

Remote speech therapy – knowledge transfer between Sweden and Scotland

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Background



Competitive Health Services (a project of the Northern Periphery Programme) seeks to improve access to healthcare for residents of sparsely populated areas in northern Europe by learning from existing experience and making maximum use of innovative eHealth solutions.

The project has identified several applications as suitable for transfer between Finland, Norway, Sweden and Scotland and is now establishing these at pilot sites in the host countries.

Why?

Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) services in northern Sweden and northern Scotland face similar challenges:

- Scattered rural populations
- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Access to specialist services
- Cost of travel (in time and cash) for health staff and patients

What?

Using video conferencing to deliver speech and language assessment and therapy remotely.

The technology itself is not new, but rather the focus on multiple use.

Where?

Sweden

Well established use of video conferencing to deliver SLT services now embedded as part of everyday practice in Västerbotten

Scotland

Introducing the use of VC for SLT services across Caithness and Sutherland.

When?

2009

- Interviews with SLT using the eHIT (eHealth Implementation Toolkit) developed to assess the 'normalisation' (potential and actual) of innovative health services, by paying careful attention to human and organisational factors
- Interchange of information and experience between Sweden and Caithness and Sutherland SLT Department
- All North Highland CHP SLT staff trained in using VC
- Developing competence and confidence in using VC for assessment and therapy

2010

- Began using VC for patients in North Highland CHP
- Evaluation
- Literature review in relation to patient and staff satisfaction, clinical and cost effectiveness
- Visit to Umeå SLT department

Benefits

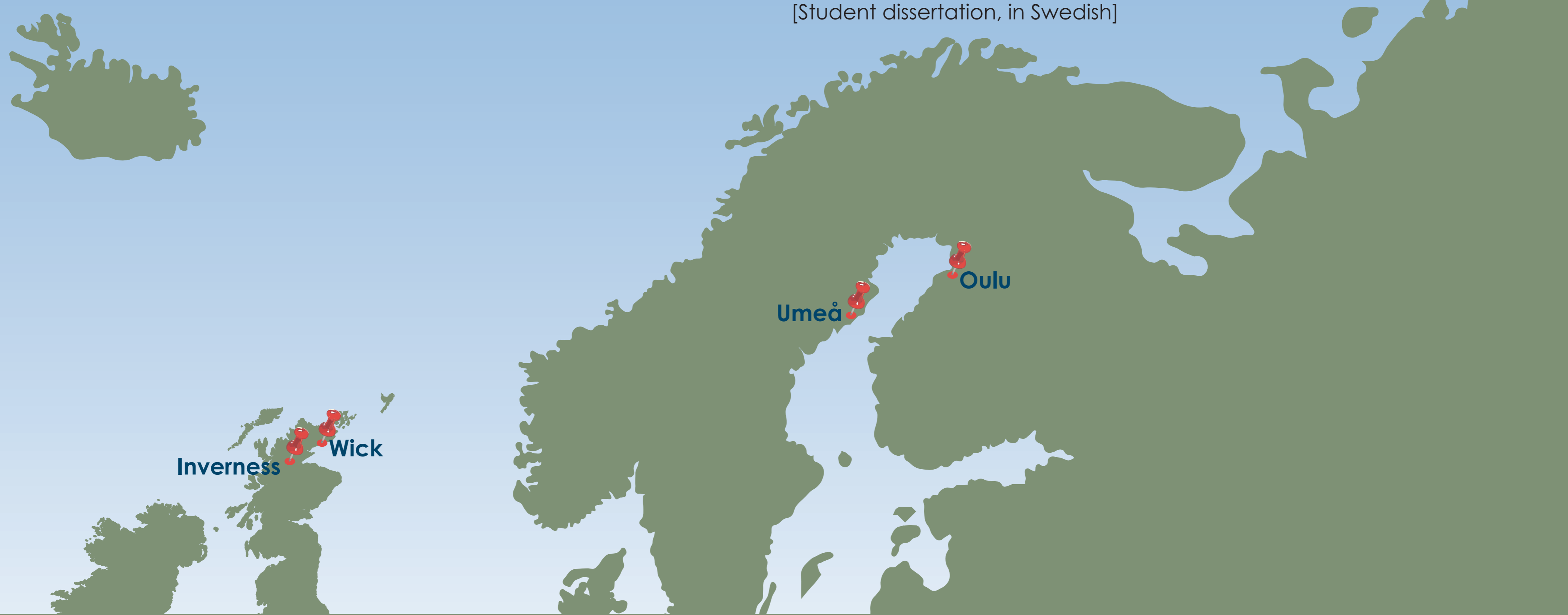
- Less time spent travelling
- More efficient service
- Improved access to services for patients in relation to:
 - Location
 - Specialist services
 - Timing
 - Impaired mobility
 - Frequency

Challenges

- Infrastructure – broadband and equipment availability; location of equipment
- Adapting resources and methods

References

1. Alrutz, K. Speech therapy final report. Umeå: Västerbotten County Council, May 2007
2. Malin, M. Patient satisfaction with speech therapy via telemedicine. Umeå University: Dept of Logopedics, 2006. [Student dissertation, in Swedish]



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