



Online in your 80s:

Lifeline or waste of time?



Executive summary

Breaking down stereotypes and understanding the range of individual needs of people over 75 is at the heart of what we do at Re-engage.

With the onset of restrictions necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, we were inundated with suggestions of ways to work with older people online. But we wanted to understand more fully the way that the older old perceive and value the internet.

Research published by the Centre for Ageing Better and by Vodafone have helped us to understand the complexity of the relationship that the over 50s have with being online, but we wanted to address the specific group of over 75s. As these reports reminded us, by the end of the second decade of the 21st century, more than half of people aged 75 and over had never been online.

Clearly this picture has changed with the Covid-19 pandemic. People of all ages have congregated online in ways none would have anticipated. Still, Re-engage works with a cohort of people who are very socially isolated. Many have lost all family and friends and are experiencing constant (or chronic) loneliness. Some of these older people have no family or close friends to provide the incentive, and support, they'd need to be attracted to participating in the online world that so many of us have become used to. We wanted to know more about the relationship with the internet of this group of older old people to better understand the cohort of people at the heart of our work.

So, we developed our research to help us to understand how we can best use technology to work with older people. It was also developed to help us understand just how often putting a service online is or isn't the right approach when you work with isolated and lonely people with an average age of 85.

Our research confirms that half of older people who live alone – so arguably the most vulnerable to loneliness – still have no access to the internet. It would be easy to assume that this is through lack of opportunity, but a number of our respondents assured us that this is through choice. If you are one of the oldest old, then your circle of connections may be so small as to make the internet seem entirely irrelevant.

We also learned a lot about the many ways that older people are using the internet. The older people we spoke to who are online are pursuing hobbies and extending knowledge through searching for more details on information found on the television. They are also chatting with friends and family and doing online banking. Older people, like the rest of the population, are using the internet in ways that suit them. Older people are acutely aware of their own vulnerability, however, and attuned to this online. They are alarmed about what they hear about scams and fearful because of their own experience or that of others.

Overall, we have found a healthy approach to internet use by older people who can be savvy about its benefits but also wary of its risks. Most of all, we can be sure that the cohort we work with is still only partially online and we are committed to supporting choice, providing support, and investigating further the massive issue of scams and fraud and helping older people to be resilient.



Meryl Davies
CEO
Re-engage



Research aims:

1. Undertake bespoke primary research with older people to understand the motivations for getting online
2. Understand the barriers to getting online for some
3. Establish a baseline of what older people do online and identify unmet needs older people may have in terms of online activity
4. Identify where Re-engage and others could play a support role and inform the development of existing and future services

There's a big wide world out there and they're missing something. If you had told me 20 years ago, I would have been saying this, I would have said 'never.' I fought against it, believe me. It's ridiculous...There's a big wide world out there and more older people should learn to use a computer.



Chapter 1 It's a journey

The road to getting online is a very personal and ongoing journey for every individual, often over 20 plus years, with inevitable bumps along the way.

Our research makes clear that to begin the journey there needs to be a combination of both the right circumstances and strong personal motivation.

If the circumstances are right, this can greatly aid an individual's journey to getting online and staying online:

- it has to feel like a priority
- older people need to have the emotional bandwidth to begin the learning process
- good health is particularly important – interruptions at the part-way stage can stop progress or reduce motivation
- financial capability to invest in hardware and getting connected is required
- determination to see it through is also needed

Challenging circumstances can put someone off starting the process of getting online in the first place. For those who have started the journey, changing circumstances can mean progress often comes to a standstill. Ill health, bereavement, and in particular loss of a partner or spouse, can significantly delay, affect, or halt, the process.

Alongside the right circumstances, strong motivation is needed and is also often encouraged by family, friends, a neighbour and/or support staff. Personal motivation can vary from person to person, but often includes:

- pursuing a hobby
- keeping in touch, particularly communicating with family
- getting chores done and being able to be independent in certain tasks
- the desire to keep up and keep learning - older people are very aware of the pace at which the world is moving, and many are keen to keep up
- simple curiosity
- having time to fill

Once the circumstances are right and the motivation is there, the actual route to getting online is varied and often involves a blend of methods for learning about the internet.

