

Technology and Social Connectedness



Guidance for organisations and individuals using technology to promote social connectedness



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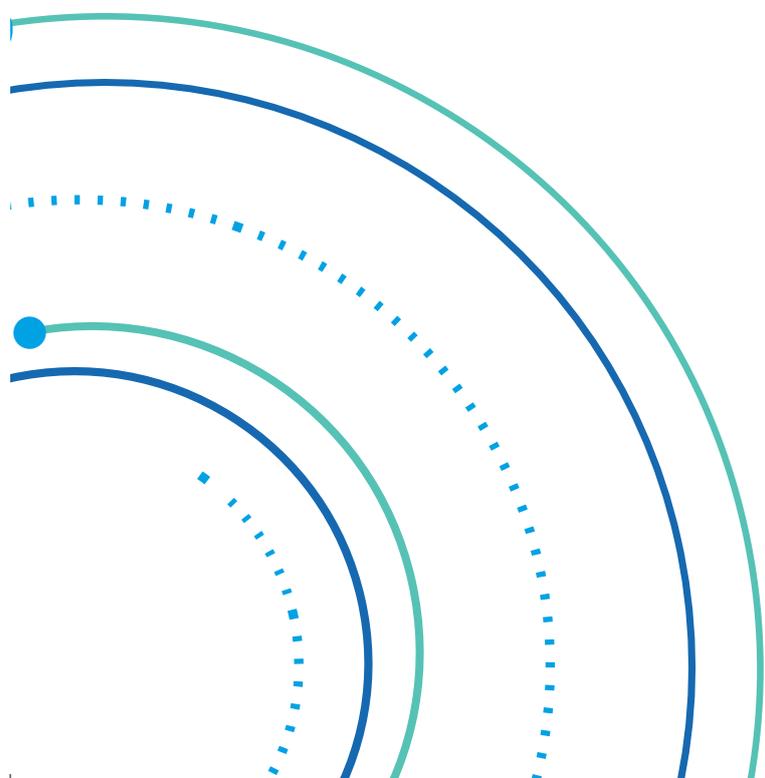
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Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to provide a short, easy-read document that individuals and organisations can use to plan and develop projects or services that use technology to promote social connectedness for adults.

The guidance has three main parts: a 'how to' guide focusing on who, what, why and how a service or project might be set up; a series of three case studies; and access to the evidence that underpins this work.

The guidance is best accessed online to enable access to the evidence base and recommended online resources. Online resources are provided from known, high quality sources and the links provided are at an organisational level to minimise the risk of weblinks changing or resources being moved.

Figure 1. Guidance schema



Setting up a service

The following sections focus on four key aspects of a new project or service:

Who? What? Why? How?

At the start of each section we present the recommendations from the T&SCon project, highlighting the relevant parts that are addressed within each section of the guidance. Across the guidance we provide reflections and resources to address all aspects of the recommendations.

Who?

PEOPLE: recognise potential users as individuals, avoiding assumptions about age, gender, disability etc, and protecting human rights.

RISK: careful consideration of risks for individuals is needed but balanced presentation of risks, taking account of individual choice, is important.

PARTICIPATION: get staff and potential users on board from the start, involving them from the planning stages onwards.

SYSTEMS: carefully assess infrastructure as well as devices for cost, accessibility, suitability and usability.

TRAINING: users will need support and training to use new devices, peer-to-peer learning, hands-on demonstrations, and simple take-home instructions are recommended.

Understanding who the intended users of a service are is a critical part of design process. The research evidence tells us that service take-up will be affected by the choice of technological device as well as characteristics of the potential users relating to their experiences and personal characteristics. It is important to explore this question thoroughly. Knowing who will use your service will allow you to design us appropriately and build and necessary flexibility into your service.

It is important not to make assumptions based on who potential users will be, but to question stereotypes and to base service design decisions on an informed understanding of your potential users.





