Evaluating the success of digital intervention activities when supporting older adults with online media literacy in the Highlands

Red Chair Highland Project Evaluation

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents an in-depth evaluation of a multifaceted digital intervention program implemented by Red Chair Highland, and commissioned by Ofcom, aimed at enhancing digital literacy, cyber resilience and promoting digital inclusion among older adults.

Red Chair Highland is a micro social enterprise, delivering digital inclusion services across the Highland region. Commissioned in 2023 by Ofcom, Red Chair joined their Making Sense of Media initiative to evaluate the success of different digital intervention activities when supporting older adults with online media literacy.

The project comprised five key digital intervention activities: One-to-One Support, Cyber Resilience Workshops, Community Outreach Sessions, Device and Connectivity Provision, and Remote Support, each playing a pivotal role in empowering older adults to navigate the digital landscape safely and confidently.

Red Chair engaged with 290 older adults across urban and rural settings within the Highlands Older adults from all age bands were engaged, with notable success with supporting individuals aged 70 and over. Cyber resilience workshops attracted more of this older age group than any other activity. More women than men engaged with the project across all activity strands.

Through a mixed-method evaluation approach, Red Chair aimed to understand what impact the project had on its participants, what worked well, less well and what could be improved. Evaluation design was supported by a rapid evidence assessment, a theory of change statement, key evaluation questions and an evaluation framework.

Findings

One-to-One Support sessions were critical in supporting older adults to become safe, confident digital users. It offered personalised assistance tailored to the specific needs of participants and fostered individual empowerment and confidence in using digital technologies. Patient, kind, non-judgemental, individualised support was critical when it came to delivering successful, impactful digital support to older adults. 74% of one-to-one support participants said they felt very confident or fairly confident using the internet after our support, compared to 42% before. On average, participants reported a 51% increase in the number of digital tasks they were able to complete, and a 70% increase in the number of online activities they participated in after our support. Whilst participants were overwhelmingly positive about the digital support received, the data showed that there is a misalignment with peoples perceived confidence in keeping safe online or in recognising a scam, and their actual abilities and knowledge. Some overestimated their abilities, and an equal number of participants underestimated their skills and knowledge. From this we can see that more work to keep older people informed of online threats and risks is required, along with efforts to improve their learning reinforcement and retention.

Cyber Resilience Workshops provided structured learning sessions covering topics such as online safety, scam awareness, and media literacy. Results demonstrated knowledge and confidence gains among participants, although a gap between perceived confidence and actual knowledge highlighted the need for enhanced learning retention strategies. 72% of participants felt very confident or fairly confident in keeping themselves safe online after our support compared to 24% before. 76% of participants felt fairly confident in recognising a scam or online threat after our support, compared to 16% before. We delivered more cyber resilience workshops than originally intended as these were extremely popular and well attended by older adults. The key to successful engagement through Cyber Resilience Workshops was in part due to our ethos of 'going to where the people are' instead of waiting for them to come to us.

Community Outreach Sessions offered drop-in digital support at various locations, addressing immediate needs, and facilitating progression to more intensive support options. The sessions were particularly impactful in rural areas, where access to digital support was often extremely limited. Taking services to where people are instead of asking them to travel to access digital support was effective. Of older people who attended community outreach drop-in digital support sessions, 33% had their issue resolved at a single session. However, this was not as successful as anticipated - most older adults multiple, regular sessions to improve their digital skills and confidence.

Device and Connectivity Provision played a crucial role in bridging the digital divide by providing older adults with devices and connectivity. Tailoring devices to individual needs was essential, underscoring the significance of accessibility features in enhancing usability. 98% of participants used their device daily or more often after our support, compared to 72% before.

Remote Support, delivered via phone, email, or video calls, catered to individuals unable to access physical services due to geographical or other constraints. While successful for those with prior face-to-face support experience, remote support methods faced challenges in addressing digital literacy issues for those lacking foundation digital skills. Remote digital support was found to be mostly ineffective where participants had not already received one-to-one support to help them build a certain level of digital literacy first.

Red Chair Highland distributed almost 1200 printed resource sheets during the project. These resources were designed to help reinforce learning from workshops and one-to-one sessions and they were intended to help older people retain learning after support was delivered.

Conclusion

Overall, each digital intervention activity demonstrated advancements in improving digital literacy, confidence, and online safety awareness among older adults. One-to-one support and cyber resilience workshops were especially impactful. The project successfully engaged participants across diverse settings and underscored the importance of tailored interventions and personalised support in promoting digital empowerment. The report emphasises the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of older adults in an increasingly digital world.

For Red Chair Highland as an organisation, we intend to refine our services based on the findings of this report to consider the areas for improvement highlighted by project participants. This includes seeking to deliver more cyber resilience more regularly in both urban and rural areas, planning to

increase individualised one-to-one support capacity and seeking ways to engage more older people in the digital intervention services, in particular older men. In addition, by incorporating more interactive digital activities into workshops, ensuring ongoing device and connectivity provision, and expanding device support service, Red Chair Highland can further enhance learning retention and digital empowerment in older people.

Ideas for Action

This project has produced several Ideas for action for Red Chair Highland and for other organisations supporting older people with digital and online media literacy.

Red Chair, other organisations and researchers could consider how to increase engagement with older men and increase focus on gender-specific support. Red Chair and other organisations supporting older adults could seek develop targeted services to encourage older men to engage in digital support activities, such as promoting the benefits of digital literacy for hobbies, interests or practical tasks that align with traditional masculine roles. Men only groups could be targeted such as The Men's Shed locations. This report shows that significantly more older women than men engaged with our services.

Researchers and organisations could consider how to improve the efficacy of remote support for individuals unable to access physical services, while acknowledging its limitations without prior face-to-face interaction. This report shows that remote digital support is only effective where previous face-to-face support has been given.

Red Chair and other organisations should consider development of tailored digital support services specifically designed for older adults, considering their unique needs, challenges, and preferences. These services could include a mix of different activities to cater to different levels of digital literacy and confidence. This report highlights that that individualised, one-to-one support was highly appreciated and considered very important by participants.

Red Chair and other organisations, especially those serving remote and rural communities, could consider the expansion of rural community outreach digital services to ensure access for older people living rurally. Regular, reliable, consistent rural digital support for older adults could have considerable impact on those who lack digital skills and confidence. This report evidences that taking digital support services to older people in their community was impactful.

Advocating for the importance of digital inclusion initiatives for older people at the policy level to ensure adequate funding, resources and support for projects aimed at bridging the digital divide will raise the profile of, and highlight the importance of, digital inclusion initiatives.

Introduction

Red Chair Highland

Red Chair Highland is an established social enterprise delivering digital inclusion services, based in Inverness, and serving the Highland region of Scotland.

It delivers services to the digitally excluded community through device and connectivity programmes, device setup services, digital skills workshops, cyber resilience training, foundation digital skills training, digital life task support and one-to-one digital support. Working with an extensive network of referral partners, services are delivered in their busy Digital Hub in Inverness and at community locations in both urban and rural settings across the Highland region.

Service users are made up of people who are digitally excluded due to a variety of reasons; financial constraints, disadvantaged circumstances, those in a time of crisis and those who do not have the skills or abilities to access the digital world. Older people make up the biggest service user group and are often wholly unfamiliar with using digital devices, the internet, and digital services.

Ofcom Initiate

Red Chair Highland was commissioned by Ofcom in January 2023 to participate in their Making Sense of Media programme.

Making Sense of Media is Ofcom's programme of work to help improve the online skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children. This project was one of thirteen projects commissioned in December 2022 to improve media literacy skills across four cohorts:

- Older adults
- People living with disabilities, learning disabilities or cognitive impairment
- Children and young people
- Communities experiencing financial disadvantage

Red Chair Highland committed to working with Older People to evaluate Online Media Literacy Interventions for Older Adults. We essentially took Ofcom along with us on our digital inclusion work, gathering data on older adults who interacted with our services to allow evaluation of the impact of digital inclusion interventions on older people in terms of supporting them to be safe, confident digital users.

Context and Need

There are 3 million people currently offline in the UK (ONS 2020). Of these, 32% are aged 50-69, and the majority (67%) were aged 70 or over. (Centre for Ageing Better- COVID-19 and the digital divide).

Our work evidences the need for digital inclusion projects and the positive impact they have, particularly on older people who are often on their own and socially isolated. We have found from our analysis that most people we support are over 50 (72% 2020-2022).

The older people we support have consistently shown to need support with the 3 elements of digital exclusion- lack of kit, lack of online skills and confidence, and lack of connectivity. We have found that older people need targeted support with online safety and consumer behaviour, education about scams and fraud, and with disseminating online information. Recent interactions with service users have identified a rising priority due to the cost-of-living crisis. A focus on consumer behaviour such as managing energy accounts online has emerged as an urgent need. Older people especially are less likely to use smart meters and to utilise online account management.

Centrally based in the Highlands in Inverness, we work across the Council area where 12% of the population are digitally excluded. There are areas of high deprivation, with 19% of our service users living in the top 2 SIMD deciles. There are also high levels of fuel poverty. The digitally excluded face financial disadvantage through being unable to access opportunities for cheaper energy deals, cheaper shopping, direct debit payment discounts and are at risk from scams, fraud and misinformation. Rural and remote communities are also financially disadvantaged by location, distance from key services, unreliable connectivity and the higher cost of living rurally.

Project Summary

The project aim was to contribute towards improved quality of life and reduced social isolation of Older Adults, through online media literacy support.

The main outcomes that the project aimed to achieve was that older adults would be better connected to online services and safer online consumers. This would be because the project would support them to have the devices, data, digital skills and confidence to do more online, and be able to prevent, identify and avoid online risks.

We anticipated that these would help bring about our overall aim because older adults would have improved quality of life and reduced social isolation, they will be less likely to fall victim to online risks and experience a range of benefits from online services (e.g. cost savings via price comparison and online shopping, social connection through social networking etc.).

The project delivered the following activities to achieve this:

- One-to-one support sessions.
- Cyber resilience workshops.
- Outreach community digital support sessions.
- Device and connectivity provision
- Remote Support
- Printed resources

Project activities were delivered by staff members skilled in media literacy intervention, trained volunteers, and community partners (e.g. libraries, community centres, senior centres) who provided additional resources.

Overall, the project aimed to contribute to wider societal change by promoting greater digital literacy, reducing social isolation, improving consumer protection, increasing participation, and building greater intergenerational understanding (see appendix A: Theory of change Statement).

Evaluation Summary

The overall aims of the evaluation were to explore: 1) what impact the project had, if any, and for who; and 2) what worked well, less well or could be improved.

The evaluation design was informed by a **rapid evidence assessment** conducted on what is already known about the impact of 1-1 digital literacy support and other digital interventions on older adults. This established current evidence as to what digital interventions are effective and have the greatest impact on older people, and to help confirm the efficacy of planned project activities. All the studies read broadly echoed each other, suggesting that the evidence base is generally consistent in its understanding of digital interventions for older adults, and the following themes were identified. A more detailed summary of the REA, and bibliography of sources, is available in Appendix B.

- The areas of digital literacy where learners saw the biggest improvement in confidence and capability was in managing healthcare, communication skills and resilience.
- The increased confidence which they achieved through learning the skills required to utilise these areas of digital literacy was important in ensuring they were able to continue learning as technology progresses.
- Improved digital literacy has a markedly positive impact on older adults' lives. This is because it improves their quality of life by establishing autonomy and independence in managing various aspects of daily life.
- One-to-one support sessions generally work well as a method of delivery for digital interventions with older adults.
- In achieving the ability to access these services and platforms, older adults are able to keep up in a rapidly digitalising society and feel less reliant on family members.
- The positive aspects of one-to-one support include its flexibility, individual focus, potential for ongoing support and increased socialisation.

Our **key evaluation questions** were:

- **Did the program produce or contribute to the intended outcomes in the short and medium term?-** has the intervention improved digital and online literacy? Impact of intervention on well-being? Has intervention improved digital confidence and feelings of online safety?
- **For whom, in what ways and in what circumstances? What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) were produced?-** what helps/hinders older adults implementing their learning around scams? Are there any unintended consequences of the intervention, such as potential impacts on privacy or security risks, that need to be addressed?
- **How well did the program work?-** what are the main barriers faced by older adults in using digital devices and how has the intervention addressed them? What types of support provided in promoting digital inclusion were most effective? What lessons can be learned from the intervention?
- **Is the program being implemented correctly?-** were activities implemented as planned? (How often, when, where, duration content, flow of people through the project e.g. Did drop-in sessions resolve people's issues?)

- Are participants being reached as intended?- are we successfully engaging with different-aged older adults? To what extent are community-based drop-in sessions and remote support effective in engaging older adults?
- How satisfied are program clients? For which clients? - What is the satisfaction level of older adults who received digital support? Which digital interventions had higher levels of satisfaction among older adults? Why?

An evaluation framework was developed to set out outcomes and measurable indicators against each of these questions. Full KEQs can be found in Appendix C, the evaluation framework in Appendix D.

Data gathering tools were developed to record the demographic data of participants and the relevant measurable indicators to be gathered for each outcome and were designed to be used during the delivery of the digital intervention activities to older people. We adopted a mixed method approach that combined pre- and post-surveys, post-knowledge assessments and a small number of interviews with a sample of service users. A full list of data gathering tools can be found in Appendix E.

As the assumption was made that the participants to the programme had limited digital capability, all data gathering tools were used in hard copy format to ensure full inclusion of participants.