I registered for the local library some time ago to learn how to use a computer but had to go into hospital and they had finished when I got out. I would really like to know what to buy and to learn how to use it.

This can include being taught or supported by a family member, friend, neighbour, or support staff; attending courses or classes; using printed guides; or in some cases self-teaching. Being online and using internet-based devices can provide essential accessibility for those with a disability or long-term health condition.

"I am registered blind. My tablet reads emails to me; and I can send emails by talking to my tablet. I have great difficulty in reading letters and magazines."

However, for others who are offline, they state that their disability or condition is the very thing that stops them from using the internet.

"[I have] problems with eyesight. [I] would not be able to use a computer."

Each person is on their own personal journey and older people recognise that they might hit a roadblock once in a while - for example when their own needs and wants evolve or software requires an update. They can find themselves needing help or advice once again. Meanwhile people who are offline are quite aware of what they are missing out on.

"I am ninety years old, on my own, and wish now that I had taken the trouble to try and use a computer. I just feel we are being left behind now."

It is evident that some people regret that they will not be able to start the journey to being online.

Technological adoption during the pandemic

The pandemic has accelerated technological adoption for some older people, seeking out connection with friends and family.

Older people often described having significant time to fill pre-pandemic, which was exacerbated during lockdowns as activities outside the home and visitors were curtailed.

"It has been a lifeline to keep in touch with family and friends."

Of those already online, 69% have begun using the internet more frequently since the pandemic started. Communicating with friends and family was the biggest driver (46% of internet users) and life events such as the birth of a great-grandchild or wanting to connect with other people at Christmas were a significant spur. Being online has also been a lifeline when other options were reduced or limited such as completing chores like online shopping (29% of those online). The internet also helped older people keep up with news and find information they needed. With extra time to fill, the internet also offered opportunities to pursue hobbies and personal interests (23% of internet users).

For many of us, the pandemic increased feelings of loneliness. The increased reliance on the internet across the whole of society had a profound effect on all age groups. For older people, the picture of internet use during Covid-19 is not a uniform one. Half of all those surveyed are not online, and 76% of these people reported that they had not become more interested in getting online. Yes, for many of those offline, the pandemic led to increased feelings of social isolation, but they did not see a route to being part of the online world and so their sense of intense isolation was exacerbated as the rest of society saw an increasing reliance on the internet to provide important information.

"There are many people who do not have access to the internet. We are dismissed, ignored, excluded, since the pandemic, the situation has become worse. Announcements on TV constantly repeat 'go to our website for information' or 'send any queries by email'. Anything received through [the post] repeats these phrases. Phone calls are appalling, I am put on hold and bombarded by recordings telling me to 'go online' etc, etc- I am 84 years old and live alone."

Telephone calls and online activities at Re-engage

While many people were turning to the internet to provide connection and social contact during the pandemic, for many of those 75+ without the internet, this just wasn't an option.

For those not connected pre-pandemic, their journey to getting online during the crisis was made even harder, as they could no longer receive physical support from family, friends, or professionals and any local community classes stopped.

Working with a group of people of whom only 50% are online, we focused on sustaining telephone contact with older people through our social groups and a new one-to-one telephone befriending service called call companions.

Our first foray into delivering an online service started with our social groups focused on physical activities, which were due to launch in person in 2020. Once the lockdowns began, we moved the groups online. These groups are giving older people the chance to do light exercise, whilst getting to know one another in a friendly, sociable setting, and have proven to be very much needed and a real success. These online groups supported those already online, in many cases introducing them to video calls for the first time, but also provided the motivation and help for some older people to get online for the first time.

Overall, the pandemic shone a real light on the issue of assuming all older people want and can get online and that it's a simple process. If anything, with the lack of family and professional support, the acceleration of technological adoption was even harder for some during the pandemic and appears to have exacerbated their loneliness.

I wasn't meeting any people at all when lockdown started until I was invited to Zoom it was wonderful to see people.

