



Digital Lives of Older Adults with Learning Disabilities

IncludeAge Inclusion of diverse older people in community and public places and virtual spaces

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What we did

- We interviewed 79 older people with learning disabilities about their lives.
- 42 of these recorded their online and offline experiences in the 'place study'.
- People told us about using technology and their online lives.

What we found out

Theme 1 Technology is part of Everyday Life

- Using technology is part of everyday life and routines for some people.
- Some people do not use technology but do not always see this as a problem.
- Using or not using technology is often quiet and taken for granted.

"That's what I do really. I come here, see people, then I go home and watch TV. I'm happy doing that." (IA838)



Theme 2 Leisure technologies support people to use time well

- TV, YouTube, and games help structure the day.
- These activities give people something to do and felt worthwhile.
- People enjoyed and felt comfortable using familiar technology for leisure.

"If I'm on my own, I'll watch films or videos (on Youtube) because it keeps me busy... the time goes quicker." (IA838)



Theme 3 Phones and messaging support social connection

- People used technology to stay in touch with friends and family.
- People checked in between seeing each other and maintained their relationships.
- Technology supports existing social ties. People feel remembered and safe.

"I just WhatsApp people now and again. Keep in touch with me friends." (IA811)



Theme 4 Support, gatekeeping and getting older shape access

- Support can make technology easier to use but gatekeeping can stop use.
- Family, staff and younger friends supported people to use technology and apps.
- Using technology can take more effort as people age.
- People limit use and make boundaries to protect themselves from online risk.

"If I get stuck, they help me. The younger ones show me what to press." (IA843)

"Texting's hard, I get the shakes ... buttons are small ... I give up." (IA836)

"I only talk to people I know. I don't talk to strangers online." (IA837)



Theme 5 A changing digital world can leave people behind

- Many older people with learning disabilities feel ok without much technology.
- Services expect people to use technology more. This is called 'digital-by-default'.
- This is a problem because people will be left behind and not included.



Take Home Message

- Some older people with learning disabilities use technology many don't.
- Lots of things stop digital inclusion. These include choice, fear, gatekeeping, and things being digital-by-default or hard to use.
- Digital Inclusion needs accessible technology, good support, chances to learn digital skills and good experiences with technology.