Evaluation limitations of the project included the attrition rate of some participants who completed a baseline survey and then did not return to the service for further sessions or to complete an impact survey. Only matched baseline and endline survey responses were used for the purpose of this report. In addition, due to distance and limited resources we were only able to interview a small number of participants at the end of the project.

Findings

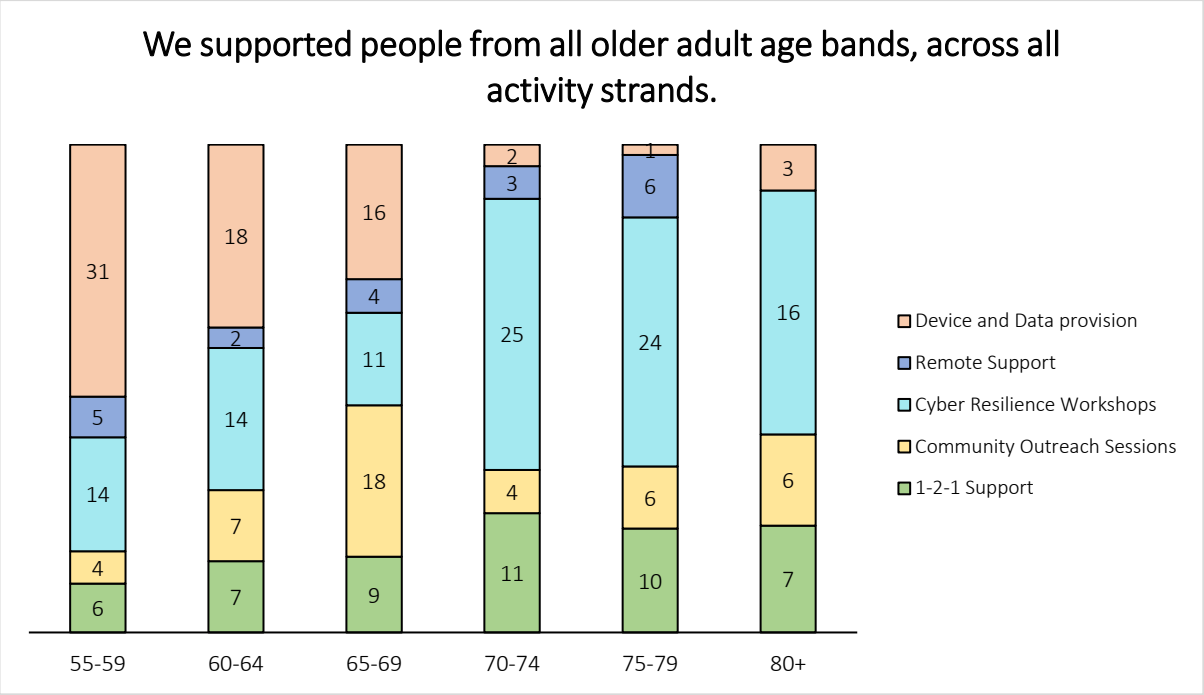
This section presents the main findings from the evaluation. It starts with the project in numbers and goes on to detail the findings from each digital intervention activity strand.

Project in numbers

Red Chair Highland engaged with 290 older people across the Highland region and recorded data on participation in each activity, and on the impact of support delivered. Some participants engaged with more than one activity.

All age bands of older adults were supported across all strands of digital intervention activities. Older adults between 55 and 70 participated more in device and connectivity provision activities than those over 70. Cyber Resilience workshops were most popular with older adults aged 70 plus. Levels of one-to-one support was consistent across all age bands with slightly more over 70s engaging than under 70s. See Figure 1.

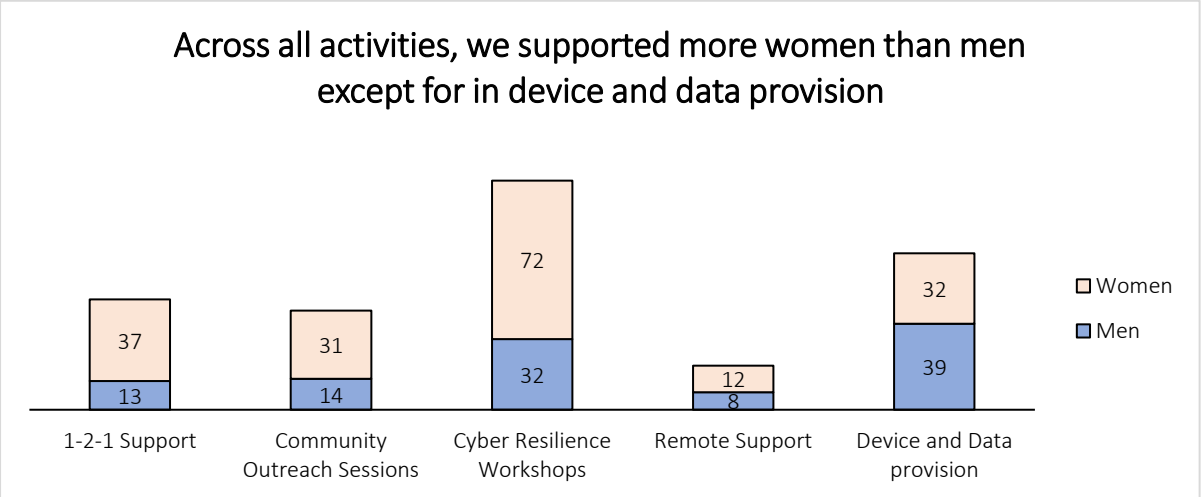
Figure 1: Chart summary of number of people supported by age group and activity type.



We advertised the sessions via physical posters, social media open advertisements and through joint communication efforts with community partners in each location.

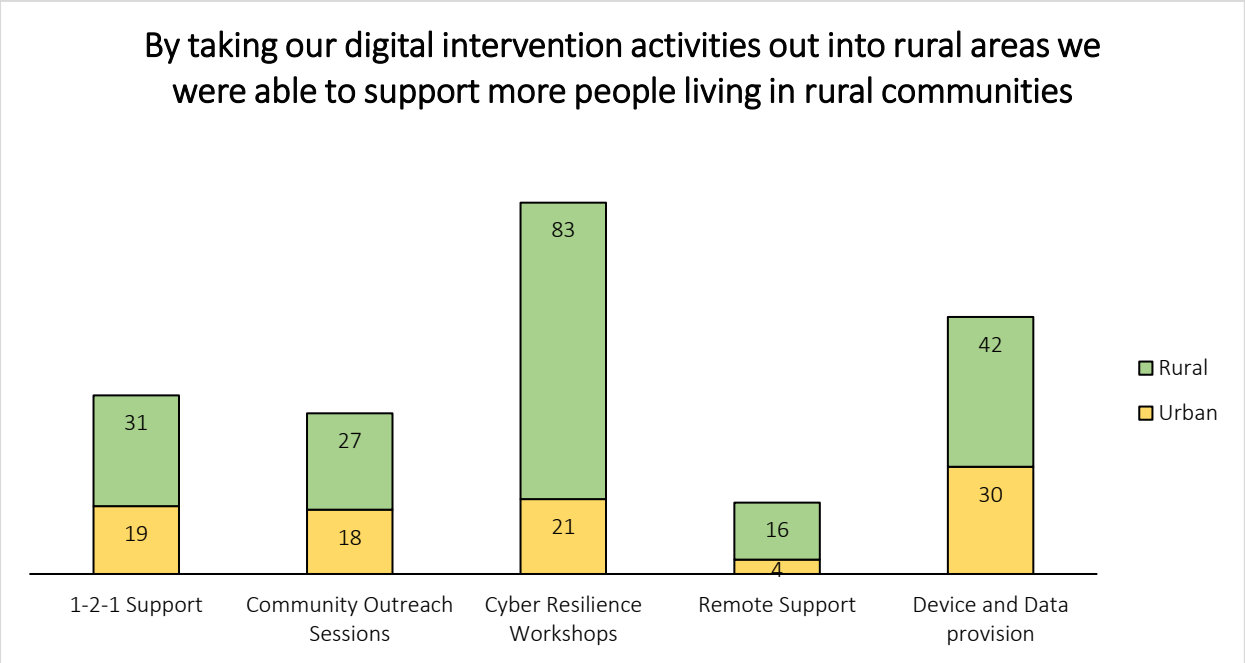
Significantly more women than men were supported across all our digital intervention strands, apart from in Device and Connectivity provision. **See Figure 2**. This suggests that women are more proactive in acknowledging the need for digital support and then seeking it out. Older women may be more inclined to seek support and advice from others as they tend to have stronger social networks and communication patterns. In addition, older women may be more aware of their vulnerability to online threats and scams, leading them to actively seek out digital support to safeguard themselves against potential risks. Older men are often seen to be more self-reliant and avoid asking for help, especially in areas perceived as technical or related to technology. There could be a fear among older men of appearing less capable if they admit they need help with technology.

Figure 2: Chart summary of gender split of participants across activity strands.



Digital intervention activities were delivered in both urban and rural settings which allowed us to compare digital access issues experienced by older people in both types of locations. The significant amount of older people who engaged with our rural Cyber Resilience workshops indicates that this was a critically important service to engage older adults in rural communities and that Cyber Resilience was a particularly relevant issue for those living rurally. In addition, this suggests that taking digital intervention services to where older adults are, could be more successful than asking them to travel to participate in digital intervention activities. **See Figure 3.**

Figure 3: Chart summary of urban and rural split of participants.



Red Chair Highland distributed almost 1200 printed resource sheets during the course of the project. These resources were designed to help reinforce learning from workshops and one-to-one sessions and they are intended to help older people retain learning after support is delivered.

Activity strand findings

The section starts with an in-depth analysis of the main service provided with Ofcom's support: one-to one support. Participants of this service received the most support in terms of time and number of interactions. This section then presents the outcomes for the other digital intervention activity strands provided as part of the project: cyber resilience workshops; outreach community support sessions; device and connectivity provision; and remote support.

One-to-One Support

Overview

One-to-one support consisted of individual sessions with older adults, delivered in an hour-long appointment on a weekly basis. Participants received a minimum of 4 individual sessions with no limit on number of sessions. Older people attending this service received personalised guidance and

support in navigating the internet safely. This included setting up security and privacy settings, identifying online risks and scams, and developing good online habits. Support was also given to participants with individual digital goals.

50 older people received prolonged one-to-one digital support over the course of the project. Each completed a baseline survey at the beginning of support and an impact survey after a minimum of 4 one-to-one support sessions.

Main Impacts

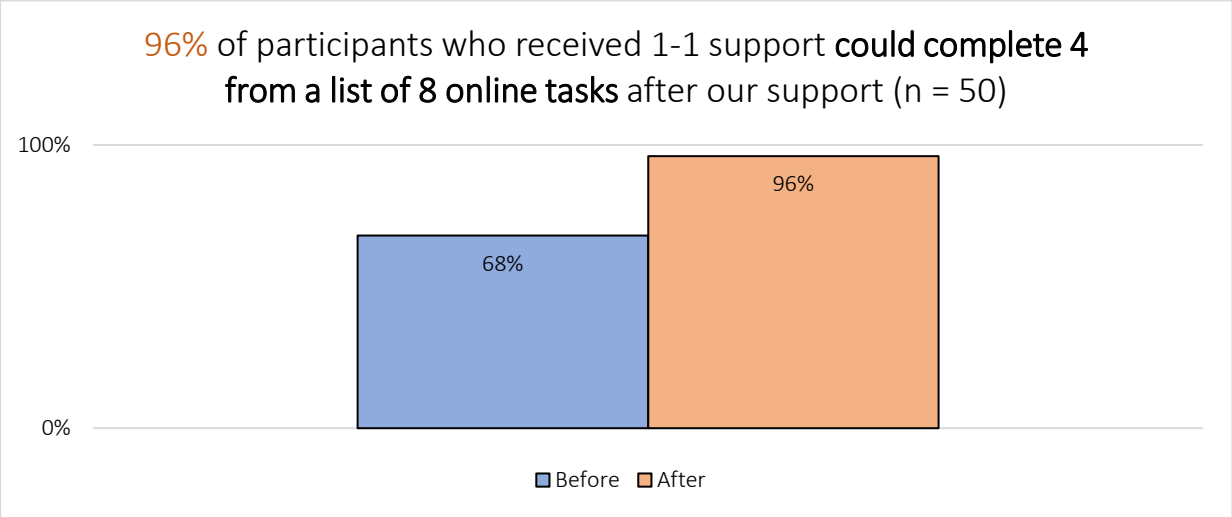
This section summarises impact in terms of; increase in number of online tasks undertaken, increase in numbers of activities participated in, increased and improved digital skills, increased confidence in using the internet, increased confidence in keeping themselves safe online, increased confidence in recognising a scam or online threat, and increased feelings of positivity toward the internet and the digital world.

Increase in number of online tasks undertaken

This project aimed to support older people to become better connected to online services, and safer online consumers, which we anticipated would result in them doing more online in terms of digital tasks and would see benefit from this.

Participants were asked **how many online tasks they could complete** from a list which included checking emails, sending, or replying to emails, sending attachments to an email, using messaging apps such as WhatsApp, read newspapers or use news sites, make a video call or use facetime, checking or updating social network sites such as Facebook, using a search engine to find trustworthy information such as Google. **96% of participants could complete 4 online tasks from a list of 8 after receiving support compared to 68% before**. **See Figure 4.**

Figure 4: Chart summary of increase in online tasks.



