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Learning Snapshot: Delivering Digital Projects

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 50+.

This learning snapshot details key findings and recommendations when delivering digital projects with people aged over 50.

We explore 'getting people connected', 'delivering a digital session' and the benefits of 'hybrid delivery.' Use this snapshot as a summary of the full learning report and to share insights and tools with colleagues.

1. Why deliver digital projects?
- Over the last 12 months, the Ageing Better model has evolved to that of a 'hybrid delivery' model; delivering activities and projects across multiple platforms, face-to-face, telephone and digital.
- It follows a huge investment in online services provision and digital support. The result has been that many housebound and isolated people are now more connected.
- As a tool through which we can widen reach and improve accessibility, digital plays a vital role in the mixed delivery model; providing choice and flexibility.

2. What are the challenges?
- For many projects the biggest challenge will always be getting people from the target group to join a digital session.
- People continue to be affected by digital inequalities and opportunity (access to necessary devices, finances and support).
- People will have different levels of motivation, confidence and skills.
- Online delivery is not the same as face to face. It is different and so the approach to it, our service design, the type of social interaction it achieves, and our expectations of it, should be different.

4. So what can we do with this learning?
- Across all our Ageing Better learning we have highlighted the importance of working with people in a holistic, person centred way. Digital projects give more people greater choice and opportunity to connect with services and friends.

Test and learn with digital in your area:
- Try different methods to build confidence and skills; mirrored devices, guides, 1-2-1 coaching and bespoke peer-group sessions (such as Tea and Technology classes).
- Use experienced online facilitators.
- Keep online activity groups to under 12 people for optimum experiences.
- Offer 'phone-in' groups for people who find digital inaccessible but where face-to-face doesn't match their needs.
- Offer a wide range of activities and access routes, appealing to many interests.

3. How can we deliver digital projects well?
- Assist people to access digital services through ongoing friendly, patient, person centred support from a range of sources, including; professional connectors, befrienders, volunteers and peer groups.
- Understand and utilise the 'Digital Connector' function. This role can help unpick where people are on the "digital spectrum" and what motivates their offline and online behaviour. It also works to identify and address barriers to digital.
- Adapt volunteer training and induction sessions to take place online. This will open up volunteering opportunities to a more diverse group of people, addressing barriers of mobility, geography and time.
- Draw on peer support and volunteer networks to advocate for digital within hard to reach groups and communities.