Enhancing digital skills and digital literacy among older persons

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Centre for Ageing Better

– Our vision is a society where everyone enjoys later life

– We create change in policy and practice informed by evidence, and work with partners across England to improve employment, housing, health and communities

– www.ageing-better.org.uk
State of the digital nation

- 95% are online
  - 1.5 m people have started to use the internet in the last year
- We are at 2025 levels of high digital capability because of the pandemic
- However **2.6m are still offline**, and it may be harder to really lower this figure now
  - Age is not the only factor, there are broader factors as well
  - 11% of those aged 60+ increased their digital engagement score by more than twenty points
  - People on incomes of less than £35,000 are more prone to larger decreases in digital engagement.

Source: Lloyds Consumer Digital Index 2021
What enables and what prevents people in later life from getting online?

Our report, *Digital Age*, aimed to answer these questions. This hierarchy of factors came through from the research.

Most influential factors relate to the perceived value of a task and to self-efficacy.
Key insights from our recent research
Digital Skills to connect

- Aims of research:
  - Exploring the digital experiences of people aged 50-70, and the organisations who supported them during Covid-19

- Methodology
  - Phone poll of 500 in 50-70 age range in households where income is less than £25,000 p.a.
  - Online survey of organisations – 252 responses
  - Online survey of individuals – 327 responses
  - Follow-up in depth interviews with both

- Timeline
  - Nov 20 to end of Jan 21

Source: Digital skills to connect research
26% of 50-70s living on lower incomes were not using the internet before the pandemic
# More support for devices and data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Proportion of Organisations (n=252)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping people understand what they can do online</td>
<td>56.8% (19.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping people do new things online, such as benefit applications, or online shopping</td>
<td>51.0% (16.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping people to set up digital devices</td>
<td>39.2% (22.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing courses on topics relevant to digital access and skills</td>
<td>38.7% (11.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to the internet</td>
<td>31.9% (18.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital devices – accessed in person/on site</td>
<td>27.0% (15.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital devices – given to people or loaned</td>
<td>13.0% (34.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping people with the costs of devices or data</td>
<td>11.8% (20.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **We did this before COVID-19 and are still doing it**
- **We've started doing this since COVID-19**
- **We used to do this, but have stopped since COVID-19**
- **We've never done this**
Digital skills to connect

7 key messages

− There is a significant digital divide among 50-70 year olds exacerbated by the pandemic
− Digital inclusion is not just about being online, its also about building skills and confidence
− Local and national organisations have had to adapt to continue to support users
− There is a lack of awareness among older adults of the support that is available
− Organisations need more financial and peer support in building digital inclusion
− Remote support has benefits beyond the role played in the pandemic
− Non-digital channels still need to be available
Sharing good practice

Digital skills research project – insights from interviews with organisations and individuals
8 principles of good practice

1. **Flexibility and relevance**: structured, skills-focused courses won’t work. Concentrate on helping people to do the things they need and want to do online.

2. **The right pace**: older learners will pick up information and will progress their learning at different paces – responsive approach is key.

3. **Repetition and reflection**: creating space for repetition and reflection on success is vital to success.

4. **The right language**: avoid jargon and focus on the task, not the tech.

5. **One-to-one support**: a strong tutor-pupil relationship is key to building confidence.

6. **Time to build relationships**: time to build communication and trust helps to maintain learners’ interest in digital and increase their self efficacy.

7. **Ongoing support**: support needs to be open-ended, allowing learners to return with questions and problems.

8. **Co-design**: involve a wide range of users in the shaping and design of all services, new and existing, to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

Source Digital Age report Centre for Ageing Better
Key learning from our research

- Enabling people to access services without being online
- Providing devices
- Using referral networks/word of mouth
- Reaching people via direct mail/paper-based information
- Contacting people by telephone
- Using digital systems internally
- Developing specialisms in Digital Champions

Source: Digital skills to connect report, Centre for Ageing Better
Links and resources

- https://ageing-better.org.uk/digital-inclusion

- Research reports and case studies
- Blogs, videos

- Webinars
  - https://ageing-better.org.uk/events/digital-skills-connect-webinar
  - https://ageing-better.org.uk/events/good-digitally-connected-home