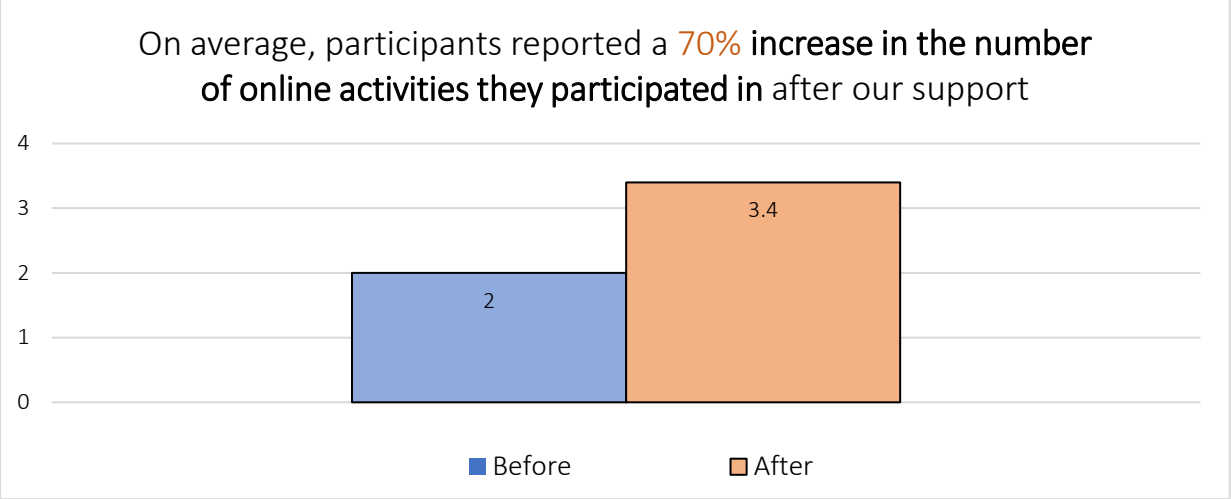
Increase in number of online activities participated in

This project aimed to support older people to become safer users and consumers of online services,

we anticipated this to result in them being able to safely experience a range of benefits from online services.

Participants were asked about the **different kinds of online services they have used** over the previous 3 months. These services included- bought a product online, made reservations or travel bookings, paid bills, used banking online services, ordered groceries or food online, sold things online, used a price comparison site. On average, we saw a **70% rise in the number of online services older people participating in the project used** after our support. **See Figure 5**.

Figure 5: Chart summary of increase in online activities.



Increased and improved digital skills

This project aimed to improve older adults digital skills, we anticipated that improved digital skills amongst participants would result in them doing more online.

Lack of foundation digital skills was cited by older people as being a significant barrier to them becoming safe, confident digital users before accessing digital intervention services. Participants said that their **lack of digital skills and the need for training meant that they did not find that the internet made their life easier**. Some said that lost and declining skills after retirement were a considerable issue, and some highlighted a need for training and support to help them understand and navigate the digital world.

"I've started an online course and have realised I don't have the digital skills I need, everything has changed, I am anxious about it and need help." Woman, 58, Urban location.

"Previously more confident using digital services when still in work but have lost a lot of confidence since retiring. Reckon I could benefit much more if I could regain skills." Woman, 70, Rural location.

Participants reported that they had **increased and improved digital skills after the support**. They said that they had easier use of digital tools and new digital abilities, leading to more confidence when doing things online. Participants reported increased use of online services such as energy account management, online banking and grocery home delivery, increased search engine use, and new use of travel apps and online tools such as word processing apps, photo management and job searching.

"I use my phone a lot more now that it's easier for me to use. The accessibility stuff for the screen and text were great! I now use the bus and train apps which have made my everyday life so much easier." Woman, 59, Rural location.

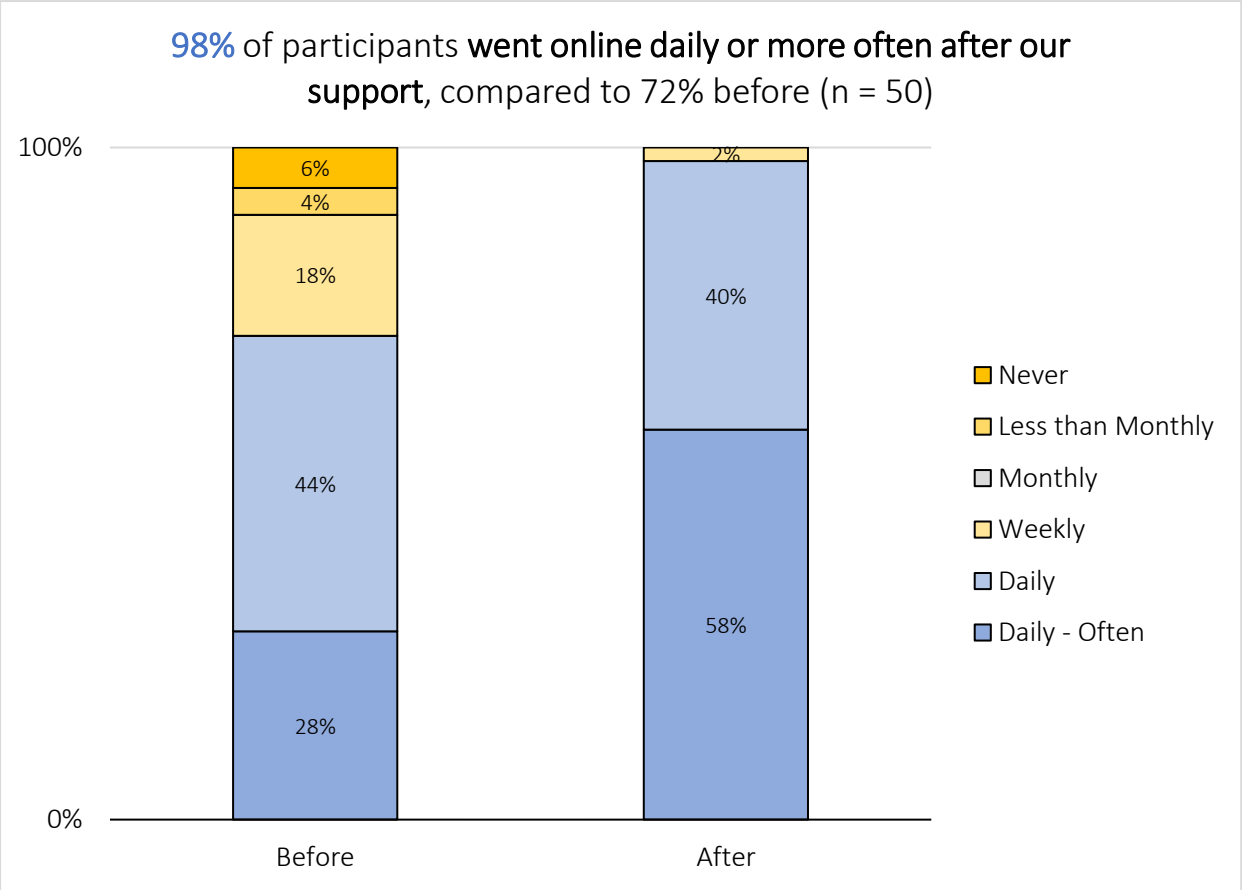
"Feeling more confident now I know how to keep my information safe. Definitely braver about exploring things. I've even signed up for grocery delivery, I would never have been confident enough to do that without the support." Woman, 76, Urban location.

Increase in frequency of device use

The project aimed to support older people to become more proficient in using their devices, we anticipated that this would result in older people using their devices more, and consequently engaging with the digital world more.

We asked participants to tell us **how often they used their device and went online** before and after the one-to-one support. **98% went online daily or more often after our support**, compared with 72% beforehand, indicating that device and internet usage in older people increased after individualised one-to-one support. **See Figure 6.**

Figure 6: Chart summary of change in frequency of device use.



Increased confidence in using the internet

This project aimed to support older people to become more confident digital users, we anticipated

that they would do more things online if their digital confidence improved.

Increased confidence in using the internet amongst participants was a particularly important outcome at the start of the project as many participants reported anxiety, fear and resentment being major barriers to them participating with the digital world.

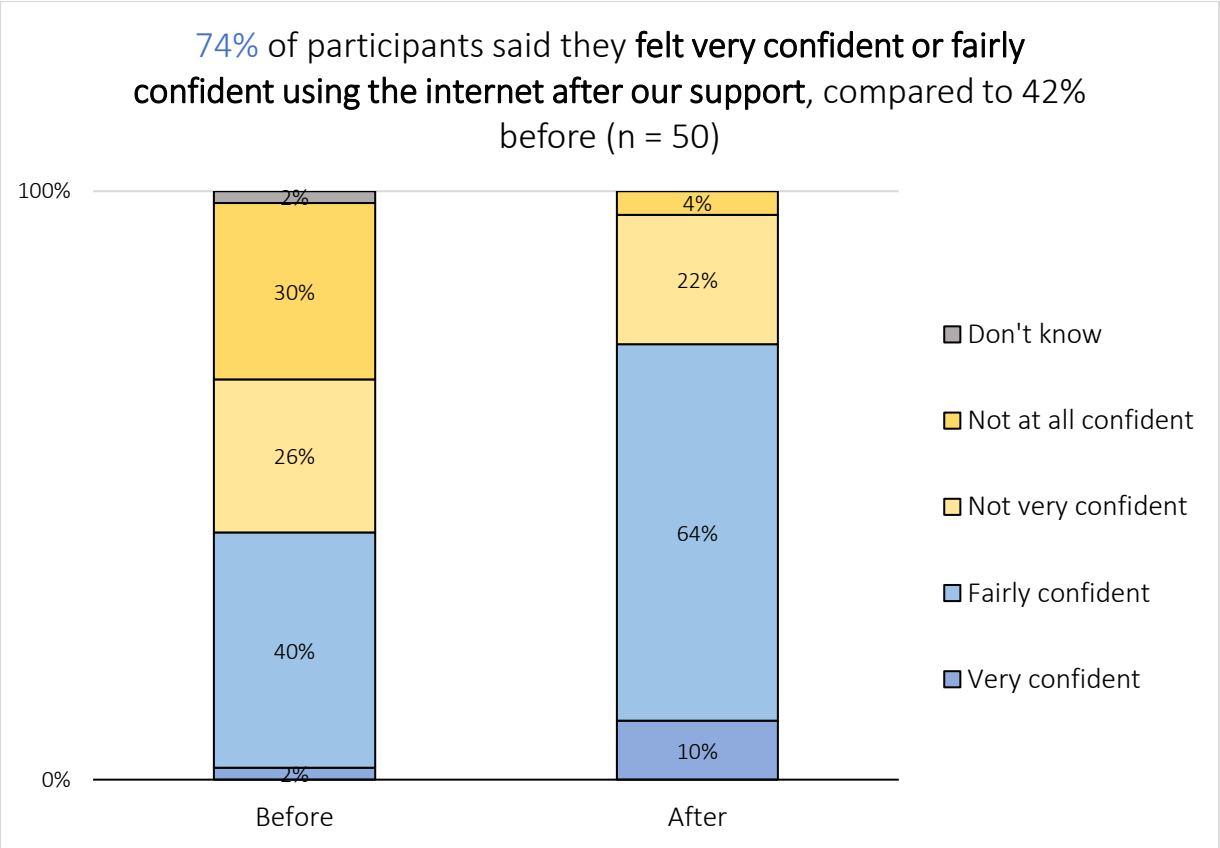
Participants reported having **feelings of anxiety, fear and resentment when thinking about using the internet**. Some participants expressed feelings of isolation and being locked out due to an inability to use the internet confidently. Anxiety and frustration were common sentiments, along with a sense of being left behind and feeling overwhelmed by the pace of technological changes. The internet was seen as complicated, daunting, or a hassle and some expressed resentment towards using the internet, alongside feelings of being forced into it by modern life.

"I really resent having to engage with the internet etc. I don't want to use the internet, but I have to. Everything is done by email these days." Woman 71, urban location.

"I feel locked out because I cannot use the internet, I can't access it. I feel totally isolated." Woman, 67, Urban location.

Participants were asked **how confident they felt using the internet** before and after receiving one-to-one support. **74% said they felt very confident or fairly confident after our support**, compared to 42% before, showing that digital confidence in older people improved after receiving one-to-one support. **See Figure 7.**

Figure 7: Chart summary of increased confidence in using the internet.

