



Digital inclusion for older people in Brighton & Hove

Local landscape and case study

INTRODUCTION

This report aims to present an up-to-date summary of the current state of play of digital exclusion for older people. This includes the latest national statistics; estimating digital exclusion among older people in Brighton & Hove; the latest trends regarding internet use and device ownership; and a practical case study focused on digital champion activity in Brighton and Hove City Council’s Seniors Housing schemes.

This report formed the basis of a Digital Inclusion Network Showcase organised by Digital Brighton and Hove and run as part of Older People’s Festival, which focused on how to best support people in later life to get online. This event highlighted the benefits and barriers for older people to get online, and showcased the range of different organisations and services in the city which provided continued digital support. Citizens Online, Brighton and Hove City Council’s Seniors Housing Department, libraries, Age UK, the Hop 50+, AbilityNet, the Hangleton & Knoll Project and the University of Brighton all contributed to the event.

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SUMMARY

INTERNET USE FOR OLDER PEOPLE - UK LANDSCAPE

- 3.7 million people aged 65 or over have never used the internet (31.3% of this age group)
- In other words, 83% of the 4.5 million adults who have never used the internet in the UK are aged over 65.
- The proportion of women over 65 who are regular users of the internet has almost doubled since 2011
Only half of disabled people aged 65 or over are used the internet recently
- 2 million disabled people aged over 65 have never used the internet
- The proportion of over-75s using tablets increased from 15% to 27%, and the use of smartphones nearly doubled, from 8% to 15%, between 2010 and 2016.
- The proportion of over 75s with a social media profile has nearly doubled – from 19% to 41% between 2010 and 2016
- However, “Most over-75s (51%) are ‘narrow’ internet users, meaning they typically carry out limited online activities - this compares to the average of 28%.”

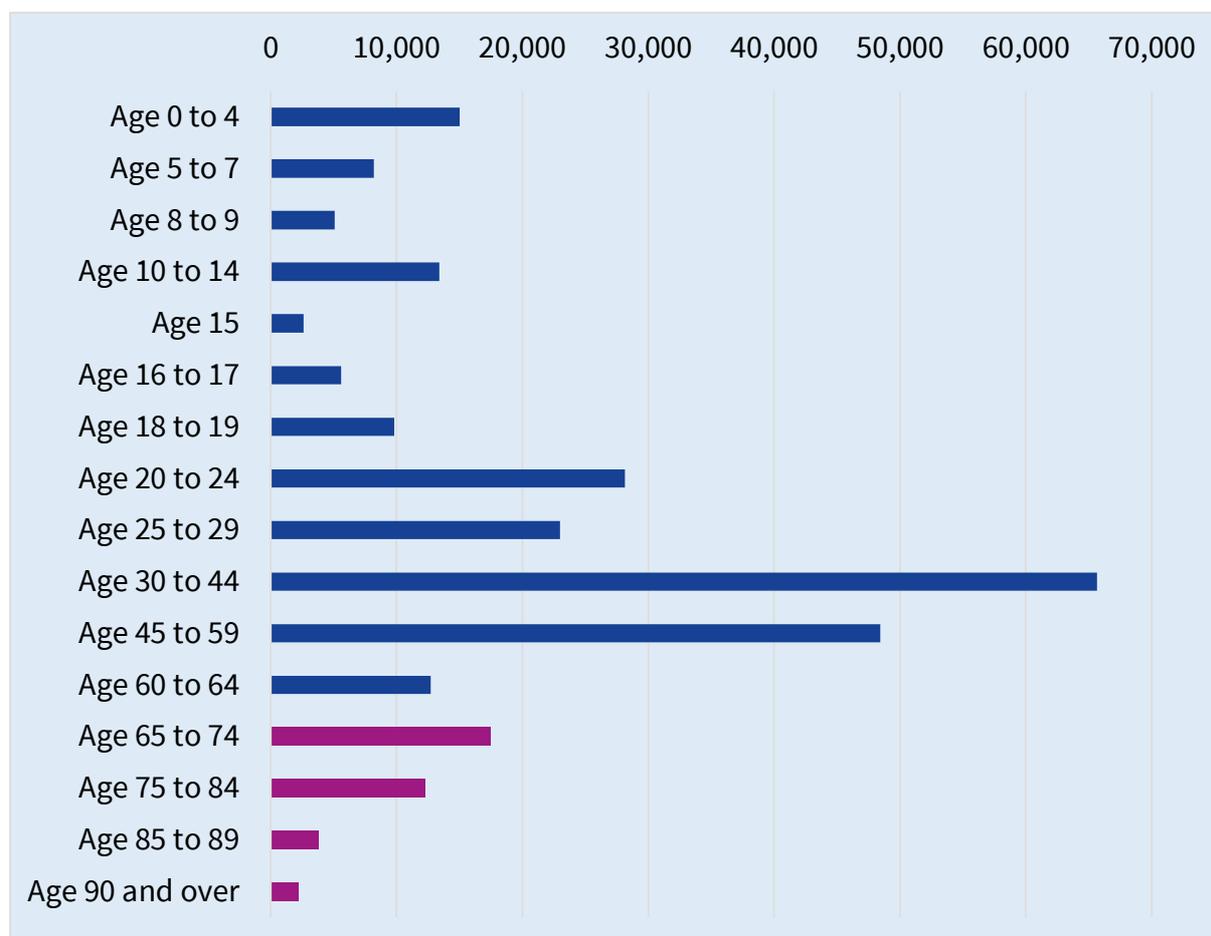
INTERNET USE FOR OLDER PEOPLE - LOCAL LANDSCAPE

- 38,300 residents of Brighton & Hove are aged 65 or over (13.3%)
- Of those, around 12,000 residents of Brighton & Hove will be people aged over 65 who have never used the internet (4.2% of the total population)
- Around 20,000 people aged 65 or over in Brighton and Hove lack at least one of the five Basic Digital Skills, with around half this number having no digital skills at all

