

# THE BRADFORD CENTREPOINT PROJECT



The free home shopping service is a godsend to the elderly and people with disabilities.

Mrs Nell Bromyard, aged 79, who lives in an old people's home, is pictured checking her order which has been delivered by Walter Riley – shopping clerk at Centrepoint.



: Which Teleshopping scheme costs over £300,000 to run, employs over 50 staff and has a manager who can't make a profit?



: Bradford Council's Centrepoint.

But before you say "Bloody Local Government" it should be explained that Government rules specifically bar Bradford Metropolitan Council from running a commercial operation. In fact Bradford's objectives are very

uncommercial and are to:

1. Provide a free home shopping service to the elderly and people with disabilities.
2. Provide work for unemployed people.
3. Employ over 20 people with disabilities.

The majority of Centrepoint's running costs are met by the Manpower Services Commission under their Community Programme Scheme. This amounts to over £300,000 with Bradford Council's Unemployment Unit contributing around £40,000.

The heart of the system is a ROCC 2840 running V-load software linked to ROCC and Tandata terminals throughout

the district.

Centrepoint was launched just over a year ago and now has over 800 customers who, with the help of shopping clerks can select from over 10,000 different items at the local supermarket or chemist.

Similarly, information about local activities, the council, benefits and community activities can also be accessed.

Shopping can be ordered in three main ways:

1. From a person's home. A mobile visiting service has been established with shopping clerks calling on a regular basis to serve client's shopping and information needs.

2. From selected sites. Staffed shopping and information outlets have been established at over 30 sites throughout the region, these include sheltered housing schemes, community centres, day centres, centres for the disabled and church halls. In this way, a number of people can be served in one place while community interaction can be encouraged.

3. By telephone. People who order on an irregular basis (eg bad weather), can ring in their order either to a staffed selected site or to the Centrepoint headquarters in the middle of Bradford.

The orders are then processed on the ROCC 2840 and then sent to the relevant retailer where Centrepoint staff assemble the shopping orders for delivery. The delivery is usually on the next-day basis with the scheme's drivers delivering around 95 orders each day, the customers paying on delivery the shop-standard price.

The Bradford Metropolitan Council is a large, hilly and geographically diverse region, with the main centre of population, the City of Bradford in the SE quarter with isolated rural/moorland centres such as Ilkley, Silsden, Burley-in-Wharfedale and Haworth up to 30 miles away to the N and NW.



Supervisors Harjinder Singh – IT and Dolly Grievson – community information are pictured discussing a new programme for expanding the information service to include all voluntary and statutory organisations within the entire Bradford Metro district.



After shopping clerks at Centreport have taken orders from its elderly and disabled customers these are then entered into the system using videotex terminals. This information is then processed on a ROCC 2840 and forwarded to the relevant retailer where Centreport staff assemble the shopping orders for delivery, usually on the next day.

In charge of this side of the operation is Earl Billheimer – ordering and registration supervisor pictured standing.



Paul Nichols – the manager responsible for the Bradford Centrepoint project.



Centrepoint provides work for the unemployed and 50% of its staff have some form of disability.

During their 12 month period of employment with Centrepoint, they are helped to find permanent employment or are assisted in continuing with further education.

Recent bouts of severe winter conditions, in the past isolating communities and individuals has shown that Centrepoint can really provide a crucial link, with over 350 customers regularly receiving shopping throughout the winter months.

Centrepoint is not solely a

Teleshopping scheme, it has a number of dimensions:

**– Links with France.**

Using videotex to link with Bradford's twin town of Roubaix and also a youth training institution in Paris. The aim is to build on existing commercial ties between the cities and to help local industry in Bradford develop a better European



awareness. The scheme provides training in marketing, languages and new technology.

**– Job Line.** Bradford Council runs a 1600 place agency under the MSC's Community Programme Scheme (which includes Centrepoint). Job vacancies are listed through which people can browse and select those of interest. On average there are about 150 jobs advertised and these are updated twice-weekly.

**– Credit Check.** Perhaps the term 'credit check' isn't a very good description for the system. The council provides a card to unemployed people or those on low incomes which enables them to have a discount on council facilities such as leisure centres. Centrepoint has developed an on-line videotex system which allows it to keep an up-to-date register of those who take advantage of the scheme. There are a number of places at which people can register and the cards expire after three months.

**– Services for the Deaf.**

This is a development which allows people with a hearing impairment or speech impediment to log-on to Centrepoint and have a simultaneous conversation with other users using a keyboard.

**– Home working scheme.**

This is a two-part development which will enable Centrepoint to employ a number of people who will work away from home or away from the normal work environment. The second part is in conjunction with IT World, which will allow people unable to get out of the house to learn computer skills. Centrepoint will be used as the link between users and their tutors.

**– Equipment Ordering Service.**

Bradford Council maintains a warehouse of equipment such as desks, chairs, filing cabinets and tables, some of which is new, some being refurbished. An on-line ordering system allows managers to place orders for equipment from the store and also enables the stores to keep an inventory of equipment both in-house and on location.

**– Community Information Service.**

This is a development which seeks to link together many of the community groups in the





Centrepoint's Teleshopping project has been a boon to the elderly and disabled residents of the Bradford Metro District.



Jobline - Bradford Council runs a 1600 place agency under the MSC's Community Programme Scheme, which includes Centrepoint.

On average there are about 150 jobs advertised and these are updated twice-weekly.



Local community council information is easily accessed by the general public using videotex terminals.

Centrepoint employs eight pickers/packers at Morrisons Superstore.

Pictured loading up the Centrepoint delivery van with customer orders is Pat Lennon - driver (employed on a 12-month contract), and John Lindley - delivery supervisor who is seen checking the next order.

Bradford area. Centrepoint currently has 11 locations and provides a useful service to groups, which includes the Job Line and local community council and benefits information together with a What's On feature. Future developments include a Bulletin board and training packages via videotex.

These developments have paralleled Centrepoint's developments in Teleshopping over the last year. Like other home shopping schemes, Centrepoint began by offering a set of screens which enabled customers to browse through the different items and select their requirements. However it very quickly became evident that the majority of customers knew exactly what they wanted and frequently just handed over their shopping list.

Centrepoint's Integrated Home Shopping (IHS) enables a rapid placing of a customer's order. It has been developed to be fast, flexible and uses skills shopping clerks quickly develop, it also enables the clerks to quickly take a large number of orders from one location.

Centrepoint began life simply

as a home shopping service, in 14 months of operational life it has grown like an octopus, developing several different tentacles, which illustrates the flexibility and wide applications of videotex. However the main

core is still in the Teleshopping field, and from the interest already shown by other councils, Bradford will not be alone in extending the concept of home shopping to become a normal part of everyday life.