Table 1. provides a checklist of questions to help you fully understand your service users

Table 1. Identifying your service users

User characteristics to consider	Relevance to service design
Age	Older users are at increased risk of age-related changes in sensory function, e.g. sight loss, hearing deficits, etc. which may require adaptations in devices or interfaces, e.g. larger text on written materials and display screens. Younger users may have different preferences for ICT (Information and communication technology) devices or modes of interaction. Avoid assumptions, such as thinking older adults may be less willing to use technology, there are many older people who are very enthusiastic about technology and also many who are not.
Gender	In group settings, the mix of genders among participants may influence someone's willingness to connect and/or share information with others. Some studies have suggested that gender may affect technology device preferences.
Religious and Cultural Beliefs	Religious or cultural beliefs may make potential users uncomfortable with some service models, causing them to self-select out of interventions, e.g. where individual ICT training is delivered by a member of the opposite sex.
Willingness to try new things	Researchers have suggested that some people are more willing than others to try new things and that this character trait might influence technology use more generally. This could be important if the user does not have prior experience of the technology you plan to use.
Emotions or moods	Negative emotions or moods can affect potential users' motivations to interact, their sense of self-esteem, self-efficacy, etc. and users may need additional encouragement to interact. Users may feel nervous or anxious about getting involved in something new.
Sensory impairments	Some users may require changes or adaptations in how they interact with technology devices.
Long-term health conditions	Long-term health conditions may affect users' abilities to sustain participation in services, e.g. attending regular training sessions at a location other than home, or to use different modes of communication, e.g. people with aphasia may not be comfortable using audio-based or audio-visual modes of interaction.
Issues with manual dexterity	Issues with manual dexterity, e.g. stiffness of hands due to arthritis, may impact on users' ability to successfully use devices such as a keyboard, a computer mouse or a mobile telephone.
Household or personal income	This will be relevant to potential users' abilities to purchase their own devices or pay for services.
Previous use of ICTs	This should be considered as mixed ability groups can be demotivating for less experienced users. Further, lack of previous experience may leave users vulnerable to or anxious of risks, e.g. of online financial exploitation or abusive interactions on social media.
Ownership of ICT-based devices	This may reflect a level of familiarity / experience with the owned devices (although this should not be assumed without further questioning). This may also influence your choice of what devices to use.

What?

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The what of technology devices is almost endless...but there are some key questions you need to ask before selecting a device. It is important to be aware of the various users of any device and also to think about the type of device; its cost, availability, compatibility and usability. Findings from the RemoDem and RemoAge project suggested that mainstream technology is more user-friendly, cost-effective and has better support available than more bespoke technology developed for a particular user or user group. However, what you choose will depend on the specific project.

Many technology options use existing operating systems and Apps that can be downloaded onto a phone or tablet computer, using a widely utilised system such as Apple or Android. This has helped to reduce earlier issues where new devices needed to use or link into existing systems, however, wider infrastructure issues around the availability of broadband as well as security issues within systems mean that infrastructure is still a consideration when thinking about what technology to employ.





Table 2. below provides important questions for consideration when choosing a device.

Table 2. Considering which device to use

Issues	Questions to ask/issues to explore
Cost	What is the initial cost?
	Are there ongoing costs relating to support services or up-keep for the technology?
	Who will meet the different costs?
Users	Who is the user and what are their particular needs? (sight-loss, hearing loss, poor dexterity, learning disability, cognitive impairment, etc.) – see previous section on ‘who’?
	What type of support does the user have at home or in their neighbourhood for using technology?
Support	What kind of technical support is available for this device?
	How can the user access this support?
	Does the user or those supporting them require training to use the device? If so, who will provide this training, where, when and at what cost?
Infrastructure	Does the device need to link to ICT infrastructure such as phone or broadband or other devices? If so, have you checked the compatibility between the device and the necessary systems?
	Does the device require a strong Internet signal to function? If so, is one available in the location the device will be used? What happens to connectivity when the user goes out and about?
Device options	Is it necessary to invest in a new device or are there existing devices that can be adapted to the relevant task? (For example, by providing a user-friendly interface on an existing computer or tablet computer).

What is being used already?

There is a vast amount of information on different technology devices that can have a role in supporting social connectedness. From this project you can access the literature review for examples of technological devices that have been tested and evaluated through research and the technology scoping dataset for recent information about projects promoting social connectedness. These can be accessed at www.tec.scot

Recommended online resources - technology

There are also organisations and groups providing reliable information online for those interested in using technology for care and support. These organisations do not focus on social connectedness specifically but offer information on technology for a range of uses including social connectedness. A short description is provided for each. These resources have been recommended by project team members and stakeholders involved in this project.

atdementia

www.atdementia.org.uk

The website offers an easily accessible guide to different technologies to support people with dementia and is regularly up-dated by the team at the Trent Dementia Services Development Centre.