Methodology

Re-engage worked with Message House, an independent research and communications consultancy, to explore and identify the research insights to inform this publication.



stated they did not use the internet



of those currently offline said 'I have no interest getting online'



Being scammed was the biggest fear with 40% saying 'I am worried about scams' as being the reason they aren't online.

We used a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods conducting twelve in-depth interviews over the phone or by Zoom with older people in Braintree and Chelmsford between 10th February – 2nd March 2021.

Half of the respondents were already online, and half were not online at the time of participating.

A postal survey, informed and shaped by the findings from the interviews, was sent to 7,053 older people from across the UK in April 2021, as an insert in Re-engage's magazine Time Together. We had 623 responses, an overall response rate of 8.8%. There was an almost 50:50 split of those who stated they used the internet (304) and those who stated that they did not use the internet (319).

According to Ofcom Adults' Media Use & Attitudes report, 2020, 51% of those aged 75+ do not use the internet and this was reflected in our survey, with 51% stating they do not use the internet.

The number of people over 75 who live alone has risen to

2.3m



are using the internet more frequently since the pandemic began (already online)



use the internet to persue interests and hobbies

623 responses



of those not online said 'I don't want to be a burden or have to rely on others to help me.'

Postal survey sent to

7,053

older people from across the UK

Chapter 2 The online experience

What older people do online

Our research demonstrates that older people's experience of being online is as varied as their journey to getting connected.

Most of those people who do use the internet, use it for multiple purposes (broad users) and many enjoy the experience once they are connected and set-up. Like the rest of us, older people aren't looking for engagement with technology for technology's sake. They are looking for engagement with people and interests. Keeping the benefit - not the tool - front and centre is important.

The leading use of the internet among survey respondents was to stay connected with family and friends, whether by email, social media, or video/audio calls. This is both a powerful motivator for getting online in the first place and one of the main purposes of its use. There is enthusiasm for staying connected with family in easy, informal ways and being able to see and hear family is a big reason for being online for many. Much of their lives has to be regimented schedules of carer visits and hospital appointments, so informal opportunities to see family via a tablet at ad hoc moments are a powerful counter to this.

Being online is a fantastic way for respondents to pursue existing hobbies and to further enjoy and develop interests and passions. Playing bridge, uploading holiday photographs, ordering plants/seeds, looking up recipes are all pastimes cited by our respondents. People see the opportunity to grow their knowledge, which in turn reduces the fear factor of the unfamiliar world of the internet and boosts the confidence of the users. Extending and deepening existing hobbies also provides a compelling motive for getting connected, particularly in the absence of family help.

"I'm a very basic user. I sometimes buy things online, mainly for my card-making hobby or household items; but there are lots of keys on my laptop that I've never tried to use so would like to use it better and understand how things work a little more!"

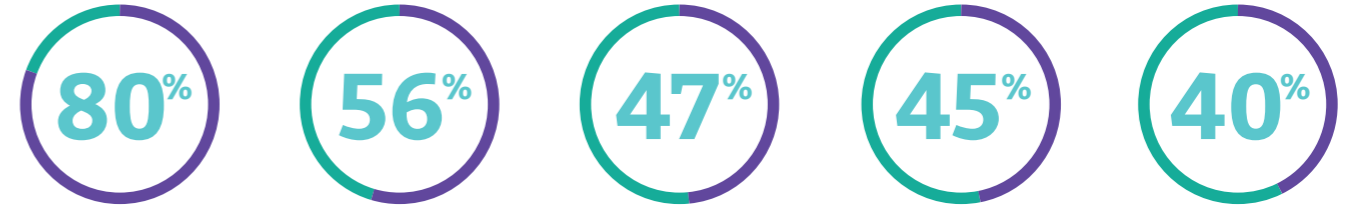
"I can't go to the bridge club, but I can play online. There is an online [space] where you could be playing with anyone, all over the world, which I have done... You can drop in and drop out whenever you want. You are not tied to any time, you can play in the middle of the night if you want to because the time zones are different wherever you are."

