

## Workshop 4 – Tackling Loneliness: the role of technology

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In lots of ways technology has connected us more than ever before, with people able to speak to, and see, family living on the other side of the world, receive instant messages from friends, join online communities, and find out about groups and events of interest to them nearby. Whether young or old, people are now able to keep in touch with friends and family and feel part of a community – whether that is the community where they live or a global online community of people who share their interests. And whilst this isn't a substitute for human interaction, for some, particularly people with mobility issues, it can also give them the means to be able to continue to make an active and valuable contribution to society.

However, physical human interaction in the form of face to face contact has been shown to be important for all of our physical and mental well-being - in particular for those at risk of social isolation. As the physical is increasingly replaced by the digital this can result in some unintended consequences such as a reduction in places and opportunities for people to connect; an increase in cyber bullying and us all being less physically active preferring instead to spend our leisure time on-line.

### **Technology; share one thing that demonstrates technology to you?**

Participants responses:

- Alexa
- Smart Phones
- Video Calls
- Tablet
- Face time
- Social Media
- Virtual reality goggles
- Life-line pendant

- App that monitors child's mobile use
- Fit Bits/GPS Watches
- Tinder
- Meet up
- Facebook
- Wearable medical technology
- Camera
- Accessibility

**Do these things make you feel fearful or optimistic? Points from discussion (Q – posed as a question, C- comment, CS – case study)**

- Q – Why are there concerns around connections when there are so many digital connections?
- Q – Role of technology in overcoming isolation?
- C- Technology is an opportunity, the benefit is how we use it.
- CS – Shared story of group of individuals who met on line.
- C – Challenge is human behaviour; trolling, faceless views, how we respond is crucial.
- C- 50% of people are connected online, age differentiation and financial ability to purchase.
- C- Trend moving towards more voice automation rather than tablet access.
- CS – Exploring ways technology can support community connections for those not able to physically access their wider community.
- Q – How do we use technology to enable what we do rather than as a replacement that displaces other activities?

### **Alexa Demonstration**

The demonstration showed how Alexa could be used to order food from a local shop and how it could be used to call someone.

**Participants were split into two groups and asked to consider:**

### **Good Practice (+ & -)**

- Face Time – Increased contact time between grandparents and children
- Reducing distance – calls/FT/FB etc.
- Using App's – Weightwatchers connecting users and turning into 'real life' meeting up.
- Potential to have more connected platforms – fed by fire, post service – can they use info they know to flag concerns (e.g. fire service flagging isolated people).
- Technology working to alleviate concerns ie transport linking to the community directory and bus route's (Disability forum engaged).
- Station View – venue to use technology and try it out.
- Too much choice
- Not aware of what is happening on NYCC Platform, NYCC broadband provision map – useful for partners to see.

## **Assets & Gaps in North Yorkshire**

- Encouraging non-adopters to embrace technology
- Where people don't have wifi
- Overcoming fear of what can happen on line
- Lending technology rather than purchase.
- Equipment Gap sensory conditions
- Community directory being used better
- Using Alexa in a better way – not to replace face to face but add on.
- Infrastructure not equipped in all areas (super-fast broadband)

## **Opportunities for working together**

- Building confidence in users across many partners.
- Demonstration events – showing people how things work, that it can be easy, - produce a pack to take around lunch clubs etc..
- Collate data and share in a better way – cheaper more up to date mapping.
- Need to have same standards to capture data and link to google
- Technology needs to work for individuals
- Demonstration space
- Home platform that educates what is available- empowering individuals to have choice & engage
- Educating individuals
- Using existing technology- face book/workplace platform
- Building confidence, partners promote good news stories as a collaborative approach.