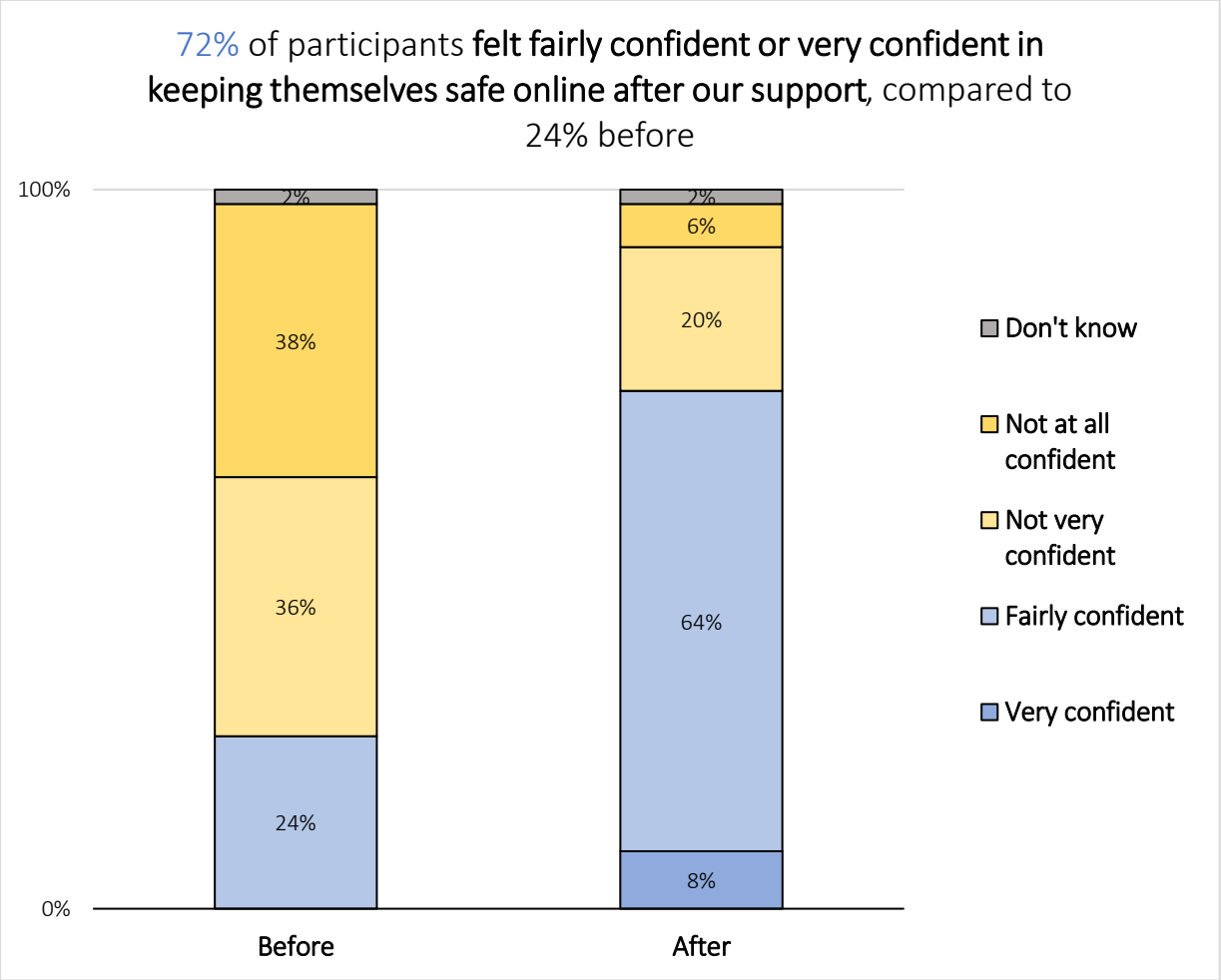


Increased confidence in keeping themselves safe online

This project aimed to support older people to be more able to keep themselves safe online and be able to prevent, identify and avoid online risks, we anticipated that older people would be less likely to fall victim to online risks.

Participants were asked to say **how confident they were in keeping themselves safe online**, before and after our support. **72% of older people participating in the project felt fairly confident or very confident in keeping themselves safe online** after our support, compared to only 24% before. **See Figure 8.**

Figure 8: Chart summary of increase confidence in keeping safe online.



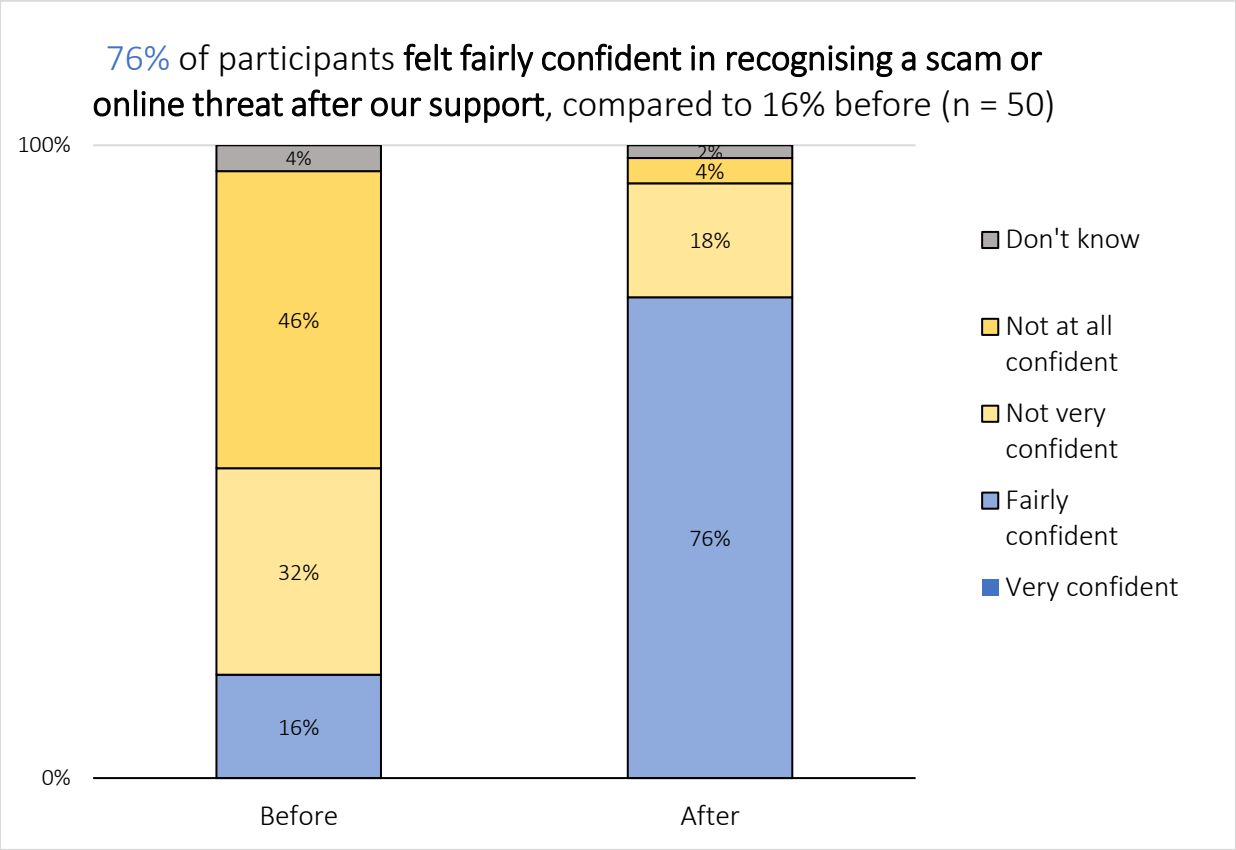
Increased confidence in recognising a scam or online threat

This project aimed to support older adults to safely navigate the internet and become safer online consumers, we anticipated participants to be better able to identify and avoid scams and online threats.

We asked participants to say **how confident they were in recognising a scam or an online threat. 76% said they were fairly confident in recognising a scam or online threat** after our support, compared to

16% before. **See Figure 9.**

Figure 9: Chart summary of increased confidence in recognising a scam or online threat.



When asked what they would do differently, people commented that they were more careful with passwords now, had an increased awareness and use of fact checking sites, and were more cautious with unsolicited emails and suspicious links, attachments, or pop-ups.

"I feel less worried about scams now I've been shown how to recognise them and what to do. I am using the tablet more and am less anxious about making mistakes." Man. 64. Rural location.

"I am feeling much more confident using my phone and laptop now. I've been told I can't break the internet! I feel confident about shopping online safely and am more aware of scams now. Much more careful of my emails now." Woman, 71, Urban location.

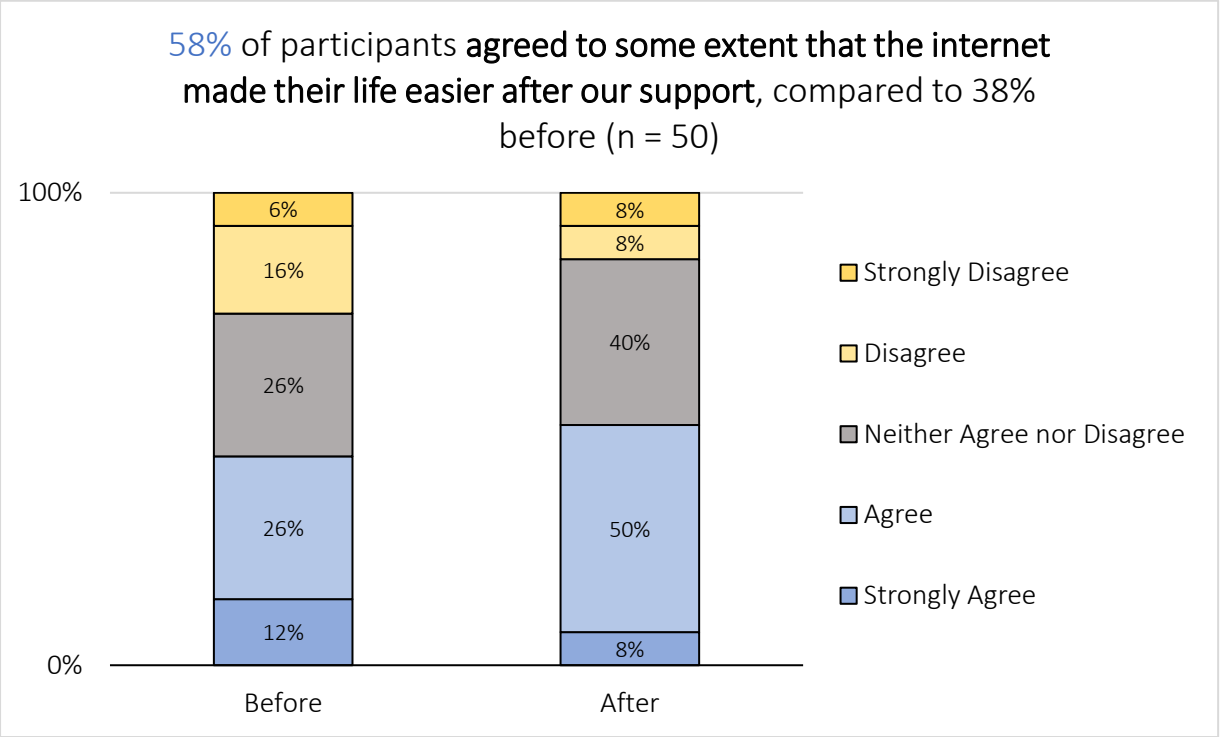
Increased feelings of positivity toward the internet and the digital world

This project aimed to improve older people's perception of the internet to a more positive stance, we anticipated that this would lead participants to use the internet more and to benefit from improved quality of life and reduced social isolation.

We asked older people who received one-to-one support **to what extent they agreed with the statement that the internet made their life easier before and after our support**. **58%** of participants agreed to some extent that the internet made their life easier, compared to 38% before**. See Figure 10.** This finding aligns with the 60% of people who said they considered their life to be better since

they started using the internet (n=50).

Figure 10: Chart summary of agreement to if the internet made life easier.



Lessons learned – One-to-one support.

This section will outline what worked well with one-to-one support, what could be improved, and other lessons learned. This will centre around the importance of the following themes: friendly, kind, patient and non-judgemental support, and individualised one-to-one support,

What Worked Well About One-To-One Support?

After a period of regular 1-1 support, we asked participants what they liked about the support received. Out of 50 participants, all 50 made comments on this question.

Friendly, kind, patient, and non-judgemental support.

The most commented theme was that participants said that **friendly, kind, patient and non-judgemental support** was key and critical to the impact of the support. Staff were described as patient, understanding and willing to take things at each learner's pace. Participants were able to ask any question without feeling embarrassment at their lack of knowledge and the staff's ability to make participants feel at ease was highlighted.

"Friendly approach, they have been patient with me, struggling to understand and learn new skills. They have not made me feel stupid and encouraged me as I progress." Man, 69, Rural location.

"It was tailored to what I needed to know. The tutors were knowledgeable and very patient! And I felt comfortable asking questions to which I go clear answers. They were very supportive throughout, and this has been good, I would recommend to others." Woman, 65, Rural location.

Individualised one-to-one support

The second most commented theme was that **individualised and one-to-one support** was an aspect of the support that was well liked by participants. 1-1 support was highly appreciated and considered very important. Some participants expressed gratitude for support tailored to their individual needs and stated that individual help with practical digital tasks was particularly helpful. Participants expressed that individualised support helped them to overcome digital challenges and learn new digital skills, leading to a feeling of progress and accomplishment.

"The 1-1 support was VERY important. Taking it at MY pace. Patient and understanding. Excellent!!" Woman, 78, Rural location

"They were so kind and helpful, taking things slowly at my pace. The 1-1 sessions were great, I didn't do so well at a group workshop before." Woman, 66, Rural location.

What Could Be Improved?

Overall, the feedback on sessions was positive, with participants suggesting, more frequent sessions, or longer sessions and more 1-1 individual support. Participants also suggested that more regular one-to-one support available in rural and remote communities would be beneficial.

Other Lessons

At the start of the project, we anticipated that supporting people with the knowledge, confidence and skills would contribute to them feeling less lonely. However, when we asked participants if they agreed that there were **people they can talk to online if they are feeling lonely**. Only **36%** of participants indicated that they would reach out to people on the internet if they felt lonely. This is less than anticipated at the start of the project and highlights an issue where older people do not seem to view digital means of communication to be valuable or desirable and would prefer to use traditional forms of communication such as phoning or writing.