POPULATION

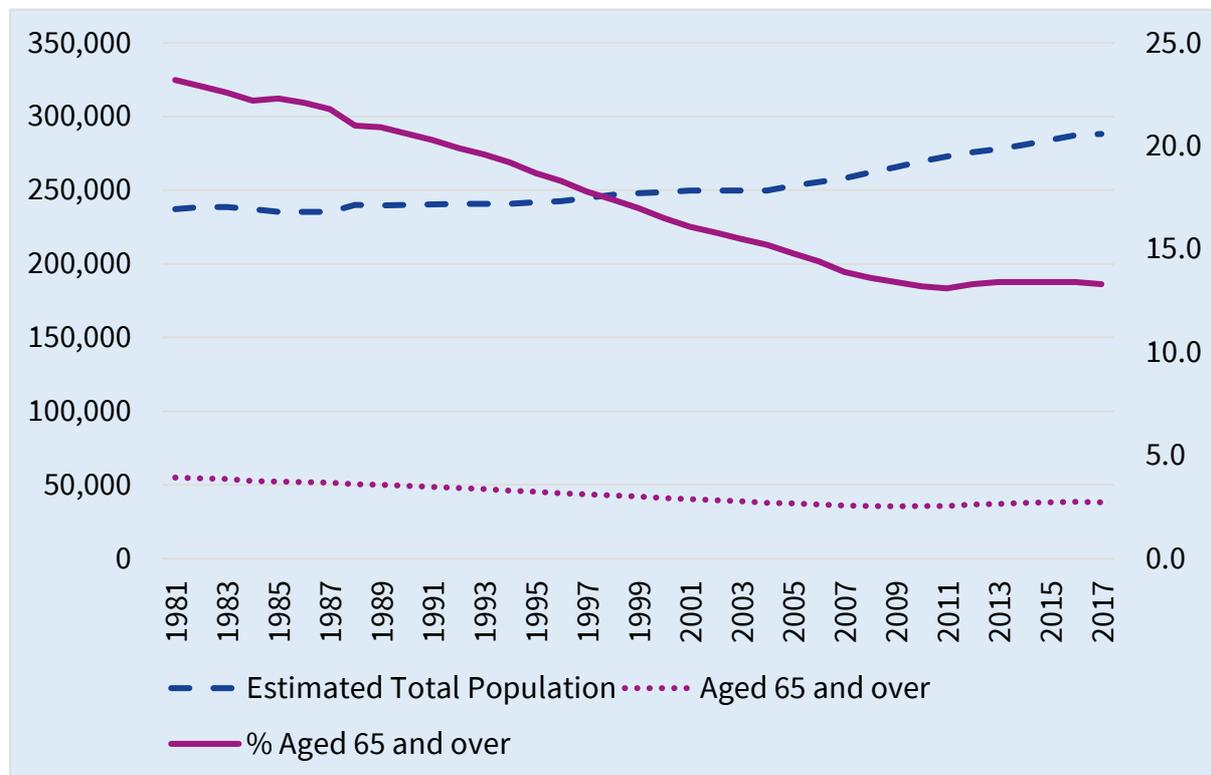
The 2011 Census recorded 35,692 people aged 65 of over who were “usual residents” in the Brighton & Hove local authority area. Together, people in this age bracket accounted for 13.1% of the population. Figure 1 breaks down the age structure in the 2011 Census in more detail. Figure 2 reveals that the estimated population aged over 65 in Brighton & Hove has plateaued over the last decade – between 13% and 14% - having been falling consistently in the previous two decades, from 23.2% in 1981. The 2017 ONS estimate is that there are now 38,300 residents of Brighton & Hove aged 65 or over.

Figure 1: Number of usual residents, by age band (Source: 2011 Census)



AGE: A FACTOR IN DIGITAL INCLUSION

Figure 2: Number (left-hand axis) and proportion (right-hand axis) of people aged 65 or over in Brighton and Hove (Source: ONS/Nomis)



ESTIMATING DIGITAL EXCLUSION AMONG OLDER PEOPLE IN BRIGHTON AND HOVE

INTERNET USE

Data from the Office of National Statistics on Internet Users (from the annual Labour Force Survey of 40,000 people) suggests that, across the UK, 89.8% of adults in the UK had recently used the internet in the last 3 months. The proportion who had never used the internet was estimated at 8.4% (4,497,000 people), with a further 1.6% who have not used the internet in the past three months¹. This percentage has been rising slowly but steadily

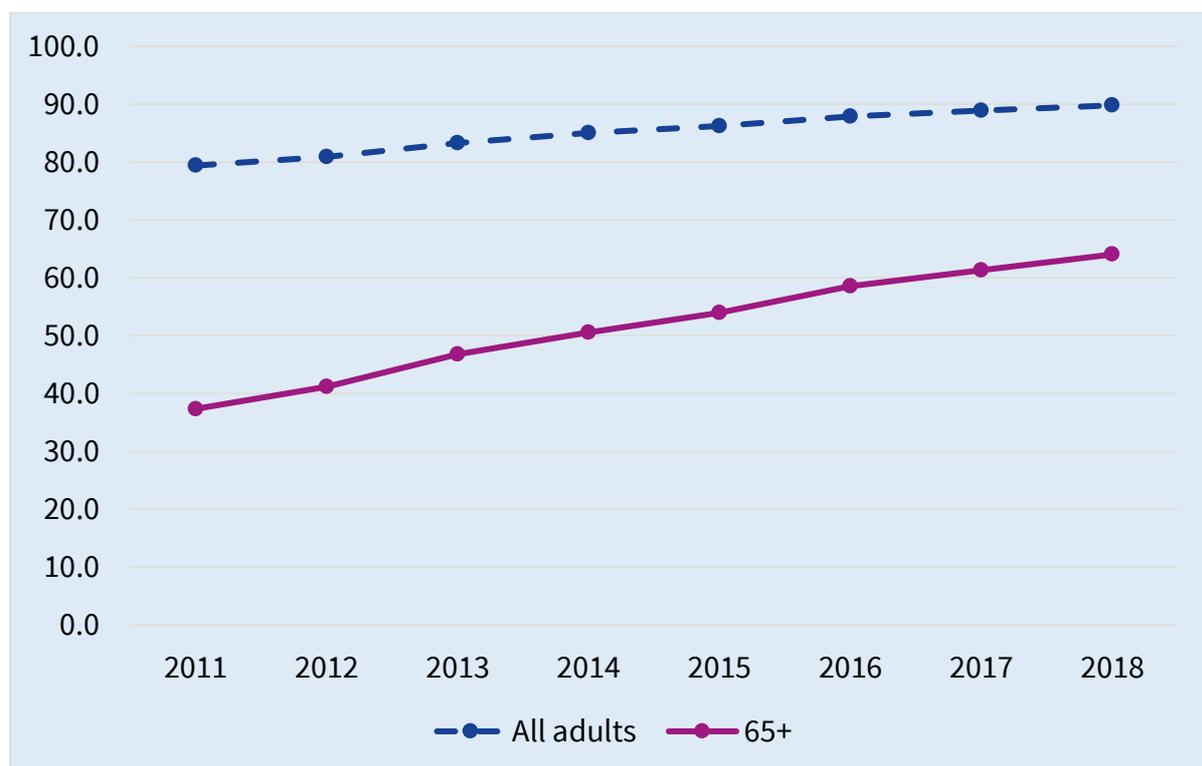
¹ ONS - [Internet users in the UK: 2018](#). Percentages sum to less than 100 due to the way ONS treats "don't know" responses. Years represent January to March 'Q1' period each year.