Alzheimer Scotland: Staying Independent resource

www.alzscot.org/living-with-dementia/staying-independent

This website provides real life reviews of technology products that have utility for people with dementia and their families.

Ask Sara

www.asksara.dlf.org.uk

Ask Sara offers an online assessment that provides recommendations about potentially useful technology products for people of any ages and needs.

Recommended online resources – social connectedness

It is also useful when thinking about what to use and why to link to organisations working towards greater social connectedness. These organisations may not have an interest in technology but provide important information about social connectedness, social isolation and loneliness. The resources listed here also include recent policy documents from England and Scotland that provide the wider context to work taking place across the UK to address loneliness. Both of these strategy documents note the potential of technology to reduce loneliness and social isolation.

The English government strategy: A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2018)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/750909/6.4882_DCMS_Loneliness_Strategy_web_Update.pdf

The Scottish Government Strategy: A Connected Scotland: our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections (Scottish Government 2018)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/connected-scotland-strategy-tackling-social-isolation-loneliness-building-stronger-social-connections/>

Campaign to End Loneliness

The campaign offers advice and resources to organisations working to address loneliness and also campaigns nationally for this purpose.

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org

The social prescribing network

Social prescribing is increasingly used by GPs and other health professionals as an alternative approach to supporting people facing social isolation. The social prescribing network consists of professionals and academics and provides a range of information and resources about this approach.

www.socialprescribingnetwork.com





Why?

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TRAINING: users will need support and training to use new devices, peer-to-peer learning, hands-on demonstrations, and simple take-home instructions are recommended.

It is important to be clear about the why of your service. What is it that you hope to achieve and for whom? Setting out your objectives as part of the service design process enables you to give consideration to the changes that you want your service to make to its users' social connectedness and how you will measure and evaluate 'success'.

One way of setting out the objectives of your service is to use the 'SMART' objectives model. This asks you to consider whether your objectives are sufficiently Specific, Measurable, Achievable (i.e. technologically possible), Realistic (i.e. achievable with the resources available to and constraints imposed on your service), and Timed (can be delivered within an appropriate timeframe).

Table 3 sets out the elements of the SMART objectives model together with a list of questions that you might want to ask yourself in relation to each.

Table 3. Checklist of questions for developing SMART service objectives

SMART objectives element	Questions to ask in addressing this element for your service
Specific	<p>Who is this service for?</p> <p>What will they receive from this service (ICT hardware/software/support)?</p> <p>What benefits will they experience as a result of receiving this service (e.g. maintained or increased social connectedness, enhanced ICT use skills, personal satisfaction, meaningful occupation, creation of a digital profile or other assets)?</p>
Measurable	<p>How will you know that the expected benefits have been achieved?</p> <p>Can you measure these benefits directly, or is there a related benefit that would indicate success?</p> <p>Are available measures suited to your service and to your service users, can they be modified to better suit and if so, how?</p>
Achievable	<p>How do you know that what you want your service to achieve is actually possible?</p> <p>Is there published research evidence that supports your belief, and how strong is that evidence?</p> <p>Do you have evidence of the acceptability of this type of service to your intended user group?</p> <p>Are there other similar services that have proved to be successful in other locations?</p>
Realistic	<p>Do you have the finances required to implement and sustain your service?</p> <p>Do you have the manpower and the skillsets necessary to design, implement and sustain your service?</p> <p>Do you have an appropriate level of motivation and support from users and other stakeholders to be able to achieve your desired outcomes?</p> <p>Is it possible for your service to provide the outcomes that you want in the time available?</p> <p>If the answer to any of the previous questions was 'No', what are you going to do about it?</p> <p>Are there characteristics of your intended user group that would make achieving your outcomes more challenging, and what are you doing to address those challenges?</p>
Timed	<p>When do you expect your service outcomes to first be measurable?</p> <p>When do you expect your desired outcomes to be achieved?</p> <p>How long do you have funding for your service, and what can you achieve within that timeframe?</p>



How?

PEOPLE: recognise potential users as individuals, avoiding assumptions about age, gender, disability etc., and **protecting human rights**.

RISK: careful **consideration of risks** for individuals is needed but **balanced presentation of risks, taking account of individual choice**, is important.

PARTICIPATION: **get staff and potential users on board from the start, involving them from the planning stages onwards**.

SYSTEMS: carefully assess infrastructure as well as devices for **cost, accessibility, suitability and usability**.

