iStep

European Forum on Social Innovations for Healthy and Active Life Expectancy
Tuesday 19th May (11.45am to 12pm)

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iStep stands for Intergeneration Support To Encourage Physical activity. iStep is an initiative that uses a web enabled social platform that supports younger and older people to connect with one another and participate in collaborative goals, and ultimately improved health.

It is one of a number of projects within a larger European research project called Innovage. The iStep initiative aims to both promote behaviour change through social interactions and enable healthy, active lifestyles towards reductions in levels of problematic obesity in an increasingly aging population. We have addressed these issues through physical activity promotion in, as far as possible, non-exclusive ways.

At the heart of the iStep concept is the creation of younger and older person partnerships. We have developed ways for people to work together to achieve increased physical activity that is both tangible and rewarding by giving these couples (or dyads) pedometers that track how much physical activity they do, together.

Participants can then enter their activity on the on-line iStep environment, see how much activity they have done, compare their progress with one another, other dyads and teams, and work towards a series of collective goals.
The intent is for iStep to be implemented within a wide range of situations and scenarios. For example, our research showed that a very wide variety of factors act as both barriers and motivations for people to take part in such social, intergenerational and physical activity initiatives. These can range from physical ability, availability of a partner to IT access and cost, to name a few.

Considering this broad range of potential situation the iStep system has been designed to be tested with a range of conditions and with a diversity of 'entry points' from schools to existing social groups and with individuals in mind.

However, the system does require at least one of the dyad partners to have access to the internet and both participants to have some form of pedometer (or step counter).
How does iStep work?

By way of example, the following illustrates how iStep is used. The Innovage WP4 team have piloted versions of iStep and iteratively modified it in subsequent development and implementation phases.

This study was run with secondary school aged children, through their school who paired with school staff members.
How does iStep work?

By way of example, the following illustrates how iStep is used. The Innovage WP4 team have piloted versions of iStep and iteratively modified it in subsequent development and implementation phases.

This study was run with secondary school aged children, through their school who paired with school staff members.
In another (first pilot) example, we ran iStep with primary school aged children. We received good feedback about the system with many parents (and one grandparent!) taking part with their children. However, the exercise informed some changes in particular in relation to the process of sign up and research project administration.

A total of 29 children, aged 7 to 8, from St Marie’s Catholic School, 15 parents and 1 grandparent took part in the iStep pilot challenge. There follows some of the feedback when participants were asked “Has this project changed your day-to-day activity in any way?”

"...it has made me go on bigger walks to get more steps. I have normally done more steps each day on the graph on the website."

"this project has changed my day because I do more running."

"I think it's made me more active."

"Yes it changed my day by making me get off of the couch and see all of Sheffield."
Why is iStep as it is?

- End user workshops and contextual research
- Concept development and system design
- Pilot (phase 1) St Maries
- Pilot (phases 2 & 3)

Six older workshops were run with older participants, concepts developed and reintroduced to the workshop format. Views and opinions were recorded and analysed.

Concepts further developed and detailed and web system design frame worked.

Pilot scheme designed, undertaken, data captured. Children and older family members.

Phases 2 and 3 undertaken, evaluations underway.

2 to 3 further development / implementation phases planned and final evaluations

Now!
The iStep concept has been developed specifically to address three principal criteria. Firstly, an aim for the product was that it was intergenerational, secondly that it was social and lastly that it contributed to improved health through increased physical activity.

In our design focused research we determined that factors influencing increased physical uptake and behavioural change were many and complex and further that we needed to be mindful of changing technological (cost and access), social and cultural factors that may effect transfer to further application territories and demographics.

The iStep concept has been considered and iterated with these issue in mind and we see it being applied in many situations because it will;

• Function in differing modalities both in terms of challenge type and personal circumstance and interest
• Not exclude people (within reason) based on physical activity type
• Although access to basic technology is required, system not costly