AGE: A FACTOR IN DIGITAL INCLUSION

in recent years, from 79.4% in 2011, i.e. by 10.4 percentage points (pp) or 1.5pp each year on average.

The **proportion of internet users is much lower among adults aged over 65 – of whom only 64% used the internet in the past 3 months in 2018** (figure 3). However, **there has been a more dramatic increase in internet use among over 65s than the general population over the past 7 years** – 26.7 percentage points or 3.8pp/yr – since 2011 when just 37.4% of people aged over 65 had recently used the internet. The **proportion of people aged over 65 who had never used the internet was estimated at 31.3% (3.7 million people)**, with a further 4.5% (535,000 people) who have not used the internet in the past three months.

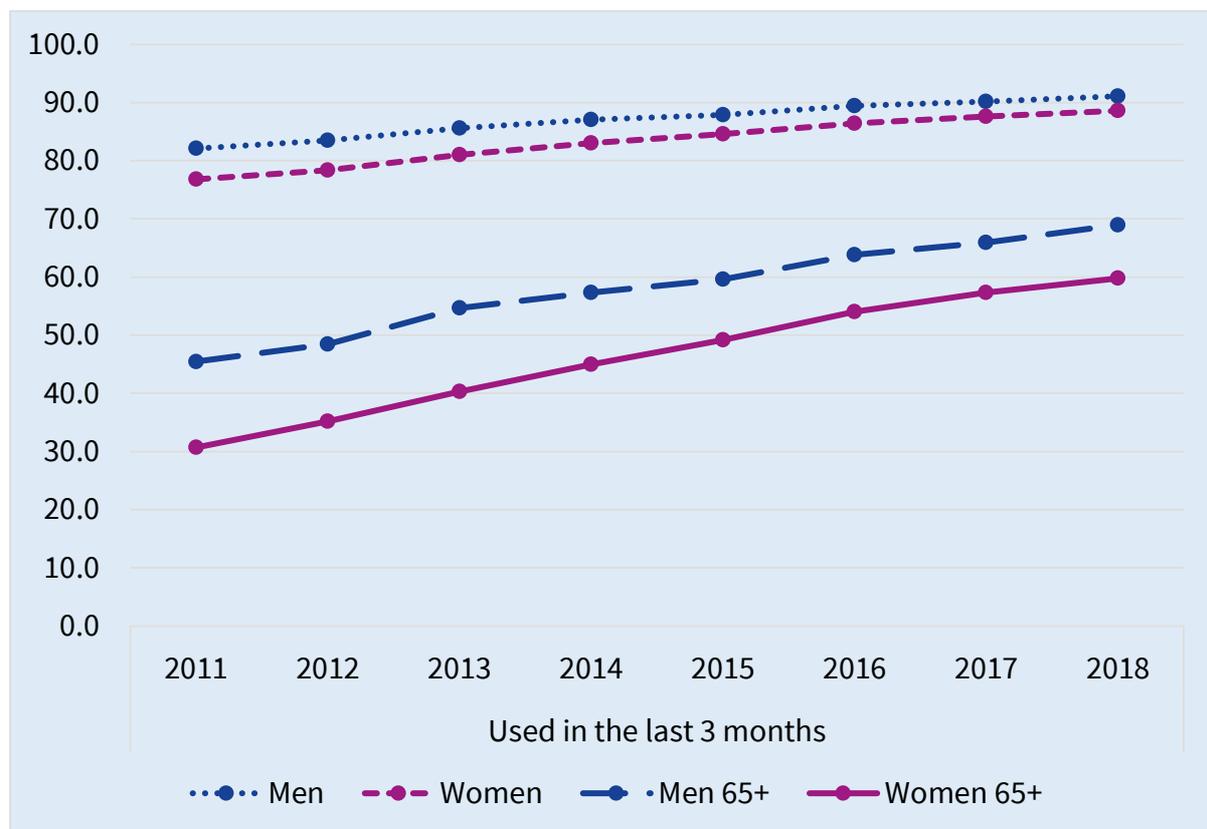
Figure 3: Used the Internet in the last 3 months, 2011-2018 (Source: ONS Internet Users/Labour Force Survey)



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Assuming this proportion applies to the people aged 65 or over in Brighton and Hove², we would estimate that there 24,512 internet users locally who are aged over 65, and **around 12,000 people aged over 65 who have never used the internet (11,988 people or 4.2% of the estimated 2017 population).**

Figure 4: Used the Internet in the last 3 months, 2011-2018, by gender (Source: ONS Internet Users/Labour Force Survey)



Further, while the gender gap is closing, it remains the case that fewer women are regular users of the internet than men (figure 4), and this is more dramatically the case among women aged 65 and over – 59.8% of whom have used the internet in the last three months, compared to 69.0% of men. **The proportion of women over 65 who are regular users of the internet has almost doubled since 2011** (up 29.1pp from 30.7%, rising on

² As age interacts with other factors such as income, disability and gender (the latter detailed below), the proportion may not apply evenly in Brighton and Hove. However, this calculation provides an approximate guide figure.

