

# Technology and Social Connectedness



The T&SCon project, led by Dr Louise McCabe and a team from the University of Stirling, explored the potential of technology to support social connectedness for adults living in Scotland and will produce a toolkit for organisations and individuals looking to use technology in this way.

## What we did

Scoping of academic and grey literature to elucidate the current state of play

Four focus groups with stakeholders from across Scotland providing technology enabled support

Secondary analysis of HAGIS dataset to understand the scope and patterns of social isolation in Scotland

Co-creation workshops with service providers and clients to develop toolkit for services using technology to address social isolation.

## Literature review

Our scoping exercise identified a wide range of UK-based and international technology-based or technology-enabled services and interventions designed to support social connectedness and targeted at different adult user groups. However, there is relatively little research evaluating the effectiveness of such services or interventions reported in the academic literature.

Identified publications most frequently describe the development and small-scale piloting or prototype testing of services to support older people's social connectedness through internet-based services with little discussion of the scalability, sustainability or practical implementation of services.

## HAGIS

- The scope and patterns of social connection in Scotland were identified using Healthy Ageing in Scotland (HAGIS) – a comprehensive survey of adults aged 50+ years across Scotland<sup>1</sup>.
- Six distinct patterns (profiles) of social connection were identified.
- Social connection is distinct yet inter-related with loneliness (see Figure 1. Patterns of Social Connection & Loneliness In Older Adults in Scotland. Source: HAGIS)
- Many older people use the internet or email to some extent and access it from their own homes.
- The most common use of the internet in older people is to send or receive email, find information on goods or services, and shopping. However, those with the fewest social connections were also least likely to use the internet for email or to seek information.

Figure 1. Relationship between social isolation and loneliness