TRAINING: **users will need support and training to use new devices, peer-to-peer learning, hands-on demonstrations, and simple take-home instructions are recommended**.

It is important to consider how your service may impact people or their views of using it. What concerns may users have of using technology? How can your service address these concerns? How can your service promote confidence in using technology?

Protecting human rights

It is widely recognised that using technology to promote social connectedness brings risk as well as benefits. Therefore, when using technology or thinking about using technology for this purpose it is important to consider and protect individual human rights within the project. Various organisations across the UK provide advice and guidance on human rights and how to ensure they are protected.

Equality and human rights commission

The commission provides a huge range of resources to support individuals and organisations in ensuring that people's human rights are protected.

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Citizen's Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/civil-rights/human-rights/what-are-human-rights/

Citizen's advice provides practical advice on protecting human rights.

Scottish Human Rights Commission

The Scottish Human Rights Commission provides information and resources to support the protection of human rights of people living in Scotland, including training materials for those working with older people.

careaboutrights.scottishhumanrights.com/welcomepage.html

Scottish Care

In Scotland, Scottish Care (the umbrella organisation for third sector care organisations) have campaigned for better recognition of human rights within care services.

www.scottishcare.org/top-row-ctastop-item-1care-home-week

Risks – considering and balancing

There are clear risks relating to the use of technology to support social connectedness, as highlighted in the findings from the focus groups and co-production workshops in this project. These risks were both about individuals (such as protecting people from scams and abuse online) and organisations (ensuring data is handled properly and online activities are secure).

Minimising individual risk

There are many examples of guidance to minimise risk when online – a selection of the best-evidenced ones are provided in the links below. Many online guides are aimed at children and parents so there is less choice when thinking about safety for adults. The participants in this project did, however, stress that it was important not to over-emphasise risk and to cause people to be afraid of accessing the Internet. A balance needs to be reached and it is important to support people to make their own choices about risk.
Guides to safe use of the Internet:

AgeUK Staying Safe Online

www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/work-learning/technology-internet/internet-security

Connect Safely Safety Tips

Although this is an American organisation much of the advice is applicable to all regions.

www.connectsafely.org/safetytips

Minimising organisational risk

One of the most relevant pieces of recent legislation when setting up a technology project to promote social connectedness is the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation. GDPR provide guidance and rules about how personal data is collected, managed and stored.

The full UK government guidance can be accessed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/711097/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr-1-0.pdf

But more accessible guidance can be accessed at these links:

www.hipaajournal.com/gdpr-for-dummies

www.vpngeeks.com/beginners-guide-gdpr





Participation

Another important factor to consider in how a technology project is developed is the involvement of the different stakeholders including the end users and the frontline staff. There are many toolkits and resources to support participatory, co-production approaches to service and intervention development. The links below give you access to some of the best of these.

IRISS co-production toolkit

www.iriss.org.uk/resources/tools/co-production-project-planner

Independent Living in Scotland toolkit

www.ilis.co.uk/get-active/publications/co-production-toolkit

The Scottish Co-production networks provide a range of information and resources to support co-production

www.ilis.co.uk/get-active/publications/co-production-toolkit

Involve is a key organisation to access when working collaboratively. Involve provides advice, information and resources to support participatory approaches to research. While the focus of their work is research there are many lessons that can be drawn between research and services development and the level of expertise within Involve is invaluable to any co-production project. www.invo.org.uk

In order to support full participation in digital activity, the Scottish Government has developed a **Digital Participation Charter** with a set of resources to support both organisations and individuals to ensure that they are digitally included. The charter and resources can be found here.

digitalparticipation.scot

Training

Findings from the focus groups and co-production workshops suggest that hands-on demonstrations and peer-to-peer learning are the best approaches to training for technology use as well as simple, written, take-home instructions as an ongoing reminder.

There are many examples of Internet training for older people and other groups of adults, some of these are listed in the Technology scoping dataset (www.tec.scot). These training programmes appear to work best when delivered peer-to-peer, for example, older people teaching other older people. The two organisational case studies (pp13-15) in this guidance provide examples of Internet training for older people, with the use of peer educators by Roar (case study B).

If there is a need for guidance to use mainstream technology then Digital Unite offer a useful range of online guides for using different types of everyday technology and applications.

www.digitalunite.com/technology-guides

These guides could be adapted for peer-to-peer learning or to support a hands-on demonstration of technology. They start from the very simplest 'How to turn on a computer' through to more specific guidance, for example, about different operating systems.