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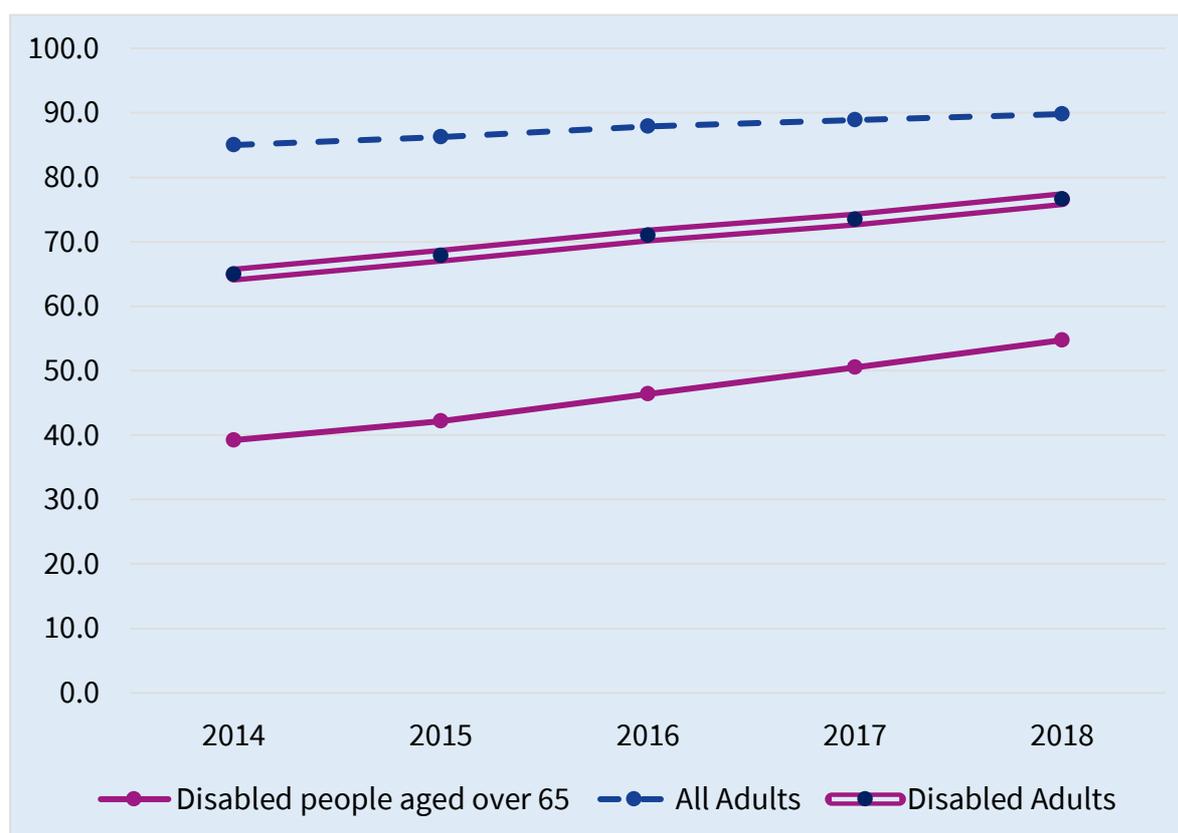
average 4.2pp/yr), at a faster rate than for men aged 65 or over (up 26.7pp from 37.3%, 3.8pp/yr).

Disability also interacts with age (Figure 5). While again the proportion of people who meet the Equality Act definition of disabled who are internet users has been rising (from 64.9% in 2014 to 76.6% in 2018), the proportion among those aged over 65 is much lower.

Just 54.7% of disabled people aged 65 or over are recent users of the internet.

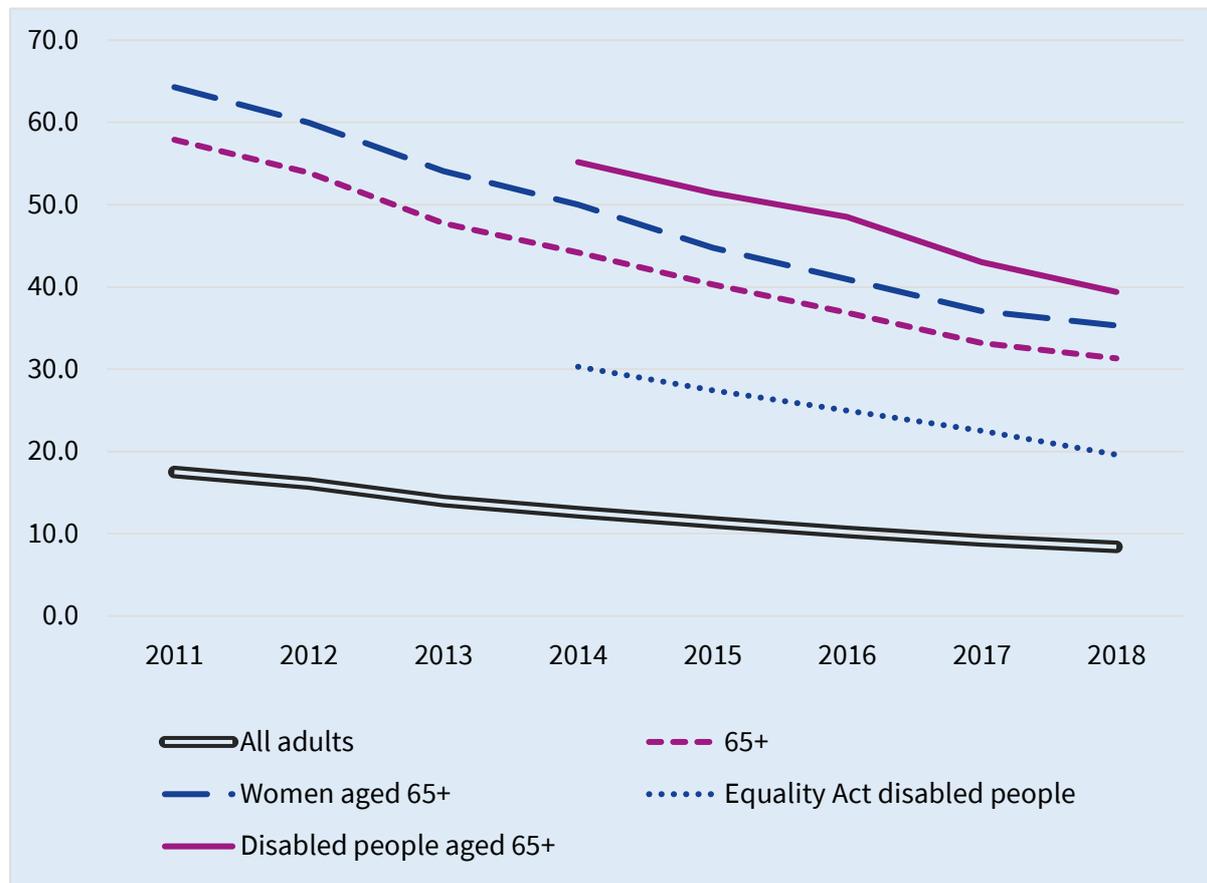
Further, while the proportion is again rising faster than for disabled people as a whole (15.5pp compared to 11.7%), it remains the case that **2 million disabled people aged over 65 have never used the internet.** Figure 6 presents a summary of the differences in proportion of people who have never used the internet by demographic group.