Cyber Resilience Workshops

Overview

Cyber Resilience group workshops consisted of structured learning sessions for small groups of older adults, where they could learn from a facilitator and each other about how to navigate the internet safely. Workshops were an hour long, and covered a range of cyber resilience topics, including how to identify fake news, how to avoid online scams, and how to protect personal information online. Workshop participants had demographic information gathered via a session record sheet and completed topic-specific quizzes after each workshop to allow us to measure impact and learning. Quizzes were only conducted post-workshop to reduce the evaluation burden on participants.

104 older adults participated in group workshops during the project. The workshops were small group sessions delivered in person, across both urban and rural locations. We grouped workshop topics into 3 broad themes: Online Safety, Scam Awareness, and Media and Consumer Behaviour Literacy.

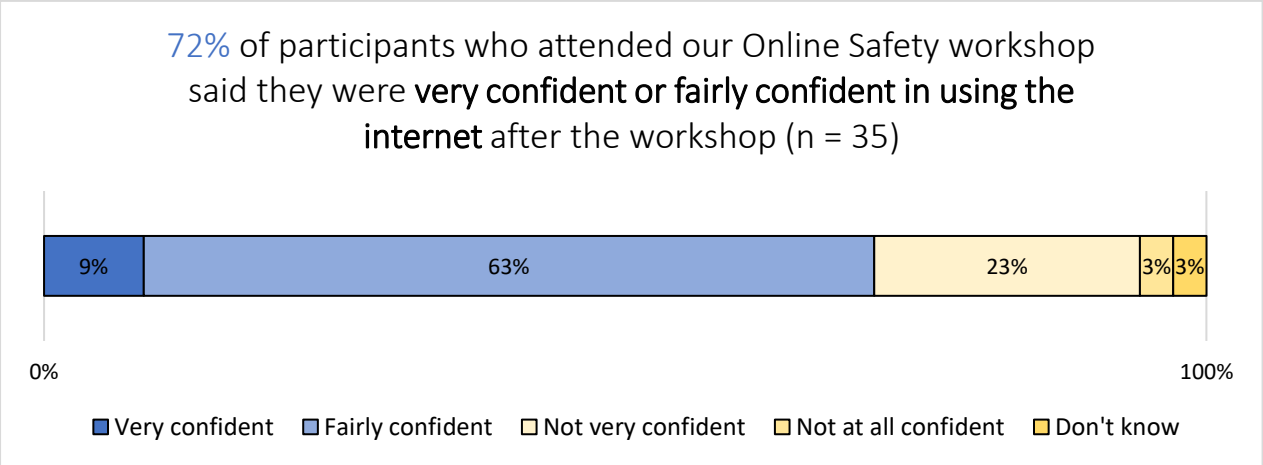
Main Impacts

Online Safety Workshops

These workshops took a general online safety focus and covered topics such as good password management, safe online shopping, and safe email management. After attending our online safety workshop:

- **89%** could correctly identify how to safely shop online after the workshop.
- **72%** said they were very confident or fairly confident in using the internet after the workshop. **See Figure 11**.
- **71%** of participants could correctly identify how to make and use strong passwords after the workshop.
- **60%** could correctly identify and report a scam email after the workshop.
- **51%** could correctly identify different practices to use when keeping yourself safe online after the workshop.

Figure 11: Chart summary of online safety workshop participants, confidence in using internet.

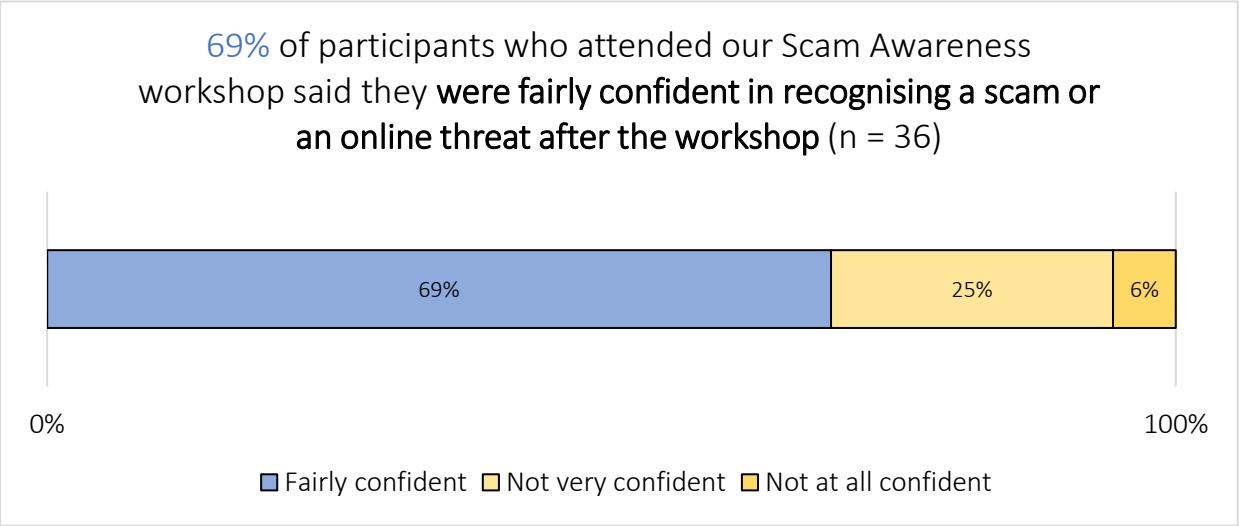


Scam Awareness Workshops

These workshops focused on teaching scam awareness, types of scams, and what steps to take if you suspect you are a victim of a scam. After attending our scam awareness workshop:

- **94%** could correctly identify what steps to take if they have been a victim of a scam after the workshop.
- **72%** could correctly identify the common signs of an online scam after the workshop.
- **69%** were fairly confident in recognising a scan or online threat after the workshop**. See Figure 12.**
- **67%** could identify 3 common scams after the workshop.

Figure 12: Chart summary of participants of our scam awareness workshops, confidence in recognising scam or online threat.



Media Literacy and Consumer and Consumer Behaviour Workshops

These workshops focused on teaching media literacy and consumer behaviour topics such as how to identify misinformation, disinformation, and fake news, how to independently research what you read online, unrealistic ads, and how to keep safe when making an online purchase. After attending our media literacy and consumer behaviour workshop:

- **100%** could correctly identify what to do if they encounter an online ad promising unrealistic results or offers.
- **79%** could correctly identify how to spot fake news, misinformation, and disinformation.
- **76%** could correctly identify red flags indicating a potentially fraudulent email.
- **70%** could correctly identify what to do to keep safe before making an online purchase.
- **64%** were very confident or fairly confident using the internet.

Lessons learned – Cyber Resilience Workshops

What Worked Well with Cyber Resilience Workshops?

The impact of the cyber resilience workshops suggest that this type of digital intervention is a successful one in terms of supporting older people to be able to identify, prevent, and avoid online scams and online threats, with participants reporting increased knowledge and understanding of scams and online threats.

The small group workshops, both in rural and urban, locations were very well attended, especially in the older age bands of the older people engaged. This was the most popular service for the over 70s who participated. The format was appropriate and enabled participants to engage with tutors during the discussion. It was a good opportunity for participants to share their own experiences with scams, fake news etc. This engendered a positive group atmosphere, highlighting that issues experienced by one are likely to be experienced by all at one time or another.

What Could be Improved?

A considerable number of attendees required some level of device support to take part in the interactive digital activities within the workshops. If this project was to be repeated, individual device support time would be built into the workshops to allow for this important service to be included.

Other Lessons

We compared the confidence of those attending the Scam Awareness workshop against their actual knowledge as evidenced by their answers on the workshop quiz.

- Of those who said they were **very confident or fairly confident** in recognising a scam, **only 72%** could correctly identify and report a scam email after the workshop.
- Of those participants who said they were **not very confident or not at all confident** in recognising a scam or online threat, **73% actually could** correctly identify the common signs of an online scam after the workshop.

These insights suggest there is a misalignment between older people's confidence and the actual knowledge and/or abilities they have gained during the digital support. Older people's confidence in their abilities does not quite match their actual knowledge and abilities. This tells us that further work needs to be done to help older adults retain digital learning during digital support. As an organisation we are developing more interactive digital activities to use during our workshops to try to improve learning retention and aid learning reinforcement

Community Outreach Sessions

Overview

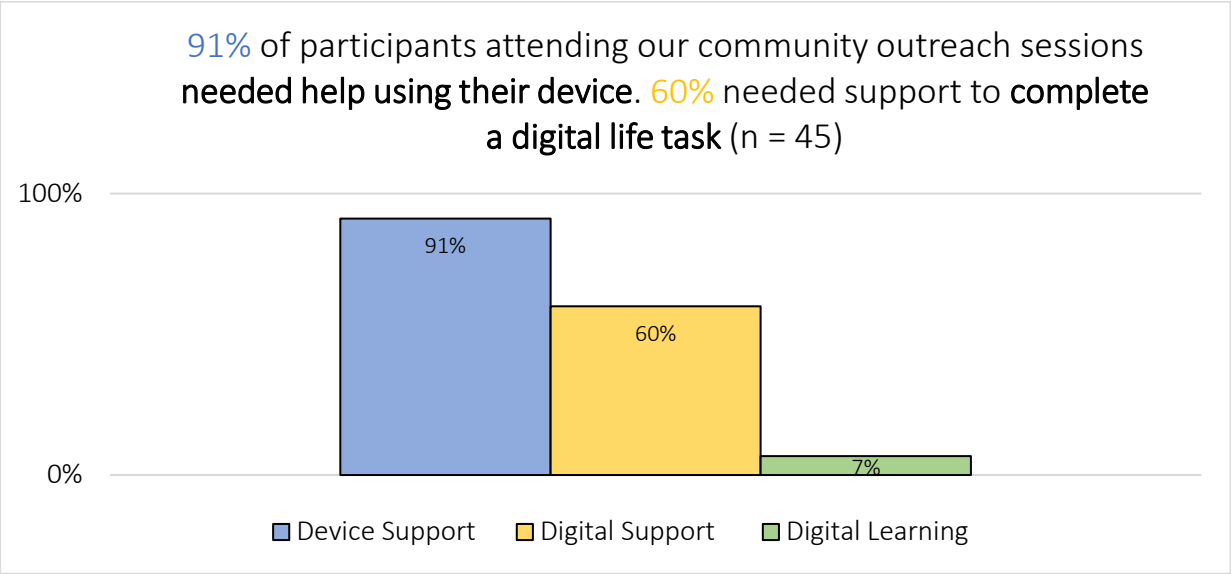
Outreach community digital support sessions were sessions held in community centres, libraries, or other public spaces, in urban and rural settings, where older adults received guidance and support in a friendly and accessible setting. These sessions included single interaction support, and offered progression to one-to-one support, and group workshops.

Red Chair Highland visited several community locations, both urban and rural, to provide drop-in digital support sessions to digitally excluded people. We engaged with 45 older people at these sessions over the course of the project. Interactions at these sessions were most often a single interaction with an older person and most people required either support to use their device or support to complete a digital life task.

Summary of Evidence

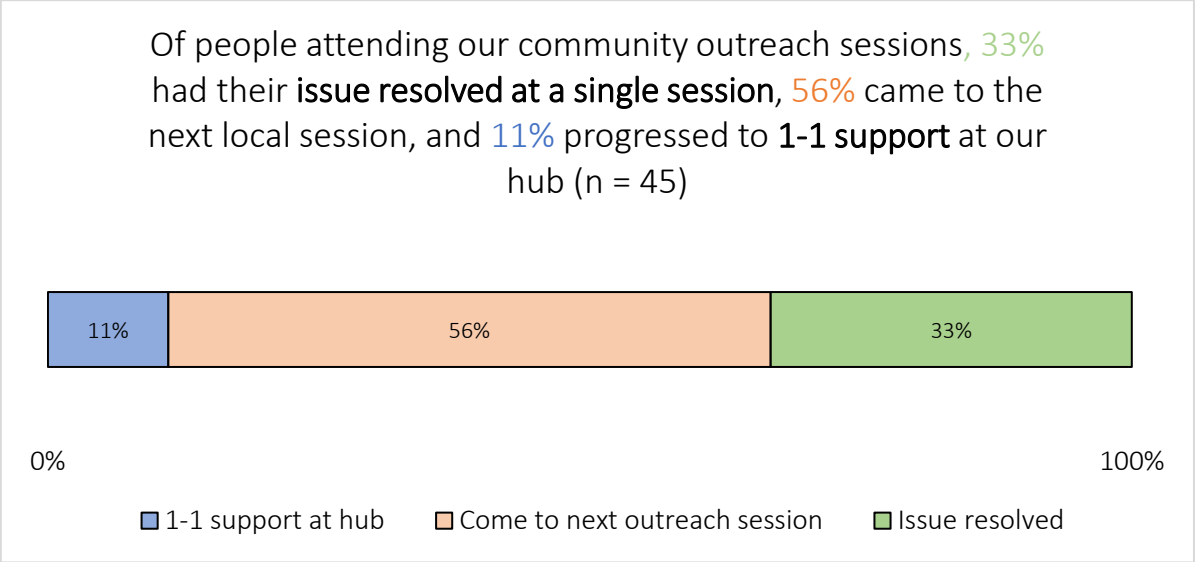
91% of people required immediate help to navigate their device effectively, while **60% of people needed help completing a digital life task** such as filling in an online form or attaching something to an email. This indicates that older people need help and support when setting up and using their device to ensure they can do what they want to do with it. **See figure 13.**

Figure 13: Chart summary of type of support required at community outreach sessions.



