Digital inclusion: opportunities for older people

Conference or Workshop Item

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Digital inclusion: opportunities for older people

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Research themes

- social isolation and loneliness
- online social interactions
  - blipfoto.com: a photography journal
- digital skills
- digital health wearables
Social isolation and loneliness

Effects of social isolation on individuals

- social isolation is more harmful than not exercising and twice as harmful as obesity
- social isolation puts older adults at greater risk of early mortality, dementia, suicide and cognitive decline
- individuals are at greater risk of developing low self-esteem, depression and loneliness
- deprives communities from their knowledge and experience, and the roles that they could play in communities and neighbourhoods
Digital inclusion

- can lead to greater social inclusion
  ◦ regular interactions with family and friends
- foster interests and hobbies
- awareness
  ◦ local events
- empowerment
  ◦ planning days out
  ◦ pre-holiday planning

Digital inclusion — *online social interactions*
Aid for interactions

Motivations
Who / what influences you?
Family, Friends, Clubs, Societies, Advice for others?

Advantages
Helps you to do what?
Gives you access to what?
Advice for others?

Disadvantages
Affect relationships?
Limits other activities?
Increases isolation?
Hinders conversation?
Consumes time?

Risks
What are your:
Worries?
Experiences?
Warnings for others?

Obstacles
Equipment? Know-how? Time?
Where do you go for help?
Advice for others?
Oh my God. I have always been like a sponge, trying to learn certain things. Now I need a whole big sponge, because I want to get through to all of these I can possibly get to learn about.

It has been a great change as far as age goes. I really don’t have anything to worry about. If it is a rainy day or snow, I know I can go and continue to learn. Let’s do it. That is what it has done to my mind. It has opened me even more.

Some examples

My mum was a bit of a campaigner and she belonged to an NHS [National Health Service] patient forum and they had meetings and they shared a lot of stuff by email ... and when she could no longer get to meetings she could still make a valid input on documents and stuff.

Decreased mobility may lead to older people becoming isolated. Online communities may help. I think a lot of deaf people, particularly people who lose their hearing in older age can become very, very isolated, so it [online interaction] is important.
Online communities – daily photo-journal blipfoto.com
You develop new friends and become a part of their lives through their photos and commentaries.

I wanted to keep my brain active and I also like taking photographs.

Also it opens my eyes to my surroundings and it gives me structure in my day.

I find I am able to share some of my concerns and worries as well as extreme joys in a way which I am unable to do face to face with people.

It makes me go out every day to find something beautiful if possible.

**Digital skills**

- employability
- lifelong learning
  - open educational resources
  - massively open online courses, Open University’s FutureLearn: [https://www.futurelearn.com](https://www.futurelearn.com)
- accessing government and other online services
Considerations for digital inclusion

- need an incentive to get and stay online
- one-off training on using the internet doesn’t suffice
- need access to an ongoing technical support
- prefer learning from one another by sharing knowledge and swapping tips

Digital health wearables — self-monitoring of health
Activity tracker or smart watch

Research objectives

- challenges for adoption
- usage of the data for self-monitoring and self-management of health
- behavioural changes
- ethical dilemmas related to access and sharing of data
- accessibility and usability aspects related to the design and use of these devices
Reports

- Minocha, Shailey; Holland, Caroline; McNulty, Catherine; Banks, Duncan and Palmer, Jane (2015). Social isolation and loneliness in people aged 55 and over in Milton Keynes. [http://oro.open.ac.uk/43925/](http://oro.open.ac.uk/43925/)
- Reports and presentations available from: [http://oro.open.ac.uk/view/person/sm577.html](http://oro.open.ac.uk/view/person/sm577.html)

I cannot understand "older people" who are not interested in using it [the internet]!
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Discussion

- What has helped you to become digitally skilled/literate?
- Which other new digital skills would you like to learn?
- What could be done to help others to become digitally included?
- How could you help somebody else to become confident with using the internet?