Case studies

Three case studies are presented here. The first two are of services currently running in Scotland where the focus is on the use of technology to support social connectedness. Both projects are working with older people. The third is a fictitious case study of an individual we named Alan that was co-created by a range of stakeholders including service users in the second co-creation workshop.

Case study one: organisation A

Project title and name and role of organisation(s) involved.	<p>Project title: CLASP Digital - a project managed by CLASP – Community Led Action & Support Project</p> <p>Role: Delivery of digital skills support sessions to people wishing to learn more about the use of digital devices and the internet in general.</p>
Who is the project for?	<p>Residents of North Ayrshire. Initially the support was intended for all ages but in practice over 90% of users are over 65 years of age.</p>
Why was the project set up and what were the main aims?	<p>Set up in response to a consultation of service users of another CLASP project who requested support to learn how to use their smart devices and access the internet safely.</p> <p>The aims are to support the social inclusion; financial inclusion and health and wellbeing of participants through enhancing knowledge, skills and experience in using the internet.</p>
What technology and other resources are utilised in the project?	<p>The project has access to a number of iPads and Android tablets, together with a portable Wi-Fi hotspot for learners to use but in practice, almost all participants have brought their own devices.</p> <p>Local to Stevenston, CLASP provides a venue for learners and tutors to meet. Elsewhere in North Ayrshire, we have negotiated free access to a range of venues including community centres, church halls, a day-care centre for the elderly, and local authority libraries & ‘community hubs’.</p>





How is the project delivered? (please include information on project funding here as well as other aspects of the delivery)

CLASP Digital is funded through the Scottish Govt.'s Digital Participation initiative. The 2-year funding commenced on 1.8.17 and ends on 31.7.19.

The project lead is the Digital Participation Coordinator who arranges 1-1 and small group learning sessions in response to advertising campaigns, referrals from external agencies & other CLASP projects, and word-of-mouth contact.

A team of volunteer Digital Buddies, specially trained by the Coordinator, support the project, working one-to-one with learners.

Sessions are one hour long and cover skills and topics gleaned from the Essential Digital Skills Framework and presented with reference to CLASP Digital's own Bronze, Silver & Gold skills levels. The Bronze skills are reviewed at the initial session as a baseline indicator, after which learners attend six sessions before the skills are reviewed again to measure progress.

Once learners decide to disengage, or if they have reached a level of capability beyond 'Gold', they are asked to complete an Impact/Exit form to record their thoughts on their experience with CLASP Digital.

What have been the key successes of the project?

137 registered participants
 1325 engagements
 12 Trained Digital Buddies
 100% positive feedback from learners. The most common cited the following:

- one-to-one delivery;
- patience of tutors;
- progress at learner's pace;
- greater abilities in keeping in touch with family and friends

Celebration Event when 13 learners were presented with Certificates of Achievement.

What have been the key challenges in the project?

The primary challenge has been the lack of self-confidence in learners. It can be very difficult to convince a learner that s/he is not the only person finding it hard to get to grips with their device and that all the people they see using their phones and tablets, and who they think are whizz-kids, have had significantly more time to acquire their digital skills.

Another issue concerns the peaks and troughs of numbers of interested parties. Without a continuous advertising campaign it is a challenge to attract a regular flow of new learners. Most of CLASP Digital's learners arrive via word-of-mouth.

Case study two: organisation B

Project title and name and role of organisation(s) involved.	Stay Mobile Stay Connected Roar – Connections for Life Ltd
Who is the project for?	Older people
Why was the project set up and what were the main aims?	Roar has identified a correlation between mobility in its widest sense and reducing loneliness and social isolation. The project aims to enable older people to be as Physically, Socially, Cognitively, Digitally and Logistically mobile as possible because this will enable them to be more connected and less isolated and lonely
What technology and other resources are utilised in the project?	Our main digital ambition is to encourage as many older people as possible to get a smart phone, learn how to use it and to keep it on and with them at all times. We also deliver a range of tablet classes, digital inclusion for people with a visual impairment and use technology as part of lifelong learning across our groups and projects
How is the project delivered? (please include information on project funding here as well as other aspects of the delivery)	Roar has a Digital Participation Officer who was funded last year from our own income but now funded by Renfrewshire Council. Our project is delivered through engagements sessions, classes and in partnership with libraries We are part of a network called DigiRen where we work together on promoting Digital Inclusion and tackling inequalities
What have been the key successes of the project?	More older people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - report having, using and keeping a mobile phone with emergency numbers on them during the day - can use email - can get on line (either at Home or in the library) - Can use an App
What have been the key challenges in the project?	There are unfortunately many challenges. Many older people will not be convinced to use technology, those who may consider it will be put off by any cost for a service to help them, there are challenges with creating groups for training because older people learn at very different rates. There is fear about using any financial services or ordering shopping – which could be necessities for future independence Achieving the outcomes to secure funding is very challenging

