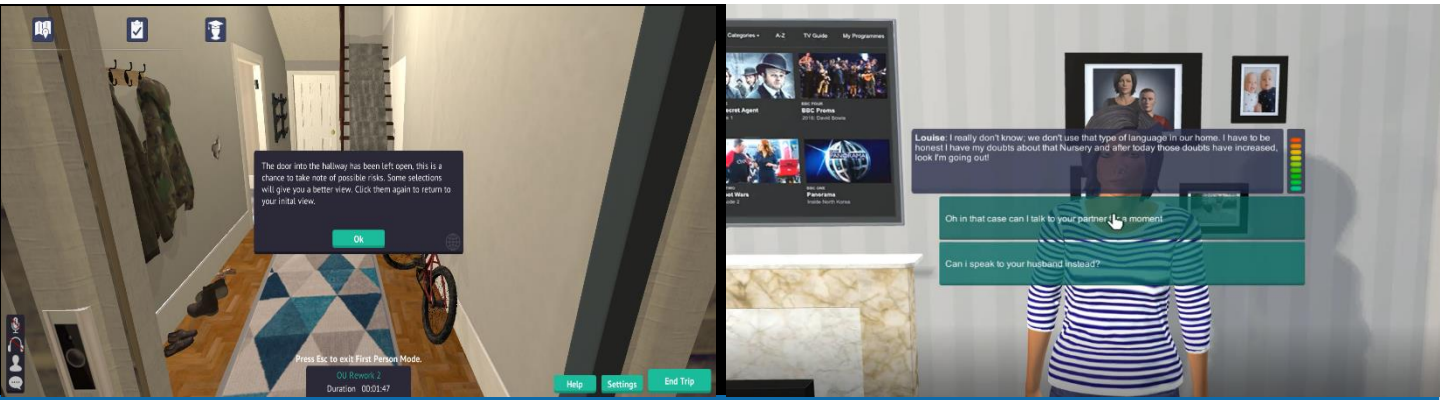


Virtual Home Visits for Social Workers 3D and VR Training at the Open University



Practicing vital social work skills in a safe and immersive environment

REQUIREMENT

The Open University (OU) trains social work students and identified a need in social work training to use VR simulation, in particular to support newly qualified social workers.

Many social work tasks are hard to train for, conducting a home visit being a case in point. Whilst role-play is possible, it typically isn't in a home environment, and can only be done at set times – there are few chances for students to repeat and learn through iteration and practice with safe failure.

As a first step the OU wanted an exercise which would give students a chance to practice skills related to child safeguarding.

The OU had worked with Daden on virtual fieldtrips and asked Daden to create a virtual home visit which the students could use to learn specific skill sets before they practice them in a real-life situation.

OUR SOLUTION

The exercise called for three “acts” – in the office, in the house and in the car. Since budgets were (as ever) limited it was decided that the first and last could actually be done just in 2D, but still within the Trainingscapes environment, the student moving seamlessly from 2D to 3D and back to 2D.

With the housing estate and house quick to build the majority of the work was in the dialogues. We used Trainingscapes' drag-and-drop flow charting tool to author these. In order to convey emotion most also had audio recordings of the family responses. Since these can be hard to maintain as changes are made we also implemented a “mood barometer” to replace non-verbal cues which the student could use as a guide to how each avatar was feeling.

The exercise was made available to students on PC/Macs and iOS and Android devices.

RESULTS

The OU found that “working together with practitioners, local authorities and Daden was very positive.”

Whilst the analysis of the qualitative data is ongoing student feedback has been “very positive” and “quantitative data indicate social workers would like to have simulation part of their training, nearly 92% were willing to use simulation.”

The main benefits are seen as being around being able to “immersive students in the experience and to practice skills in a safe environment.”

The project team are planning to develop a number of other simulations in social work for social workers to practice the core social work skills, and also to extend to care worker training.