Figure 5: Used the Internet in the last 3 months, 2014-2018, by disability (Source: ONS Internet Users/Labour Force Survey)



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Figure 6: People who have never used the internet, by demographic, 2011-2018 (Source: ONS)



DIGITAL SKILLS

According to the 2018 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index, 79% of the English population has all five Basic Digital Skills. This figure is estimated to be higher in the South East at 86%. Both estimates have increased slightly since 2015, when doteveryone (then Go ON) estimated that 81% of the population of the South East have or claim to have all of doteveryone's five Basic Digital Skills (Managing Information, Communicating, Transacting, Creating, Problem Solving)³, and 77% of people in the UK as a whole.

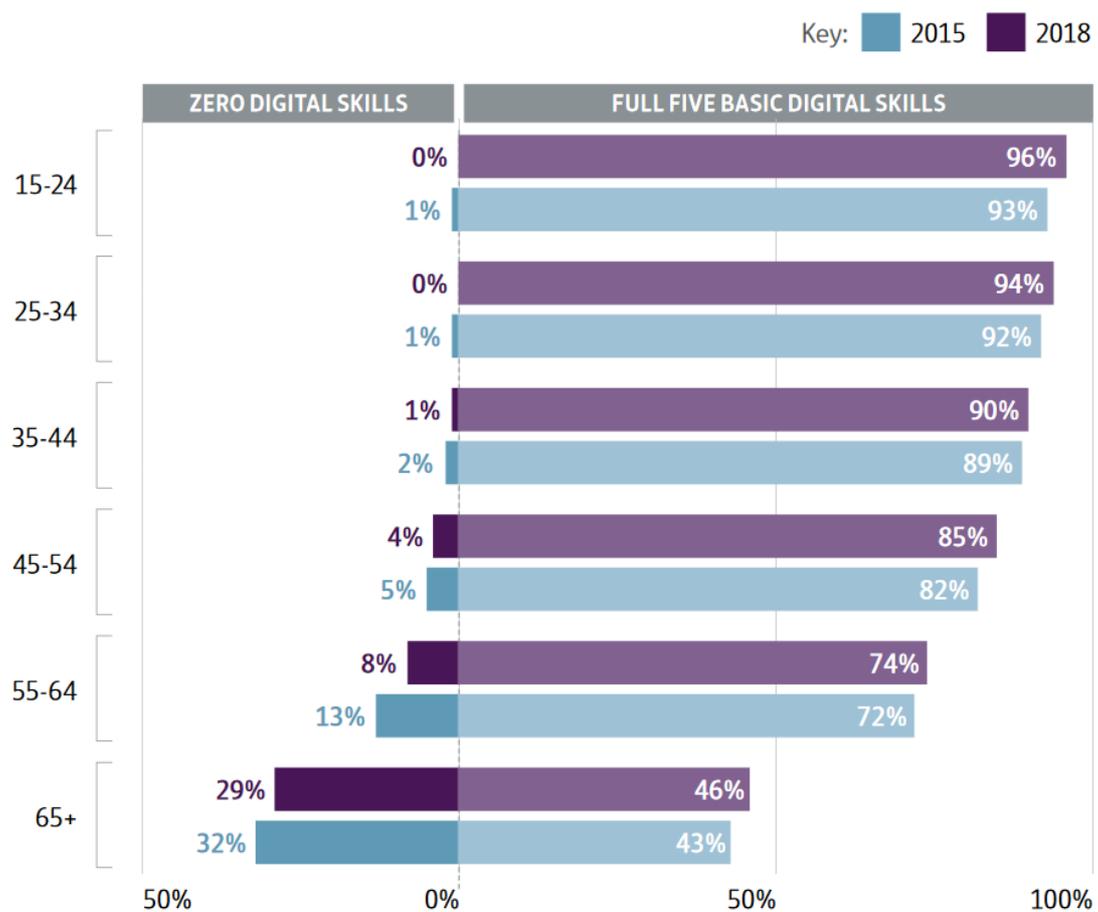
³ Lloyd's [Consumer Digital Index 2018](#) is based on Ipsos Connect's Capibus Tech Tracker survey, which involves 4,000 face-to-face interviews across the UK. Data on digital skills is not available for Brighton & Hove or smaller areas.

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However, the same research found **just 46% of people aged 65 or over have all five Basic Digital Skills**. Further, **29% of those aged 65 or over have zero digital skills**. Both figures have improved slightly since 2015, however, when only 43% were estimated to have all digital skills, and 32% to have zero digital skills (figure 7).

If these figures apply at similar proportions to the rest of the country, we would estimate that **around 11,000 people aged 65 or over in Brighton and Hove have no digital skills** (11,107 – a figure very close to the number who have never used the internet – 11,988). Further, **just 17,618 people aged 65 or over have all five Basic Digital Skills**. This means we would expect a further **9,575 people aged 65 or over lack at least one of the five Basic Digital Skills**.

Figure 7: Percentage Population missing at least one Basic Digital Skill, by age (Source: Lloyds Consumer Digital Index 2018)



DEVICE OWNERSHIP AND CONFIDENCE

Ofcom's annual [Adults' Media Use and Attitudes report](#), found that while device ownership remains low among older people there have been sharp rises. **The proportion of over-75s using tablets increased from 15% to 27%, and the use of smartphones nearly doubled, from 8% to 15%, between 2010 and 2016. The proportion of over 75s with a social media profile has nearly doubled – from 19% to 41% between 2010 and 2016.**

It is important to stress that, as Ofcom point out, device ownership does not necessarily imply people have the skills, confidence, understanding or motivation to explore the full range of benefits the internet can offer. New users may be less confident and lack skills that longer-term users have developed. Their skills may be limited to mobile devices, and potentially to a limited number of apps associated with these.