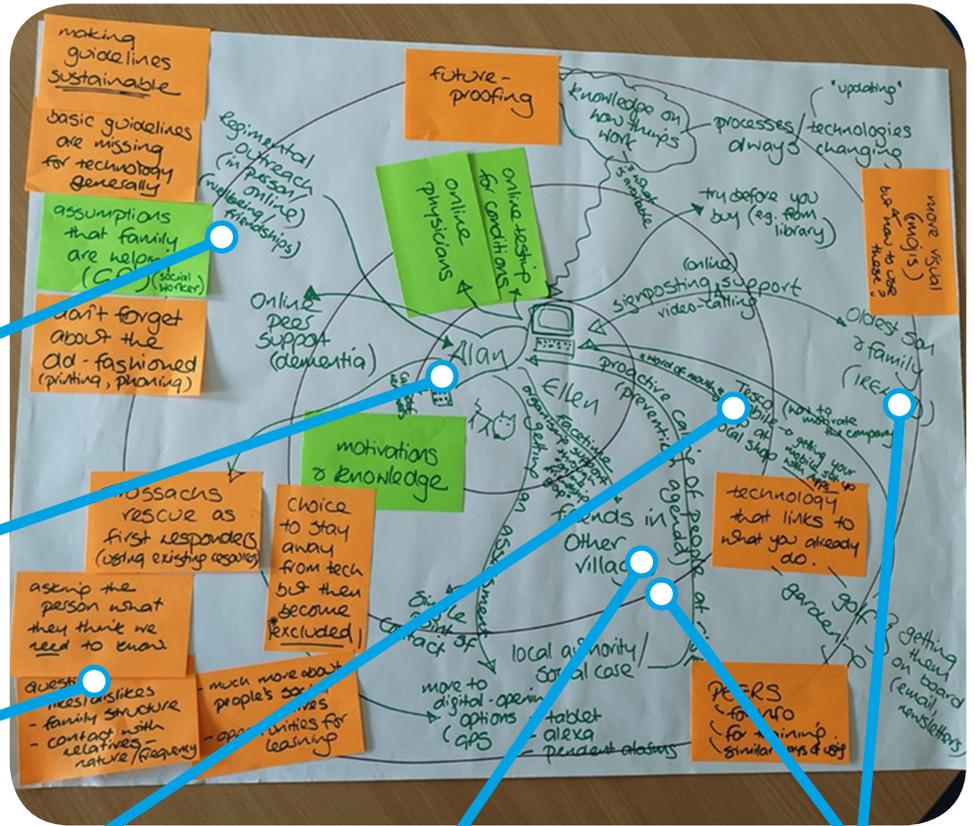
Case study three: Alan

Alan is a 78-year-old man who lives in a rural village in Scotland. Alan lives with his wife Ellen and they have small dog. His oldest son lives in Ireland with his wife and two children and his youngest son lives in London.

Alan's previous employment might provide potential routes for social connectedness through social media.

Alan uses his PC for emails, booking holidays and banking and his mobile phone for staying in touch when out and about.

It is important to get to know the person to understand how technology might be best used.



Case study three

Use local resources such as local businesses which can offer help with technology use.

Find technology that links to things Alan does already - does the golf course have a Facebook page or online newsletter?

Suggested use of video calls to link with friends in other villages, now driving is more difficult, and with sons living at a distance.

Evidence base

Here we provide persistent links to the detailed information collected during the first stages of the project, this includes the full report from the project providing detail on what we did and the main findings from the project; database of technology projects collected during the scoping exercise; supplementary materials explaining the literature review process; a database of literature that was reviewed; and a more detailed presentation of the HAGIS survey analysis with additional tables and figures presented.

The full project report, the technology scoping database, the literature review database and supplementary material, and the HAGIS survey analysis supplementary material can be accessed here: www.tec.scot



