus Desbarats suggested the funding call and gave pointers to help with the application.

### Results

The funding allowed Nutshell Communications to work with different groups of older people in different settings, some using care services, others simply living in the community. This demonstrated how the 'Whose Shoes?' concept appealed to different audiences and could be applied to a wider range of topics. One small

home care provider in Oxfordshire was able to use the feedback they gained to meet with the council and other local organisations and request specific improvements, as well as making changes in areas within their own control.

Although Nutshell was unsuccessful in an application for Phase 2 funding, they are now working with the 'Think Local, Act Personal Partnership' to produce an on-screen version aligned to 'Making it Real', the national programme to help organisations implement personalisation.

**"It was brilliant. Even though we didn't get Phase 2 funding, Phase 1 moved the project on significantly and gave it more credibility; it was very, very helpful."**

Gill Phillips, Director,  
Nutshell Communications