Of older people who attended community outreach drop-in digital support sessions, 33% had their issue resolved at a single session, 56% came along to the next local session to continue their support and 11% progressed to one-to-one support at our digital hub. **See Figure 14.**

Figure 14: Chart summary showing progression of community outreach participants.



Lessons learned – Community Outreach Sessions

What Worked Well with Community Outreach Sessions

Taking these sessions out into rural and remote locations was an important part of this project as it brought digital support sessions to communities where such support has not been available before. Participants at rural outreach sessions said:

> "It was amazing that this support was available in my rural community." Man, 60, Rural location.

"I am really grateful that you came all the way to Kinlochbervie. Getting help once a week for the month was so helpful. Thanks!" Woman, 57, Rural location.

What Could be Improved?

More people than expected needed more than a single session to resolve their individual digital issues. This led to high progression rates to a further community outreach session or sessions, and to prolonged one-to-one support at our digital hub. Red Chair Highland will consider this when planning for future community outreach sessions to possibly allow for longer and more frequent sessions.

Device and Connectivity Provision

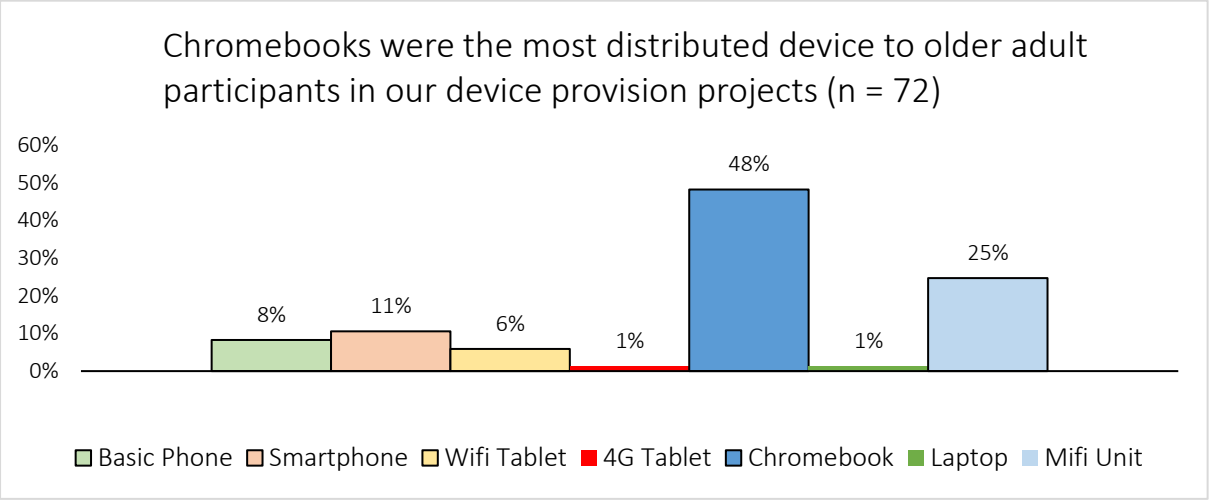
Overview

Digital device and connectivity provision, this service consisted of Providing older adults with digital devices, such as tablets or laptops and connectivity where required, so that they could access the internet and participate in online media literacy interventions. Device set-up support was included and offered guidance and support to older adults in setting up and using their digital devices. This included assistance with basic device functions, as well as guidance on how to access and use online media literacy resources.

Summary of evidence

72 older people were provided either a device or connectivity, or both, during the project in order to support them to become digitally included. Of the 72 people who received devices and/or data during the project, 70% needed assistance to set the device up, with help with accessibility features being the most asked for support. The most popular device requested by older adults was a Chromebook. **See Figure 15.**

Figure 15: Chart summary for devices type issued to older people.



Lessons learned – Device and Connectivity Provision and set-up support.

A large proportion of older people needed support to set up the device they received from us, and setting appropriate accessibility features tailored to each individual was important. This suggests that

the tailoring of a device to suit its owner's individual needs is a critical step when considering the impact of device and connectivity projects.

Remote Support

Overview

Remote Support was delivered to participants who could not access our physical services, it consisted of digital support delivered over the phone or by email or video call. This service was offered in consideration of the size of the area covered by Red Chair Highland.

Summary of evidence

Over the course of the year, we received requests from 20 people to give support via remote means. This might take the form of support delivered over the phone or by email. The most common reason given for requesting remote support was distance. Other reasons include time, confidence, and accessibility.

Of the 20 people who received remote support, 13 of the participants had their issues resolved via remote means.

Lessons learned – Remote support.

Evidence suggests that remote digital support is only successful where people had previously had an opportunity to build digital skills and confidence via face-to-face means.

Of those 13 people who had issues that were resolved successfully via remote support, 9 people had previously received one-to-one support and their digital skills and confidence had improved as a result. Of the 7 people whose problems could not be resolved via remote methods, only 2 had previously received one-to-one support.

This suggests that remote digital support should not be relied on to be successful where people have not already built digital literacy.

Case Studies of Support

Case Study: Jean’s journey to regain digital skills.

Jean, a retired individual residing in Inverness, faced significant health challenges after being diagnosed with a brain tumour in December 2022. Despite being computer literate prior to her diagnosis, Jean found herself struggling with basic digital tasks because of her treatment. Living alone and lacking close family nearby, she turned to Red Chair for support, hoping to regain her lost skills and confidence in using technology. Jean received regular one-to-one support sessions, still ongoing at the time of writing. "**Before the diagnosis, I could handle documents and spreadsheets, but after the treatment, my brain just couldn't make sense of it. I needed help to get my new laptop set up, and Red Chair's 1-1 digital support was just what I needed**."

With the patient and tailored support from Red Chair, Jean embarked on her journey to digital empowerment. The practical assistance in setting up her laptop, along with the flexible learning plan, allowed her to gradually relearn essential digital skills at her own pace. "**The support sessions are tailored to my needs, and the staff are patient and good-humoured. They made me feel no embarrassment about my memory struggles, and their generosity with time has been invaluable**."

Despite the challenges posed by her memory difficulties, Jean persisted with the help of Red Chair, gradually relearning skills such as document writing using Google Docs. The newfound confidence and connectivity online have had a profound impact on Jean's daily life. "**I feel much better connected online and don't feel as useless and digitally stupid as before. Just being able to ask means the digital issues don't scare me as much. The support has been hugely beneficial**."

Had it not been for Red Chair, Jean believes she would still be struggling with her new laptop, feeling sadder and more isolated in her digital endeavours. The positive changes resulting from the support have brought Jean a renewed sense of purpose and empowerment. "**Slowly, I am regaining the computer skills I used to take for granted. The support has been a lifeline, and I'm grateful for every step forward I've taken.**"

Jean's journey underscores the transformative power of tailored digital support in overcoming adversity and rebuilding confidence, demonstrating the profound impact such initiatives can have on individuals' lives. Through patient guidance and unwavering support, the digital interventions delivered has not only equipped Jean with essential digital skills but also reignited her sense of hope and possibility in the face of challenges.

Case Study: Wendy's journey to digital empowerment through one-to-one support delivered at our urban digital hub.

Wendy, a 60-year-old mother of two, found herself at a crossroads after the passing of her husband, who had previously handled all their digital tasks. Wendy's journey towards digital literacy was marked by challenges stemming from her late adult autism diagnosis, lack of successful formal education, and a deep-seated fear of technology. Despite her struggles, Wendy sought to reclaim her independence and overcome her fears through the support of Red Chair Highland, a digital inclusion service provider.

"I didn't do so well at school... I really struggled socially... My husband was a great help to me... Now he's gone, I've been relying on my daughters. It was really scary."

Before seeking support from Red Chair, Wendy faced immense difficulty navigating the digital world. Her lack of understanding and fear of technology left her feeling isolated and dependent on others for even the most basic tasks. *"Basically, everything to do with computers... I struggled with it for years... It was so frustrating to me... I used to go to the library and write things out longhand just so I could help my daughter."* Wendy's apprehension toward computers stemmed from a lack of confidence and understanding. Despite her efforts to cope, she felt left behind in an increasingly digital world, leading to tensions within her family and a sense of helplessness.

"The first thing was everyone was so friendly and natural, genuine... The 1-1 support has been amazing, truly amazing... Red Chair staff just put me at ease the minute I walked in the door." Red Chair's welcoming environment and personalised support provided Wendy with a sense of comfort and reassurance. Unlike previous experiences, where she felt overlooked and misunderstood, Wendy found solace in the patient guidance and understanding offered by the Red Chair team.

Through Red Chair's assistance, Wendy experienced a transformative shift in her perception of technology. From initially fearing computers to embracing them as tools for learning and connection, Wendy's newfound confidence propelled her towards self-discovery and personal growth. *"Not to be petrified of a computer... I feel so empowered... I love it. One day I'd even like to be able to help other people to be more confident with the internet."*

Wendy's increased digital literacy not only alleviated tensions within her household but also empowered her to navigate work-related tasks with ease. By reclaiming her independence, Wendy became a source of inspiration for those around her, proving that age and past experiences need not hinder one's ability to learn and adapt. *"The arguments have all but stopped in the house... I feel like I've taken a hell of a lot of pressure off the house... I also feel much less anxious about the digital things I need to do for my work."*

"When I first came, I was pretty closed off... But from day 1, I knew it was going to work... There are a lot of women like me out there who would benefit so much from this kind of help."

In reflecting on her journey, Wendy expressed gratitude for the newfound sense of purpose and excitement for learning. Her journey with Red Chair not only transformed her relationship with technology but also reignited her passion for personal growth and lifelong learning.

"I wanted to say that this is the first time since school that I have been interested and, in any way, excited about learning, and I am so grateful."

Wendy's story serves as a testament to the transformative power of digital inclusion initiatives. Through personalised support and unwavering encouragement, individuals like Wendy can overcome their fears, embrace new opportunities, and pave the way for a more inclusive digital future.

Case study: Mark’s journey to scam awareness after cyber resilience workshops.

Mark, a retired individual residing in Inverness, had been struggling with technology following the passing of his wife, who used to handle most digital tasks. Despite his background in the tech department at a college, Mark found himself falling behind in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. His challenges became more pronounced after purchasing a new laptop, prompting him to seek assistance from Red Chair Highland.
Mark's primary aim in seeking support from Red Chair was to regain confidence and proficiency in using his laptop for various tasks, including email, online meetings, and staying safe online. Red Chair's assistance encompassed practical support in setting up devices, addressing specific concerns, and providing guidance on online safety, including how to identify and avoid scams. Mark attended cyber resilience workshops and also used our one-to-one support service.

Reflecting on his experience, Mark described the support from Red Chair as **"*reassuring, accessible, and patient,*"** highlighting the importance of having a safe space to address his concerns. He particularly appreciated the personalised approach, where he could raise specific issues during weekly sessions.

One of the most crucial aspects of the support for Mark was the emphasis on online safety. This became evident when he nearly fell victim to a scam where a caller posed as a representative from Norton, claiming Mark's laptop had issues. In Mark's words**, "*Someone called me claiming to be from Norton to tell me I had a problem with my laptop. I didn’t catch on right away because coincidentally I had been trying to cancel my wife’s Norton subscription a few days before. I actually let them have access to my computer to diagnose the problem. They showed me a screen full of gobbledegook and told me my IP address was compromised. I didn’t know what that meant but when they asked me to pay £200 to fix it I realised I was being scammed*."** Fortunately, Mark’s newfound awareness, instilled by Red Chair’s cyber resilience workshops and subsequent digital support, prompted him to seek help before succumbing to the scam. Red Chair promptly assisted in verifying the legitimacy of the call, removing any potentially harmful software, and ensuring Mark's device remained secure.

In Mark's own words, **"*If I hadn’t had Red Chair supporting me, I would probably have paid the money and compromised my new laptop*."** This incident underscored the tangible impact of appropriate digital interventions in equipping individuals like Mark with the knowledge and tools to navigate the digital world safely.

Since receiving support from Red Chair, Mark has noticed a big improvement in his confidence and awareness online. He expressed gratitude for the transformative experience, acknowledging that without Red Chair's assistance, he would still be struggling with digital tasks. Despite the bittersweetness of undertaking these responsibilities without his wife, Mark felt a sense of pride in his newfound abilities and commitment to staying safe online.

In conclusion, Mark extended his heartfelt thanks to the Red Chair team for their invaluable support, emphasising the pivotal role they played in empowering him to navigate the digital landscape with confidence and security. Through personalised assistance and a focus on online safety, digital interventions can make a meaningful difference in the lives of older people like Mark, ensuring they can harness the benefits of technology while safeguarding against potential risks.

Conclusions and ideas for action

This section of the report will summarise the conclusions which can be drawn from the evidence gathered over the course of the project. These conclusions will take the format of answering the key evaluation questions developed at the beginning of the project. There will then be an outline of ideas for action for other organisations and researchers working in the field of digital inclusion.

Were participants being reached as intended?

The key to our successful engagement was in part due to our ethos of 'going to where the people are' instead of waiting for them to come to us. In addition, effective advertising, and communication of support activities available, through joint communication with community partners and stakeholders, helped with engagement of older people in both urban and rural locations.

Engagement with participants of different ages and backgrounds was successful in rural areas where access to digital support is limited. Workshops held in often overlooked rural communities were extremely well attended, especially in people over 70, indicating that if such a service was consistently available locally then older people would attend.