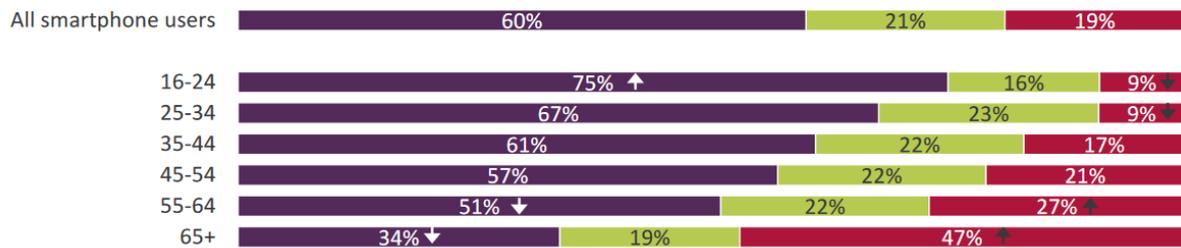
“Most over-75s (51%) are ‘narrow’ internet users, meaning they typically carry out limited online activities - this compares to the average of 28%.”⁴

The implications of ‘narrow’ internet use can be demonstrated with regard to the likelihood older people will check their mobile data allowance (just 34% of those aged 65 or over will, compared 60% of all smartphone users), and the use of public Wi-Fi (45% of people aged 65 or over compared to 82% of those aged 16-24, figure 8). The implication of this is that older people, like any group using the internet and digital devices for the first time, may require sustained engagement in order to build confidence and understanding of the possibilities opened for them through digital.

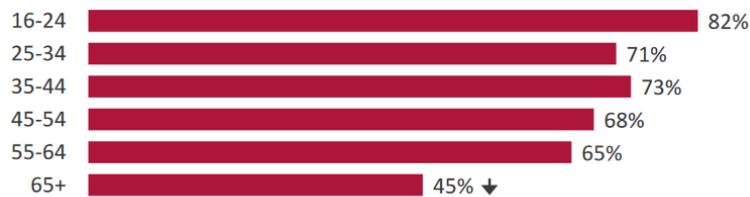
⁴ Ofcom, [Rise of the Social Seniors revealed](#), 20 June 2017.

Figure 8: 'Narrow' internet use by people aged 65 and over: checking mobile data allowance and use of public Wi-Fi (Source: Ofcom, 2017)

Checking mobile data allowance, by age



Use of public Wi-Fi



DIGITAL CHAMPION ACTIVITY

Working with Brighton & Hove City Council's Seniors Housing

CONTEXT

As well as providing an Internet Essentials course for older people in association with Age UK (now reaching its tenth edition) and digital gadget drop-ins at the Hop50+, Digital Brighton & Hove has also been working closely with Brighton & Hove City Council's Seniors Housing Department, providing digital skills support to residents through digital gadget drop-ins run by Digital Champions.

Digital Brighton & Hove has been active in **23 seniors housing schemes** in Brighton and Hove, with between 3 and 63 sessions taking place at each. In total **313 individuals were given digital skills support at 517 sessions** (204 sessions were repeat sessions with some of the individuals), with between 1 and 26 individuals being helped at each housing scheme (figures 9 and 10). That's over 30% of the total number of residents living in senior housing schemes (approximately 900).

Digital Champions, equipped with their tablets and personal wi-fi hotspots, provide personalised digital support within the communal spaces of the schemes, most of which do not have connectivity.

These digital gadget drop-ins are open to all and offer flexible one-to-one support enabling the end learner to get to grips with technology and the internet at their own pace, all in a flexible and informal learning environment. The sessions are based on helping older people find a hook which will help them see the value of being online and as a result, become more confident and engaged with the internet.

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Figure 9: Individuals helped, by Housing Scheme – chart (Source: Citizens Online/DCN, July 2018)

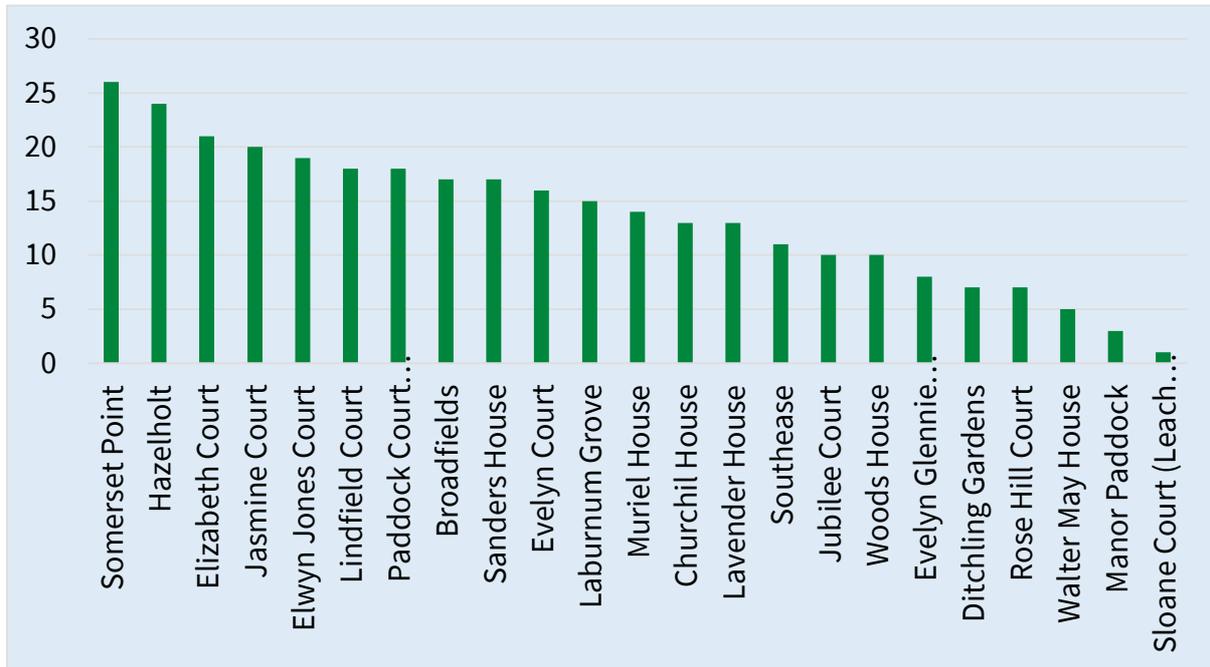
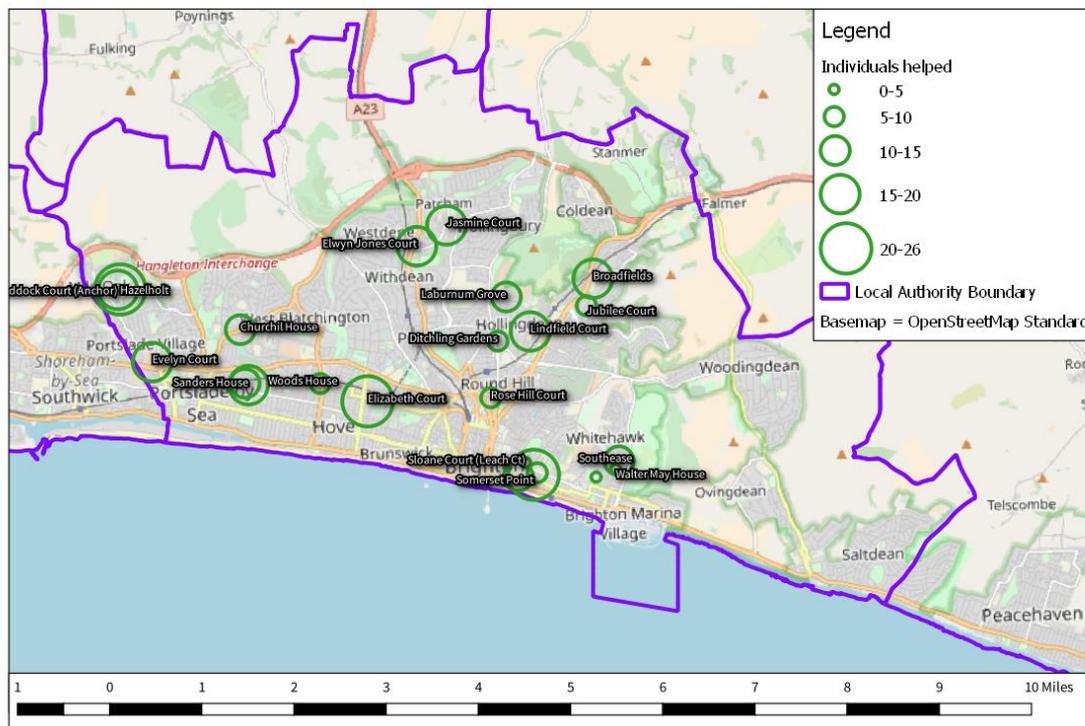


