

Bridging the Digital Divide

Ageing Better is a test and learn programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

We collect information and insights from across 14 partnerships and use this learning to support service deliverers, funders and policy makers working to reduce social isolation in people aged over 50.

This learning snapshot details key findings and recommendations to bridge the digital divide, reducing loneliness and social isolation for people aged 50+.

You can use it as a summary of the full [learning report](#), to share practical tools with colleagues and in teams, or include in your own presentations and briefings.

<p>1. Why tackle the digital divide?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digital technologies help people stay connected with friends and family and access activities they enjoy or need. ● Those at risk of loneliness and social isolation due to age, health and income, are also at risk of digital exclusion. ● People aged 50+ have different levels of income, motivation, confidence and skills when it comes to digital technology; this is called the ‘digital spectrum’. ● Over half of all adult internet non-users are 75+ (ONS, 2018). This group may be missing out on the services, activities and connections available online. 	<p>2. What are the challenges?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 24% of adults aged 65+ have not used the internet for three months (ONS, 2019). ● A person’s financial circumstances can make accessing digital equipment and internet services unaffordable. ● Digital confidence, language barriers, jargon, skills gaps and fears of being the victim of online scams, are all barriers to people accessing online services. ● The imposed self isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic presents its own unique digital challenges, a greater need to overcome these, as well as opportunities to achieve real change for people moving online.
<p>4. So what can we do with this learning? Bridging the digital divide means working in a person-centred way and at the pace, frequency and style that suits people. Understanding where people are on the ‘digital spectrum’ and what their ‘digital hook’ is, helps target and tailor resources.</p> <p>Test and learn from services in your area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build motivation by keeping the value of digital technologies in people’s mind. ● Connect with local and national charities to help individuals access the kit (devices and internet services) they need. ● Work with Digital Connectors and Telephone Befrienders to support people to move online through sustained support packages delivered one-to-one. 	<p>3. How can we reduce the digital divide?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support people to move from offline to online through person-centred support. ● Employ professionals and work with volunteers who can help identify a person’s ‘digital hook’ (the benefit they’d gain by becoming more digitally active). ● Personal motivations to move online might include communicating with loved ones, shopping, information seeking or accessing services. ● Support people to express their fears and barriers. ● Recognise that a proportion of people aged 50+ will never be able or want to access online content. Other services and opportunities to connect remain essential.