I've got a friend who's doing that and she's my age and she is now learning Spanish online. So, you can do what you want.

I'd love to be able to make biscuits*. I can make biscuits, I made them with grandchildren, but I'd like to make what I call nice biscuits.

*using online recipes

What activities do older people do online?



To keep in touch with family and friends

To get chores done, like shopping or paying bills

To help with a hobby, like knitting, cooking, gardening etc

I am curious about being online, I want to keep up and keep learning

I have spare time and it is something to do

% of internet users

Older people are motivated to get day to day tasks done themselves, such as shopping or online banking. For several of those already using the internet, being able to do these tasks by themselves was a big reason to be online. It helps people feel in control of their own lives and retain independence in specific areas.

Many use the internet for information, news, research and looking things up. Their curiosity and desire to follow up on interesting things they see or hear, particularly on TV, has encouraged several to explore further online.

Many older people, particularly those who live alone, have time to fill. Going online is an alternative to watching TV. Being online represents a variety of activities and can be done on their terms from a comfortable chair at a time that suits.

Technology

The majority of online respondents we spoke to in the interviews use a tablet. They didn't all start on a tablet, and some had other redundant hardware.

The research highlighted that phones can be fiddly and, among the few that had smartphones, very few use them for more than calls. Using a tablet is an easy option in some key ways; they have big screens, making them clearer to see and easier to use for those who are less dexterous; they are more portable and lightweight than a laptop; and with the right light and chair it's an enjoyable experience for older individuals.

"Since I bought my tablet a few years ago it has been a source of pleasure and knowledge. I wouldn't be without it even at 90 years of age."

Some older people expressed a sense of pride in being able to use the internet and various devices. Being able to use the latest gadgets and teach skills to others was a real source of pride and boosted their confidence. For some, it was an important continuation of the abilities and skills they developed in the workplace. It is also seen as a health benefit, considered a valuable way to keep their brains active and busy.

However, whilst some older people would like to develop their skills further, awareness of the ongoing need to 'manage' can limit ambition and many of those online felt pretty content with what they can do. For some that meant only using basic functions on the internet such as using search engines, while others are more comfortable using a range of websites and services like online shopping or prescriptions, using social media, or playing games.

You are never too old to learn, and I have used my skills to help my aunt and a friend get more out of their computers.

Barriers and fears

There are various barriers, even for frequent internet users. Concerns about being scammed are significant and can limit users as they avoid doing certain activities like online banking or shopping. In some cases, fear of fraud and scams has prevented individuals from getting online at all.

Lack of confidence is a common barrier. For those offline it is a fear of the technology itself, as well as worries about learning and getting stuck. For those online, lack of confidence can severely limit what people do or attempt to do, instead opting to do just the few things they know that they can (narrow users).

I am not sure that I would be able to use a tablet or a computer: I think I would not be able to learn.

I am tech-phobic with no confidence.

Being scammed put me off buying another machine.

Because I am 91, I think perhaps I am not quick enough to spot a scam which is more likely if you are online.

I lost my husband 3½ years ago, just after he passed away, I was badly scammed; therefore, I had the computer closed down.

I have no family locally to help, there are so many scams and friends seem to regularly have problems and others seem to become addicted!

I admit I have never been good at gadgets, better with words. At 92 I am unlikely to change.

No interest in following the trivia that seems to occupy so many people today or the hurtful gossip.



I think things were far better before the internet, what with people getting scammed out of all their money and even businesses being hacked into. What about all those post office employees who lost their livelihood and some even went to prison due to computer error. What about young children being taken into pornography and drugs and learning dreadful things they should not know. Life was happier and more pure without it.

I still like my correspondence sent to me on paper and the one-to-one basis, please.

I think I am a technophobic person; it doesn't come easy.

For those not online, fear of the internet can be multi-layered and brought about by hearing or reading news about the various risks of being online; from fraud to sexual exploitation; addiction to online bullying.

"I've had a computer for 20+ years and have always been unable to shop online because of lack of confidence."