Figure 10: Individuals helped, by Housing Scheme – map (Source: Citizens Online/DCN, July 2018)

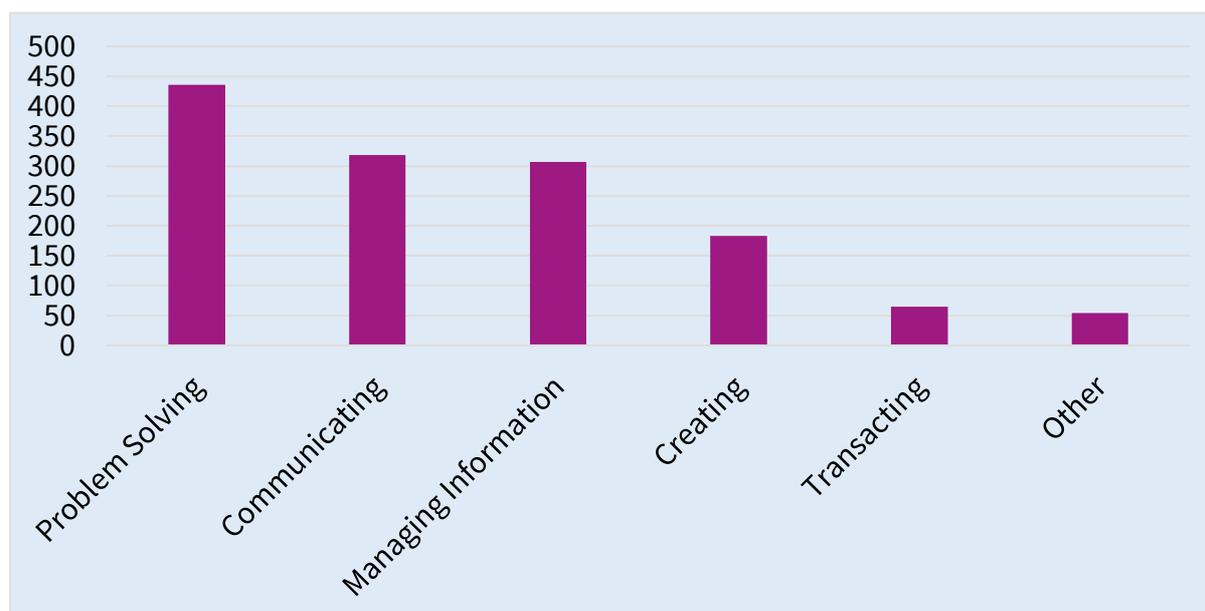
Individuals helped, by Senior Housing Scheme in Brighton and Hove



DIGITAL SKILLS

During those 517 sessions, the type of digital skills support that has been provided has been recorded using the [Digital Champions Network](#) (DCN). The DCN uses the classification system associated with the [Basic Digital Skills framework](#), which was used for a number of years before recently evolving into the [Essential Digital Skills Framework](#), hosted by the Department of Education. The five Basic Digital Skills categories used in the original framework were “Managing Information”, “Communicating”, “Transacting”, “Problem Solving”, and “Creating”. Each time a session takes place, Digital Champions can indicate which category the session involved help with – including an “Other” option, and free text box.

Figure 11: Type of Digital Skills support provided by number and proportion of sessions (Source: DCN, July 2018)



According to the original definition of the categories provided by Go On – the most frequently provided digital skills – “Problem Solving”, involves people learning to “Increase independence and confidence by solving problems and finding solutions using digital tools.” The next most frequent, “Communicating”, basket of skills includes being able to “Keep in touch using email, instant messaging, video calls and social media”, while “Managing Information” which featured in a similar number of sessions involves using search engines, comparison sites, bookmarking and cloud data storage. Skills associated

with “Creating” – publishing social media posts and sharing photo albums – were less common, with skills related to “Transacting” – managing bank and Universal credit accounts and shopping, came up least often.⁵ At the 54 sessions where the skills with which help was provided were marked at “Other”, popular topics included Passwords, organising notifications, issues with Sim cards and contracts, housekeeping of files and software and accessing online entertainment channels.

Anecdotally, Digital Champions report that individuals have needed the most help with the following skills:

- Connecting to Wi-Fi
- Installing Apps
- Understanding what ‘mobile data’ is
- Communicating using Facebook
- Basic Smartphone/Tablet use, and
- Setting up online accounts (e.g. email/social media/online shopping)

⁵ It is important to note that different Digital Champions may allocate a different session covering the same topics to different categories when recording their session on the Digital Champions Network. Further, records completed on the DCN represent only a fraction of the assistance that Digital Champions provide. As such, these figures provide a helpful indication of the range of support provided – rather than a definitive breakdown. The reality is that people require support with a range of different skills and tasks, and that these can change as the technology available changes.