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Did the program produce or contribute to the intended outcomes in the short and medium term?

Participants reported increase in the types of online tasks they were able to complete, and an increase in the types of online services they used. We anticipate this broadened use of digital and online services will help older adults connect with their families, communities, and broader social networks, which could help to reduce social isolation and improve overall well-being. In addition, reported increases in device use frequency among participants suggests that the project has resulted in better connected older adults through individual support to use their devices.

The reported increase in confidence in keeping safe online and in recognising and avoiding online scams and threats indicates that the project was successful when supporting older adults in becoming safer online consumers. We anticipate this increased knowledge among older adults will lead to them being better able to identify and avoid online scams, fake news, and other online risks.

Increased knowledge and awareness of scams also led to participants of one-to-one support feeling less anxious/more confident as a result. In the longer-term, it is anticipated this could contribute to a decreased likelihood of older adults falling victim to online scams and other online risks and will allow older people to fully participate in the digital world, accessing information, services, and entertainment without the fear of becoming victims of online scams and other online risks.

One-to-one support and cyber resilience workshops resulted in an increase in reported levels of confidence of older people using the internet. This increased confidence and comfort among older adults who received digital support in turn improves their ability to navigate the internet and engage with online content.

For whom, in what ways and in what circumstances? What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) were produced

The project produced positive outcomes for a majority of participants as evidenced in the findings section above. The project has effectively improved digital and online literacy among older adults, as evidenced by increased knowledge and confidence in navigating the digital landscape. Participants reported feeling more equipped to identify and avoid online scams and threats, indicating a tangible impact on their digital resilience.

Many participants required device support to improve their ability to comfortable use their device before participating in digital learning or workshops with interactive digital activities embedded within. This highlights the need for individual device support for older adults, before they can focus on building digital resilience.

In addition, we found that some participants were using outdated or old devices that were not suitable for effective use today. A consequence of this was that some participants either received a device free of charge form one or our device provision programmes or purchased a device at their own expense.

How well did the program work?

Participants reported that a lack of confidence, digital skills and the need for training and support were a significant barrier to them using devices and the internet. The digital intervention activities delivered as part of this programme resulted to increases in digital confidence and digital skills in most older people who participated.

Negative feelings amongst older people towards the digital world was often cited by participants as a major barrier in becoming more digitally engaged. One-to-one support and cyber resilience workshops appeared to be most impactful when it came to reducing older people's feelings of anxiety, fear, and resentment towards using the internet. The comments around this theme reflect a varied range of emotions and challenges, highlighting the need for tailored digital support to address individual concerns, build confidence, and enhance digital literacy among participants.

The project data suggests that the one-to-one support program was successful, and that patient, kind, non-judgemental, individualised support was critical when it came to delivering successful, impactful digital support to older adults. Participants said that this friendly and individualised support was most important to them when accessing digital support.

Was the program being implemented correctly?

Overall, the program was implemented as planned, with workshops, community outreach sessions, one-to-one support, and device provision executed according to schedule and objectives.

We delivered more cyber resilience workshops than originally intended as these were extremely popular and well attended by older adults. Remote digital support was found to be mostly ineffective where participants had not already received one-to-one support to help them build a certain level of digital literacy first.

However, single interaction digital support sessions were not as successful as anticipated. We found that only a small proportion of older people's digital issues and problems could be resolved in one session and that multiple, regular sessions, and prolonged longer-term support were most impactful in terms of improving people digital skills and confidence.

How satisfied are program clients?

Client satisfaction levels were high, with participants expressing gratitude for the personalised and accessible support provided, including one-to-one assistance.

Effective interventions such as workshops, one-to-one support, and tailored assistance received positive feedback, highlighting the importance of individualised guidance in promoting digital inclusion. Requests for more frequent, longer one-to-one sessions and cyber resilience workshops were made by several participants.

Whilst participants were overwhelmingly positive about the digital support received, the data showed that there is a misalignment with peoples perceived confidence in keeping safe online or in recognising a scam, and their actual abilities and knowledge. Some overestimated their abilities, and an equal number of participants underestimated their skills and knowledge. From this we can see that more work to keep older people informed of online threats and risks is required, along with efforts to improve their learning reinforcement and retention.

Supporting participants to set up new devices, to navigate current devices successfully, to tailor device setting to individual requirements, and providing devices and connectivity where required, was a critical element of this project and ensured participants could access the digital world with increased confidence and enthusiasm.

In conclusion, the digital intervention activities delivered during this project have all been impactful to a certain extent. One-to-one support and cyber resilience workshops have been especially impactful. Cyber resilience workshops and associated digital support initiatives, including community outreach, one-to-one support, and device provision, have proven instrumental in empowering older adults to navigate the digital world safely and confidently. By addressing barriers to digital inclusion and providing tailored support, the project has improved the digital resilience and well-being of older people in both urban and rural communities. Moving forward, a continued focus on accessibility, engagement, and innovation will ensure the sustained success and relevance of such initiatives in an increasingly digital society.

Future Considerations and Ideas for Action

For Red Chair Highland as an organisation, we intend to refine our services based on the findings of this report to consider the areas for improvement highlighted by project participants. This includes seeking to deliver more cyber resilience more regularly in both urban and rural areas, planning to

increase individualised one-to-one support capacity and seeking ways to engage more older people in the digital intervention services, in particular older men. In addition, by incorporating more interactive digital activities into workshops, ensuring ongoing device and connectivity provision, and expanding device support service, Red Chair Highland can further enhance learning retention and digital empowerment in older people.

The most significant organisational benefit Red Chair Highland has gained from the Ofcom commission has been the evaluation support provided. This has allowed us to develop more robust evaluation techniques and processes which can be applied to current and future projects going forward. This will bring additional opportunities in terms of securing funding and future projects to allow us to continue serving the digitally excluded community in the Highland region in an impactful way.

Concepts for action for Red Chair Highland and for other organisations supporting older people with online media literacy are:

- Red Chair, other organisations and researchers could consider how to increase engagement with older men and increase focus on gender-specific support. Red Chair and other organisations supporting older adults could seek develop targeted services to encourage older men to engage in digital support activities, such as promoting the benefits of digital literacy for hobbies, interests or practical tasks that align with traditional masculine roles. Men only groups could be targeted such as The Men's Shed locations. This report shows that significantly more older women than men engaged with our services.
- Researchers and organisations could consider how to improve the efficacy of remote support for individuals unable to access physical services, while acknowledging its limitations without prior face-to-face interaction. This report shows that remote digital support is only effective where previous face-to-face support has been given.
- Red Chair and other organisations should consider development of tailored digital support services specifically designed for older adults, considering their unique needs, challenges, and preferences. These services could include a mix of different activities to cater to different levels of digital literacy and confidence. This report highlights that that individualised, one-to-one support was highly appreciated and considered very important by participants.
- Red Chair and other organisations, especially those serving remote and rural communities, could consider the expansion of rural community outreach digital services to ensure access for older people living rurally. Regular, reliable, consistent rural digital support for older adults could have considerable impact on those who lack digital skills and confidence. This report evidences that taking digital support services to older people in their community was impactful.
- Advocating for the importance of digital inclusion initiatives for older people at the policy level to ensure adequate funding, resources and support for projects aimed at bridging the digital divide will raise the profile of, and highlight the importance of, digital inclusion initiatives.

Appendices

A. Theory of Change Statement

Overall narrative

If we provide older adults with devices and support to safely navigate the internet, then they will be better connected to online services, and safer online consumers, because they will have the devices, data, digital skills and confidence to do more online, and be able to prevent, identify and avoid online risks.

If older adults are better connected to online services, and safer online consumers, then they will have improved quality of life and reduced social isolation, because they will be less likely to fall victim to online risks and experience a range of benefits from online services (e.g. cost savings via price comparison and online shopping, social connection through social networking etc.).

An initiative that seeks to deliver online media literacy interventions to older adults could contribute to wider societal change in a number of ways:

- Society benefits from a more digitally engaged and empowered older population, who can contribute their skills, knowledge, and experience to their communities and the broader society.
- Improved digital literacy: By equipping older adults with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the internet safely; the initiative can help to improve overall digital literacy in the population. This can help to bridge the digital divide and ensure that more people are able to participate in the digital world.
- Greater intergenerational understanding: By promoting digital literacy among older adults, the initiative can help to bridge the digital generation gap and promote greater intergenerational understanding. This can help to build stronger communities and promote greater social cohesion.

Overall, an initiative that seeks to deliver online media literacy interventions to older adults has the potential to contribute to wider societal change by promoting greater digital literacy, reducing social isolation, improving consumer protection, increasing participation, and building greater intergenerational understanding.

Short/medium-term impacts:

- Older adults are able to fully participate in the digital world, accessing information, services, and entertainment without the fear of becoming victims of online scams and other online risks.
- Decreased likelihood of older adults falling victim to online scams and other online risks.
- Improved quality of life among older adults who are able to engage with online content safely and confidently.
- Reduced social isolation: Many older adults experience social isolation and loneliness, which can have negative effects on their physical and mental health. By providing access to digital

devices and online resources, the initiative can help to connect older adults with their families, communities, and broader social networks. This can help to reduce social isolation and improve overall well-being.

- Greater consumer protection: Online scams and fraud are a growing problem, and older adults are often targeted due to their perceived vulnerability. By equipping older adults with the skills and knowledge they need to identify and avoid online scams, the initiative can help to protect them from financial harm and other negative consequences.
- Increased engagement and participation: As older adults become more comfortable and confident in using digital devices and navigating the internet, they may be more likely to participate in online activities, such as online shopping, social networking, and accessing government services. This can help to promote more inclusive and accessible digital services and increase overall participation in the digital economy.

Outcomes:

- Increased knowledge among older adults in identifying and avoiding online scams, fake news, and other online risks.
- Increased digital skills among older adults in terms of being safer online consumers and protecting themselves from online threats.
- Increased confidence and comfort among older adults in navigating the internet and engaging with online content.
- Better connected older adults through device and data provision and through individual support to use devices.

Activities and outputs:

Activities	Outputs
One-to-one support: Individual sessions with older adults where they can receive personalised guidance and support in navigating the internet safely. This could include setting up security and privacy settings, identifying online risks and scams, and developing good online habits.	No. of individual sessions No. of people supported Gender split of attendees No of over 85+people
Group workshops: Structured learning sessions for small groups of older adults, where they can learn from a facilitator and each other about how to navigate the internet safely. Workshops could cover a range of topics, including how to identify fake news, how to avoid online scams, and how to protect personal information online.	No of Group workshops delivered No of people attending group workshops Gender split of attendees No of over 85+people
Outreach community digital support sessions: Sessions held in community centres, libraries, or other public spaces where older adults can receive guidance and support in a friendly and accessible	No of outreach sessions delivered

setting. These sessions could include one-to-one support, group workshops, or a combination of both.	No of people assisted at each session No of repeat interactions over the session calendar Profile: age; gender
Digital device provision: Providing older adults with digital devices, such as tablets or laptops, so that they can access the internet and participate in online media literacy interventions.	No of devices distribute to older people (over 55) Profile: age; gender Type of device No of follow up Digital Support requested
Device set up support: Offering guidance and support to older adults in setting up and using their digital devices. This could include assistance with basic device functions, as well as guidance on how to access and use online media literacy resources.	No of device set up sessions Types of device Profile: age; gender No of follow on to digital learning
Printed resources: Providing printed materials, such as guides, brochures, and handouts, that older adults can refer to for guidance and support in navigating the internet safely. Printed resources can be especially useful for older adults who prefer to learn at their own pace, or who may not have regular access to digital devices.	No of printed resources distributed - split into resource topics. Records kept and reported monthly of printed resources handed out.
Hybrid support methods: Offering a combination of in-person and digital support, such as virtual workshops or remote one-to-one sessions. This can provide flexibility for older adults who may have mobility or transportation limitations, or who may prefer to receive support from the comfort of their own home.	No of in person support sessions No of remote sessions Type of remote support - email, phone, zoom Profile: age; gender

Inputs:

- Staff members: Skilled and experienced staff members who can design and deliver the online media literacy interventions, as well as provide support and guidance to older adults. Staff members include program coordinators, facilitators, and support staff.

- Volunteers: Trained and dedicated volunteers who can provide additional support to older adults, such as one-to-one coaching or technical support. Volunteers are recruited from the community or from partner organisations.
- Previous research: Knowledge and insights from previous research on media literacy and online safety for older adults. This includes academic research, reports from nonprofit organisations, and other relevant sources.
- Community partners: Collaborations with local community partners who can provide additional resources and support to the initiative. Additional resources include spaces for support sessions, promotion of support sessions and community location specific volunteers. Community partners include libraries, community centres, senior centres, and other organisations that work with older adults.
- Stakeholders: Engagement with key stakeholders, such as policymakers, funders, and representatives from relevant industries (e.g. technology companies), who can provide support and advocacy for the initiative. This engagement helps to ensure the initiative is sustainable and has a positive impact on older adults and the broader community.
- Ofcom support: Contract to research awarded, financial support and access to research library.
- Expertise: experienced evaluation expert on hand to support with evaluation for the media literacy intervention.

Assumptions:

- Older adults have limited knowledge and skills in navigating the internet and identifying online risks.
- Older adults are less motivated to engage with digital technologies compared to younger generations, due to a lack of interest or a perceived lack of benefit.
- A range of online media literacy interventions can equip older adults with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the internet safely.
- Individually tailored digital interventions will be more effective in improving the digital skills of older adults than generic, one-size-fits-all interventions.
- The online media literacy interventions are designed to be age-appropriate and accessible to older adults.
- Participants in the online media literacy interventions will actively engage with and apply the knowledge and skills learned in the program to their online behaviours.
- By becoming safer online consumers, older adults will experience fewer negative consequences of online scams, fake news, and other online risks.