For other older people, there is a limited understanding of what they could do online, often seeing it simply as a communication tool, an alternative to the telephone or writing letters and they feel content with their existing methods.

"I still like the old-fashioned way, pen to paper."

"Please do not lose pen and paper, there is nothing like a human voice on the phone."

Some internet users also feel that they haven't had a choice in getting online, as more and more organisations turn to online only services, such as banks or utility companies.

The financial barrier has several dimensions, from the upfront cost of hardware or ongoing connectivity fees; assumptions that classes will be costly; the opportunity to spend money on other household items; and reluctance to ask family for financial help.

"There are very few places I can get help to learn more, except people who charge the earth and add travel expense to their bill. I am in my eighties so cannot afford that sort of help and rely on a young neighbour to assist me now and then. That was not possible during lockdown."

Re-engage's online activity groups in Wales

Re-engage launched its activity groups in Wales: social groups with a focus on gentle physical activity and fitness. Each 90-minute session includes around 45 minutes of gentle exercise, plus time to get to know one another in a friendly, sociable way.

It was important in the initial development stage to engage with older people and organisations who specialise in supporting older people online. In December 2020, we assembled a steering group made up of older people, volunteers, activity instructors, Digital Communities Wales, and Carmarthenshire 50+ forum, who supported with the set-up of the groups and with whom we have consulted throughout project delivery. Digital Communities Wales set up training to use the online platform for staff and the steering group members.

We also ran an online event attended by older people and our community partners about engaging older people with online groups and services. This helped us understand both potential challenges and solutions in running online groups for this audience.

As a result of this comprehensive consultation, we developed a process for supporting older people to access and attend the groups, regardless of their existing online skills and abilities. We wanted to reach the most in need of our services and so publicised both online, via local newspapers and through referral partners and social prescribing to help reach those not online. At the application stage, we find out the support an individual needs accessing our groups online. For those already connected, we provide a basic 'how to use Zoom' guide and details of how the online groups run. If more intensive support is required, we refer them to our partner organisation AbilityNet, who provide free specialist support for older people online, including setting up new equipment and fixing technical issues.

In terms of ongoing support, we ensure 15 minutes at the start of each class is set aside to offer the activity guests a run through of the basic functions of the platform and to make sure any technical issues are resolved before the class starts. Throughout the class, each activity guest has access to a number they can call if more support is needed

e.g., if their internet connection goes down or they can't find the unmute button. As time has progressed, we have found that activity guests need less and less support to access our sessions.

These groups have brought a wealth of benefits for older people in Wales, improved physical health and well-being, building social connections, reducing feelings of loneliness, supporting technological adoption and the improvement of online skills and confidence.

Since lockdown has eased, we are continuing to deliver and expand the online groups, whilst also starting to deliver local in-person groups. This ensures older people in need of our services can benefit through the channel(s) that work best for them.

With the success of our activity groups in Wales, we are expanding this programme into new regions, starting with West Yorkshire. We will be delivering both in-person and online groups, to ensure we are supporting all those aged 75+, regardless of their technological skills.

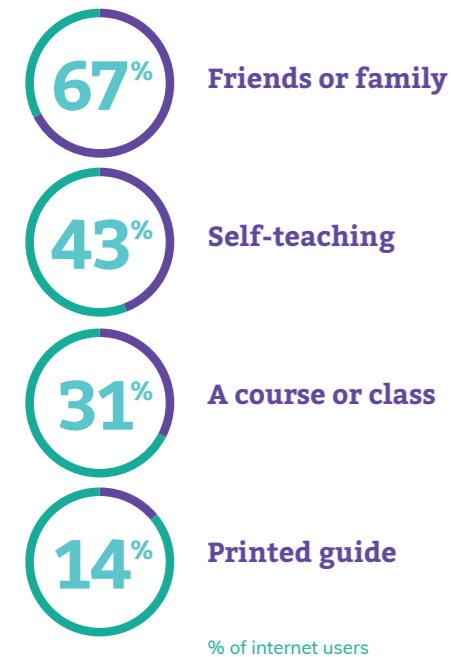
A steering group has also been set up, including older people, to support the development of the groups. We are partnering with the local authority and organisations with digital champions to provide the more intensive support older people may need accessing the online classes. These partnerships will create reciprocal referral pathways so that older people who come to us without internet access can be referred to these organisations to help them get online. At the same time, older people who complete the online courses through these organisations and may benefit from our services, can be referred to our online groups, where they can put their newly learnt online skills into practice and benefit from the physical activities and companionship that our online groups offer.