CASE STUDIES

End Learner – Sylvie



Sylvie with Digital Champion Josie Jeffery

Sylvie is 88 years old and has lived in a Seniors Housing scheme in Hollingdean, Brighton, for a number of years. A keen IT learner and crochet enthusiast, she has been making the most of the monthly digital gadget drop-ins run by our community Digital Champion, Josie Jeffery, for the past six months.

Sylvie used to attend knitting craft sessions in her local community centre until her health prevented her from walking up the hill. She was then thrilled to discover she could learn more about knitting by watching online videos. She told us:

“I used to go to a community centre up the hill every Monday afternoon but the hill got too much for me because I have angina. So I bought a ‘Teach Yourself Crochet’ book as I don’t like to be beaten. Then I realised I could use my iPad to watch ‘How to knit’ YouTube videos but I was frustrated because I wasn’t efficient enough to know what I was doing.”

FINDING THAT HOOK TO HELP SYLVIE GET ONLINE

Through her passion for knitting, Sylvie is now learning how to search for information online and access YouTube videos using her iPad. By learning how to turn on her iPad, setting it up with her preferences and downloading Apps, Sylvie is making great progress by being shown how to do this by a Digital Champion rather than have someone do it for her. Sylvie explained:

“I feel like I am beginning to understand how the iPad works. Obviously I have a long, long, long way to go but it is becoming clearer. You explain it so clearly and because you make me do the same thing over and over again, it is a great help for me.”

TACKLING SOCIAL ISOLATION WITH DIGITAL

Sylvie’s own situation is a good example of how digital communications have helped her stay better connected with family, her health issues restricting her from going out and preventing her from seeing her grandchildren as much as she would like.

With a Digital Champion’s support, Sylvie has learnt how to make video calls and send direct messages with her Grandson using Skype. She has also learned how to compose emails and include emoji while writing to her granddaughter. Sylvia commented:

“My granddaughter and friend replied to the email I sent and they enjoyed the smiley faces I included - they replied and said ‘we got your email, well done!’”

Sylvie is looking forward to the next digital gadget drop-in so she can learn how to attach photographs to emails by using her iPad camera and share her favourite knitting images with her friends and family! Sylvie told us:

“My sessions with Josie has given me more interests, more contact and taken away loneliness [...] I consider myself extremely fortunate to have Josie’s help [...] I think the internet is amazing!”

DIGITAL CHAMPION PETER GREENFIELD

Digital Champions provide support both one-to-one and in group sessions in a relaxed, informal environment. They provide person-centred support which is learner-led.

The most important skill a Digital Champion can have is to be enthusiastic about the benefits of being online and be willing to share this with others.

INTRODUCING PETER



Peter Greenfield has been volunteering on the Digital Brighton & Hove project since October 2016 on an ad hoc basis.

Peter Greenfield during Volunteers Week by the derelict West Pier

With over 40 years' experience working in IT in technical and management roles, Peter was keen to start doing some volunteering as he reached retirement. As a Volunteer Digital Champion, he assists older people using smart phones and tablets, while also providing occasional help with Windows or Apple Laptops or PCs.

He currently visits senior housing schemes approximately once a week to run 'Digital Gadget Drop-ins'. During these drop-ins, residents can bring their own device and ask for help using them. From initial set up to support accessing the internet and downloading applications, Peter gets asked a whole range of questions on a range of different devices.

COMMUNICATION RATHER THAN IT KNOWLEDGE IS KEY

Peter has found that since starting to volunteer as a Digital Champion, one of the main skills he has learnt is how to best communicate with older people. As Peter explains:

“I have found that since volunteering as a digital champion, communicating with elderly people is a new skill I have started to learn. I believe this is just as important if not more so than assisting with the technology. Often someone has a device and no one has taken the time to explain to them in simple terms how to access a browser or what the internet can be used for - e.g. borrowing e-books from the library, communicating to friends and family via Skype etc.”

During his volunteering work, Peter also realised that while having an IT background might help to be a good digital champion, it is not a requirement for a volunteer:

“I have over 40 years working in IT across Mainframes, UNIX servers, Windows and MAC desktops in technical and management roles. I expected my IT experience to be a benefit to the role but I have not met a single person who uses a Mainframe or UNIX server and I doubt I ever will!”

CHALLENGES FOR OLDER PEOPLE – ONLINE SECURITY

One of the main issues that Peter has encountered while volunteering as digital champion is underlining the importance on online safety.

“The question I am asked the most is ‘I have forgotten my user ID and/or password’ - what do I do now? Resolving this issue can take a while. Forgotten passwords procedures usually send a link to an email. And when the elderly person can’t remember their email and/or email password this can be challenging.”

While there are software solutions that can be used to help people remember their passwords, Peter has noticed that many older people have more trust in a pen and paper which can prove challenging when mislaid!

LEARNING FROM PROFESSIONAL DIGITAL CHAMPIONS...AND ONLINE!

Peter's main training has come from shadowing one of Citizens Online's Professional Digital Champions, Glenn Lloyd, which has helped Peter become more confident in his own role as Digital Champion.

"I have watched how Glenn interacts with the elderly people and helps them with their devices. This hands on approach with a professional Digital Champion has proven to be a very effective training method."

Peter also finds a lot of support online working through the courses on the Digital Champions Network website. He has found some of the courses like 'Engaging with older people' useful when it comes to learning how to best communicate with elderly people, some of which have difficulty recalling information.

As well as the Digital Champions Network website, Peter also turns to Google and youtube for technical help and further problem-solving.

"When I have been asked a question I can't answer, I have, so far, always been able to find an answer online somewhere".

CONCLUSION

This report gives only a flavour of how digital champions are supporting people in later life to get online by working collaboratively with the council's Seniors Housing department. A greater proportion of older people are accessing the internet than ever before partly due to the rise of smartphones and usage of tablets. Having said this, many new users are 'narrow' internet users and over 80% of all non-users are over 65s so there are still many barriers, like online safety, to getting online.

The benefit that both learners and digital champions have gained is indicative of the value of a digital champion approach can have in tackling digital exclusion for older people in a local area.

Providing continued digital support to older people like Sylvie can become the norm by working closely with staff and ensuring that they themselves have the confidence to share their digital skills with their service users. This will enable Sylvie to learn more and quicker in a comfortable and familiar learning environment. Soon enough, Sylvie could even have the confidence to become a Digital Champion for her friends and neighbours, and start sharing her new digital skills with confidence.