



Ageing Better Middlesbrough

Covid-19 Digital Inclusion Support – Case Studies

Our Community Development Team have purchased 4G enabled digital devices and given these to local older people who are motivated to get digitally connected but are unable to afford it. Devices are pre-programmed with apps specific to the requirements of the person, so that people can get started as quickly as possible. Examples of the pre-programmed apps include Gmail, Google Classroom, Zoom/Skype, WhatsApp, You Tube, BBC News website, NHS website. There is also link to the individual's GP website and pharmacy website links for repeat prescriptions. For people looking for work, the team add on the Universal credit app, National Careers Service, North East Jobs, Indeed website links. Games apps are added for some individuals who enjoy games or as a useful way of learning how to use the device.

Enid

“Having the tablet has been a great thing. I have a brother and sister living in Australia, and for the first time I have been able to see pictures of them and their homes and watch some lovely videos.

The tablet has also allowed me to join in with church services and prayer meetings, maintaining this connection has been so important to me during the lock down period.

I've also enjoyed watching some really interesting art sessions, and plan to try out some of the techniques I have learned.”

Martha

“It's been brilliant, I have done my first ever online shop and that's been fantastic. I don't have to rely on others and can maintain my independence.

I can keep in touch with family, especially my grandchildren in Manchester, through WhatsApp video calling and I can send and receive photos, which is so lovely.

The advice and support to help me learn has been marvellous, having everything set up on the tablet has been so good, I couldn't have managed to do all that on my own.

Receiving the tablet has kept me going, it's been an absolute lifeline.”

Sonia (Digital Volunteer) supporting Martha and Enid

It has been lovely to share the learning journey of both ladies, I have heard all the wonderful stories of their achievements and the joy and pride they have felt with each one. Maintaining contact with their loved ones has meant so much to them, and both tell me how much this has helped with the loneliness of lock down.

Both ladies tell me how much they want to continue to build on their IT learning and are excited about all the new things they will be able to do in the future.

John (Digital Volunteer) supporting James

Everything is going great with James. He has come on leaps and bounds. He is really chuffed with himself. He took the tablet out on Sunday to Cod Beck and Whatsapp'd his son using video to show him the area. I've installed the apps on his tablet, so he is playing games etc. We're moving onto responding and constructing emails next week.

He is always full of thanks to you guys, and me. I keep on telling him it's a two-way street. I get just as much out of it as he does.

We spent a few hours on the phone, just generally putting the world to rights, and navigating some simple websites. He knows how to enter web addresses. He has given his friend his email address so we can access a website for his old war photos, and meeting events.

I have a feeling he is going to get a lot out of the service. He certainly likes the phone calls as it's the only interaction with someone he gets all week.

Justine (Digital Volunteer) supporting Brenda

Everything is going well with the calls to Brenda and I was pleased that she had video called her granddaughter last week, as she was so happy in her voice when she told me this.

I think a little social chatting (the weather) at the beginning of each session has helped the relationships develop and this helped when Brenda unexpectedly cancelled the sessions. I was able to ask her the following simple questions 'how are you' and 'are you ok' and hopefully gave Brenda the opportunity to say if she was struggling or needed help.

Listening to what Brenda wanted to learn and a step by step approach, reiterate and practicing is the key in her learning. Preparation is also required and have a comfortable seat/refreshments available and IT systems i.e. phone/laptop available and charged up. Informal approach is required, as be prepared for the other person to take a break to stretch their legs/ answering doorbells/pets needed to be attended to and leave you on the telephone waiting .or suggest to them you both have a break and you will contact them again in 15 mins.

David Thomas (Digital Inclusion Officer) supporting Albert

Albert received support to help setup a men's social/games group in Coulby Newham to meet weekly at Sunnyside Community Centre. This was just starting to take off when the Coronavirus struck. Albert had a group of about a dozen men who were meeting up to socialise and play games. During lockdown he lost contact with the majority of the members.

Anna Carruthers (ABM Project Officer) referred Albert to me after hearing about his situation during a befriending call. I delivered him a tablet and supported him initially with a few phone calls to help him get started on WhatsApp and access his emails.

He has really enjoyed using the tablet and has now managed to connect with 5 members of his social group on WhatsApp. They regularly chat over messages and video call each other. It has made a massive difference to all the group being able to stay in touch and support each other through the lockdown. He has also been engaging with the Google Classroom, downloading the puzzle games, leaving comments, and keeping fit with Jennifer's chair exercises.

He has now been assigned a Digital Volunteer who calls him once a week. During her first call she helped him join a Zoom meeting for the first time.

Laura Gooderham (Digital Inclusion Officer) support Karen

Karen only got issued her tablet last Wednesday but by Friday she was taking part in ABM's Zoom bingo. This was a fantastic achievement as before Wednesday she had never used a tablet before. There is only one computer in her house which is her husband's and she is not allowed to use it. She had to ask him to do anything online which was frustrating for her. Now she has the independence to go online herself. She wants to be able to video call family and friends and be able to order groceries on the Morrisons App. She has now been assigned a Digital Volunteer who will help her achieve all she wants to, using the tablet.