B. Rapid Evidence Assessment

We looked to establish which areas of digital literacy did older adults see increased confidence and capability because of one-to-one support sessions. From evidence, it can be understood that **the areas of digital literacy where learners saw the biggest improvement in confidence and capability was in managing healthcare, communication skills and resilience.** There is a strong evidence base to support the role of digital interventions focussing on health literacy *(Rasi, Vuojärvi and Rivinen, 2020)*. Welch et al found that improved communication abilities generally comprise the bulk of digital intervention impacts, through learners becoming competent in email, video and telephone calling, social networking and messaging others online. *(Welch et al., 2023)*. A large portion of studies reported that fear and distrust of the internet was a major barrier to accessing digital devices *(Kebede et al., 2022, Dong et al., 2023, Moroney and Jarvis, 2020)*. Therefore, digital interventions focussing on equipping older adults with the knowledge and skills to use the internet safely helps to build their confidence *(Kebede et al., 2022)*. This includes understanding how to recognise and identify misinformation, spam and hacking, but also learning what to do when faced with these challenges *(Moroney and Jarvis, 2020)*. **The increased confidence which they achieved through learning the skills required to utilise these areas of digital literacy was important in ensuring they were able to continue learning as technology progresses.**

Next, we examined the impact of improved digital literacy on older adults' daily lives. Evidence suggests that **improved digital literacy has a markedly positive impact on older adults' lives**. **This is because it improves their quality of life by establishing autonomy and independence in managing various aspects of daily life.** These areas include shopping, bill management, welfare, social communication, and leisure activities. The digitalisation of many services during the Covid-19 pandemic has remained in many areas, meaning that digitally excluded older adults must become digitally literate to independently access and manage many areas of their life, including healthcare, shopping and social activities *(Kebede et al., 2022, Pihlainen et al., 2022)*. The digital communication skills which improved literacy offers older adults enables them to fulfil a variety of purposes through better access to their finances, shopping and feeling better in touch with family and friends *(Rasi, Vuojärvi and Rivinen, 2020, Welch et al, 2023)*. Financially, older adults are able to save money by being able to find good deals on services and products, an impact especially pertinent during the cost-of-living crisis *(Davidson, 2018)*. Most studies reported a generally positive change in attitudes towards digital literacy, which reduced older adults' loneliness and increased their autonomy in requiring less support to fulfil tasks *(Rasi, Vuojärvi and Rivinen, 2020, Moroney and Jarvis, 2020)*. Through these improved digital literacy skills, older adults are able to feel more independent and less reliant on family members or friends *(Davidson, 2018, Pihlainen et al., 2022)*. **In achieving the ability to access these services and platforms, older adults are able to keep up in a rapidly digitalising society and feel less reliant on family members.**

Lastly, we looked at evidence on what works well and less well about one-to-one support sessions with older adults. From this, it can be concluded that **one-to-one support sessions generally work well as a method of delivery for digital interventions with older adults.** One-to-one support sessions enable older adults to receive a form of support which is individually tailored to their own unique goals, abilities and fears regarding the internet and digital devices *(Rasi, Vuojärvi and Rivinen, 2020)*. Older adults should not be treated as a homogenous group who can be successfully instructed through a

one-size-fits-all approach, with varying learning styles, cognitive abilities and knowledge levels *(Pihlainen et al., 2022)*. Therefore, the best approach is a flexible, adaptable one which can be individualised as necessary, such as one-to-one support sessions. The social interaction which takes place between the learner and support provider in one-to-one support sessions has a positive impact on both *(Rasi, Vuojärvi and Rivinen, 2020, Welch et al., 2023, Moroney and Jarvis, 2020)*. One-to-one sessions are most successful with older adults when taking place in-person, as opposed to online. In engaging with a demographic who is typically digitally excluded, it is counter-intuitive to expect they be able to access online support sessions in the early stages of learning *(Wang and Luan, 2022, Dong et al., 2023)*. Holistic, flexible methods of service delivery saw the best success when delivered collaboratively *(Rasi, Vuojärvi and Rivinen, 2020, Davidson, 2018)*. This is possible through utilising one-to-one support sessions as they allow for total adaptability and a pace unique to the learners. Continued, ongoing support is evidenced to be more successful than one-off sessions *(Gates and Wilson-Menzfeld, 2022)*. The positive aspects of one-to-one support include its flexibility, individual focus, potential for ongoing support and increased socialisation.

Overall, when returning to the overarching research aim of establishing what is known about the impact of one-to-one digital literacy support with older adults, it can be understood that the evidence shows that this method of delivery is broadly successful in equipping older adults with the skills and knowledge necessary to independently improve their quality of life in a rapidly digitising society. It is known that one-to-one support sessions provide the possibility for individualised, personally tailored learning, which is impossible to replicate in group sessions, and is often necessary for building the confidence of very anxious learners. Improved digital literacy is fast becoming a necessity for older adults, with essential services being moved online, including healthcare and welfare.

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C. Key Evaluation Questions

Did the program produce or contribute to the intended outcomes in the short and medium term?

- To what extent has the intervention improved the digital and online media literacy of older adults in using technology?
- Has/how has the intervention impacted the well-being of older adults, particularly in terms of reducing social isolation and increasing connectivity to family and friends?
- Do participants feel more confident and safer when accessing and consuming online content after the interventions?

For whom, in what ways and in what circumstances? What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) were produced?

- What helps/hinders older adults implementing their learning around scams?
- Are there any unintended consequences of the intervention, such as potential impacts on privacy or security risks, that need to be addressed?

How well did the program work?

- What are the main barriers faced by older adults in using digital devices and how has the intervention addressed them?
- What types of support provided in promoting digital inclusion (access, skills, confidence to safely use the internet) were most effective?
- What lessons can be learned from the intervention to inform future efforts to promote digital inclusion among older adults?

Is the program being implemented correctly?

- Were activities implemented as planned? (How often, when, where, duration content, flow of people through the project e.g. Did drop-in sessions resolve people's issues?)

Are participants being reached as intended?

- Are we successfully engaging with different-aged older adults?
- To what extent are community-based drop-in sessions and remote support effective in engaging older adults?

How satisfied are program clients? For which clients?

- What is the satisfaction level of older adults who received digital devices regarding their ease of use and usefulness?
- Which digital interventions had higher levels of satisfaction among older adults? Why?

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D. Red Chair and Ofcom: Evaluation Framework

Outcomes

Outcome (a single, measurable change)	Indicator (what will we measure?)	Target	How will we collect it?	When will we collect it?	Who will collect it?
Increased ability among older adults to identify and avoid online scams	Proportion of people who are confident about recognising a scam or online threat	60%	Baseline and Impact survey questions	Start and end of digital intervention support	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers.
	Proportion of older adults who can identify an online scam	80%	Scam awareness quiz	Group workshops	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers.
	Proportion of older adults who can identify or list 3 or more types of scams.	60%	Scam awareness quiz	Group workshops	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers.
Increased digital skills among older adults in terms of being safer online consumers and protecting themselves from online threats.	Level of feeling equipped to protect themselves online	75%	Baseline and Impact survey questions	Start and end of digital intervention support	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers
	Proportion of people who correctly identify how to report online threats and delete scam notifications	75%	Scam awareness quiz	Group workshops	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers

	Proportion of older adults who can create passwords that meet 3 of 4 strength requirements.	60%	Online Safety quiz	Group workshops	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers
Increased confidence and comfort among older adults in navigating the internet and engaging with online content.	Types of online services that older adults have used in the last 3 months	Average of 4 types of service	Baseline and Impact survey questions Consumer Behaviour Quiz	Start and end of digital intervention support Consumer Behaviour workshop	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers. Digital Hub Support staff, Outreach team.
	Proportion of older adults who feel confident about using the internet	70%	Baseline and Impact survey questions Consumer Behaviour Quiz	Start and end of digital intervention support Consumer Behaviour workshop	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers. Digital Hub Support staff, Outreach team.
	Proportion of older adults who can complete half of a list of online tasks (4 of 8)	50%	Baseline and Impact survey questions Consumer Behaviour Quiz	Start and end of digital intervention support Consumer Behaviour workshop	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers. Digital Hub Support staff, Outreach team.

Better connected older adults through device and data provision and through individual support to use devices.	Proportion of older adults who have their own device	80%	Baseline and impact survey questions Device impact form	Start and end of digital intervention support 3 months after device provision	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers. Device allocation team
	Frequency of device use	Average score of 4 (twice a week)	Baseline and impact survey questions Device impact form	Start and end of digital intervention support 3 months after device provision	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers. Device allocation team
Better understanding of internet safety and secure internet use.	Proportion of older adults who feel confident in their ability to stay safe online.	60%	Baseline and Impact survey questions Online Safety quiz at group workshop	Start and end of digital intervention support Group workshops	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers. Digital Hub Support staff, Outreach team.
	Proportion of older adults who can identify three key tips to staying safe online	50%	Online Safety quiz	Group workshops	Digital Hub Support staff, Outreach team.

Access to better opportunities for consumer behaviour and financial advantages.	Proportion of older adults who have used online products/services in the last 3 months	35%	Baseline and Impact survey questions Consumer Behaviour quiz	Start and end of digital intervention support Group workshops	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers. Digital Hub Support staff, Outreach team.
	Frequency of shopping online	Average score of 3	Baseline and Impact survey questions Consumer Behaviour quiz	Start and end of digital intervention support Group workshops	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers. Digital Hub Support staff, Outreach team.
Reduced fear of using digital services	Proportion of older adults who say that the internet makes life easier for them	50%	Baseline and Impact survey questions	Start and end of digital intervention support	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers.
	Frequency of device use	Average score of 3 (weekly)	Baseline and impact survey questions	Start and end of digital intervention support	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers.
Reduced social isolation and improved overall well-being	Proportion of older adults reporting that they feel less socially isolated as a result of going online	50%	Impact survey questions	End of digital intervention support	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers

	Proportion of older adults that report 'life is better' as a result of being able to access the internet	50%	Impact survey questions	End of digital intervention support	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers

Outputs

Activity (the area of work we plan to provide)	Output (the good, service or product being delivered)	Indicator (what will we measure?)	How will we collect it?	When will we collect it?	Who will collect it?
Digital Drop In Sessions at Community outreach locations.	Community Outreach sessions	No of outreach sessions delivered No of people assisted at each session No of repeat interactions over the session calendar Profile: age; gender % of problems resolved immediately	Outreach interactions record sheet	At each outreach session with each attendee After 4 interactions with individual	Outreach session workers and volunteers
One to One Support at Hub or centre	One-to-One support sessions	No. of individual sessions	One-to-One support record sheet - records	At each one-to-one session with individual learner	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers.

		No. of people supported Profile: age; gender	each learner interaction Baseline survey Impact Survey	At beginning of support programme At end of programme of support or after 4 sessions	
Group Workshops • Scams and online threats • Internet safety • Online consumer opportunities	Workshops	No of Group workshops delivered No of people attending group workshops Profile: age; gender	Group workshop record sheet Group workshop quiz	At each group workshop at beginning and end of workshop to evidence impact	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers.
Device and data provision to digitally excluded people through a number of programmes	Device and data provision through a number of programmes	No of devices distribute to older people (over 55) Profile: age; gender Type of device No of follow up Digital Support requested	Pull relevant data (over 55s) from device distribution spreadsheets	Red Chair device allocation staff After recipient has device for 3 months	Device allocation staff
Device setup support: Offering guidance and support to older adults	Device support sessions	No of device set up sessions	Device setup record sheet	At device support session	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital

in setting up and using their digital devices.		Types of device Profile: age; gender No of follow on to digital learning - % overall			Champions and volunteers.
Producing and distributing topic specific printed resources	Printed resources distributed	No of printed resources distributed - split into resource topic	Printed resource record sheet	Record monthly how many of each topic have been given out.	Project worker
Remote Support - digital support over the phone or by email or video call	Remote digital support	No of remote support sessions % of overall sessions Type of remote support - email, phone, Zoom Profile: age; gender	Remote support record sheet	At each remote support session	Digital Hub Support staff, Digital Champions and volunteers.

E. Data Gathering Tools

Data gathering tools were developed to record the demographic data of participants and the relevant measurable indicators to be gathered for each outcome and were designed to be used during the delivery of the digital intervention activities to older people. These tools comprised of:

- Baseline Survey- used to gather baseline data for participants and completed at the beginning of one-to-one support. Demographic data was gathered, and levels of digital confidence, skills and abilities were measured.
- Impact Survey- used to determine impact and progression of participants of one-to-one support. Completed after at least 4 one-to-one sessions. Baseline questions on digital confidence, skills and abilities were repeated, and additional questions were asked on impact on wellbeing and social isolation. Questions to help us evaluate the support were also asked.
- Single Interaction Record- used to record single interaction digital support delivered at community outreach sessions.
- Workshop Quizzes- used to measure the impact of media and digital literacy training after each workshop.
- Device and Connectivity Records- used to measure how many older people needed devices and connectivity provided to gain access to the digital world.
- Remote Support Record- used to record remote support sessions, and if the issue could be resolved remotely.
- Interview Topic Guide- used to carry out uniform participant interviews at the end of the project.