Chapter 3: The role of family and friends

Getting online is more than just a practical consideration; it is a big psychological hurdle too – few online respondents we interviewed have done this themselves and most have needed support from family, a friend or support staff. If there's a sense of support and help to overcome initial fears, it's possible to encourage people to move online. In most cases, those that helped with the initial set up are the same people who are offering ongoing support.

What helped older people get online?



For many people, the process starts with learning how to do the basics and then more – e.g., starting with just email and video calls. Support at this early stage from an actual person is important for most, either from friends or family, or through a programme tailored to 'people like me.' Some local small classes are mentioned by several online respondents e.g., from governmental classes or local library courses. This was a fun part of the process for those that were more confident, and many will start to Google answers, ask a neighbour or a grandchild. Others are nervous about their ability at this stage, sometimes because they don't want to be a bother or have no one to ask.

I can use a computer, but occasionally it plays up and my son comes to correct it. I do not know what I would do without his help. Probably give up.

It's important not to assume respondents who have family are happy to rely on them. Reluctance to be a burden is very deep-seated and has increased for several during the pandemic as there is a strong view that families have enough on their plates.

"My son is very busy bringing up his children. He is divorced and I do not want to burden him with problems if I go online."

"No one has offered help in my family owing to not having the time and so I really depend on the television. I cannot see at this stage in my life. I am over 90 years. I will never get to contact my family abroad. They are online and I feel like the poor relation and very sad."

Ongoing support is necessarily broad and encapsulates emotional as well as technical help. Support is needed for ad hoc problems, upgrades or when there are new apps for example. There is a vicious cycle – the fear of needing substantive ongoing help, stemming from a lack of confidence and reluctance to be a burden, can put individuals off the initial set up. Easy and appropriate ongoing support is therefore critical to ensuring older people don't fall out of the process at any point e.g., after a hospital visit or a change in circumstances.

Social proof can potentially help reinforce the idea that getting online isn't just 'for others.' Having one's friends online can really help, as can synergies in how you communicate with each other. Some who are offline don't know anyone their age who is online; they don't feel the same pull to go online to communicate with friends. In some cases, friends have different health barriers to each other, which can make communicating difficult.

Even those with family and friends to support them can still often find themselves stuck.

"My granddaughters bought me a touch-screen mobile phone so we could FaceTime. One of them even wrote two pages of instructions for me, but I still cannot manage to grasp it yet; and they live thirty miles away so I have to wait until they can come again."

Loneliness and isolation

The number of people over seventy-five who live alone has risen to 2.3 million (ONS, 2019). All too often, loneliness is the reality for older people and nearly half of older people say the TV is their main source of company.

Social isolation and loneliness are more than an emotional experience, they have huge mental and physical health implications. Older people living alone are significantly more likely to experience health problems, visit their GP or attend A&E.

The older people we support come to us because of the loneliness and social isolation they are experiencing. Through our research, we have found that for some, inevitable changing circumstances, often due to relocation or health problems, can make maintaining community relationships particularly challenging. Physical ailments, lack of familiar faces, a changing local offering and lack of awareness of what's available all create barriers.

I still feel a proper friendship is needed. I still miss my wife who died in 1977 after a good, 24-year marriage. I don't need friends - I need one friend.

Bereavement and the loneliness that can follow is significant. Often, it's the result of the loss of a spouse or partner, but for some, it can be the loss of siblings, extended family or even children that can mean they are 'the last.' For a small number, the loneliness and isolation are significant and described as the 'unbearable torture of loneliness.'

As we have seen, the role of family and friends can be fundamental to an older person getting online, from the initial draw to connect with family, to providing ongoing support. For those who have few, or in some cases no family or friends, there can be little incentive to get online. This is especially the case for those who have a limited awareness of the different ways in which you can use the internet and only see it as an alternative to the telephone or writing letters. For those people, the internet doesn't offer any kind of solution.

"I live alone and have no close family. I have no transport. How would I manage if my computer needed repair? It would be nothing but an additional worry. I prefer to communicate by letter or phone."

Even for those who are motivated to get online, a lack of family or friends to ask for advice and support can make the whole process too overwhelming.

"I have no family - no husband, no children, no parents, no brothers or sisters! I would love a new mobile phone or a tablet, but don't want to get 'ripped off' in the store or get home to find I can't work it! I have coped through lockdowns by going out to shops on my own on my mobility scooter and/or buses. I often go for three, four, five days without seeing anyone at a 'normal' time."

Several older people shared that as technology advances, they have a feeling of being 'left behind' by the modern world and unable to 'cope.'

However, if those hurdles of getting online can be overcome (and we may have to accept that for some, the hurdles are too great), being online can in some cases be a real help in alleviating feelings of loneliness and social isolation, including after the loss of a spouse or partner.

"I am in my late 80's and have been alone for many years following the death of my husband...The loneliness never really goes away, you just have to find ways around it - not easy. However, using the internet is a great help."

Chapter 4: The role of Re-engage

As the ageing population continues to grow, so does the epidemic of loneliness among older people. We're the only charity solely committed to tackling this problem amongst the oldest old by helping them to re-engage with other people and with their communities through regular social contact, giving them a lifeline of companionship and, vitally, something to look forward to.

For those who are 75+, living alone and experiencing social isolation and loneliness, the challenges to getting online and being online can be multiple and increasingly complex.

Some older people feel staunchly that they do not want to get online. Life is already challenging enough; it doesn't feel worth it, and they are reluctant to rely on others. For a few, they just don't feel like they need the internet in their life, or they simply feel 'too old' to even get started. As people age, health issues and fear of being a burden become significant barriers. We need to accept that some older people will remain offline and will continue to need other means of engagement and support.

"It's too much to manage, I don't have a smartphone or internet. (I can't manage my simple life, so I don't want to add stress, get more contracts, more devices, more expensive)."

I don't feel that I'm a member of the human race anymore, to be honest with you. I'm not in it anywhere.

I would like to but I'm 96 and think I have left it too late.

For others with few or no contact with family or friends, the challenges of getting online can feel overwhelming and too great to overcome.

Re-engage exists to provide social connections for older people at a time in their lives when their social circles are diminishing. We want to support all older people experiencing loneliness and social isolation and whilst online groups, like our activity groups in Wales have brought companionship and improved well-being for many, it remains vitally important for us to continue to offer both in-person and telephone support for those not online and unlikely to be online.

As lockdown eased, our tea party groups have gradually been re-opening and continue to provide the opportunity for lonely and isolated older people to get out of their home once a month and attend a local, volunteer run tea party. A crucial part of these groups is that we also provide the transport, with our volunteer drivers picking up and dropping off guests each month. The tea parties are the bedrock of what we do and whilst the development of call companions and our online groups is incredibly exciting, the tea parties are very much here to stay.

"I would feel more positive [about online activity groups] because I know that's what they're [Re-engage] geared towards, they're geared towards people like me."

The pandemic has left many older people feeling incredibly lonely and the closing of smaller, local charities and services only puts more older people at risk of becoming socially isolated and alone. In this context, the re-opening of our tea parties, development and expansion of our in-person and online activity groups and our telephone befriending service have never been more vital.

We now offer an increasing range of programmes, so, regardless of whether an individual is online or not, wishes to be so, or is staunchly averse to it, we support all and will continue to strive to reduce loneliness and social isolation for the oldest old.

I know that [Re-engage] will always be there for me because they've kept in contact all through this pandemic... I'm not forgotten.



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