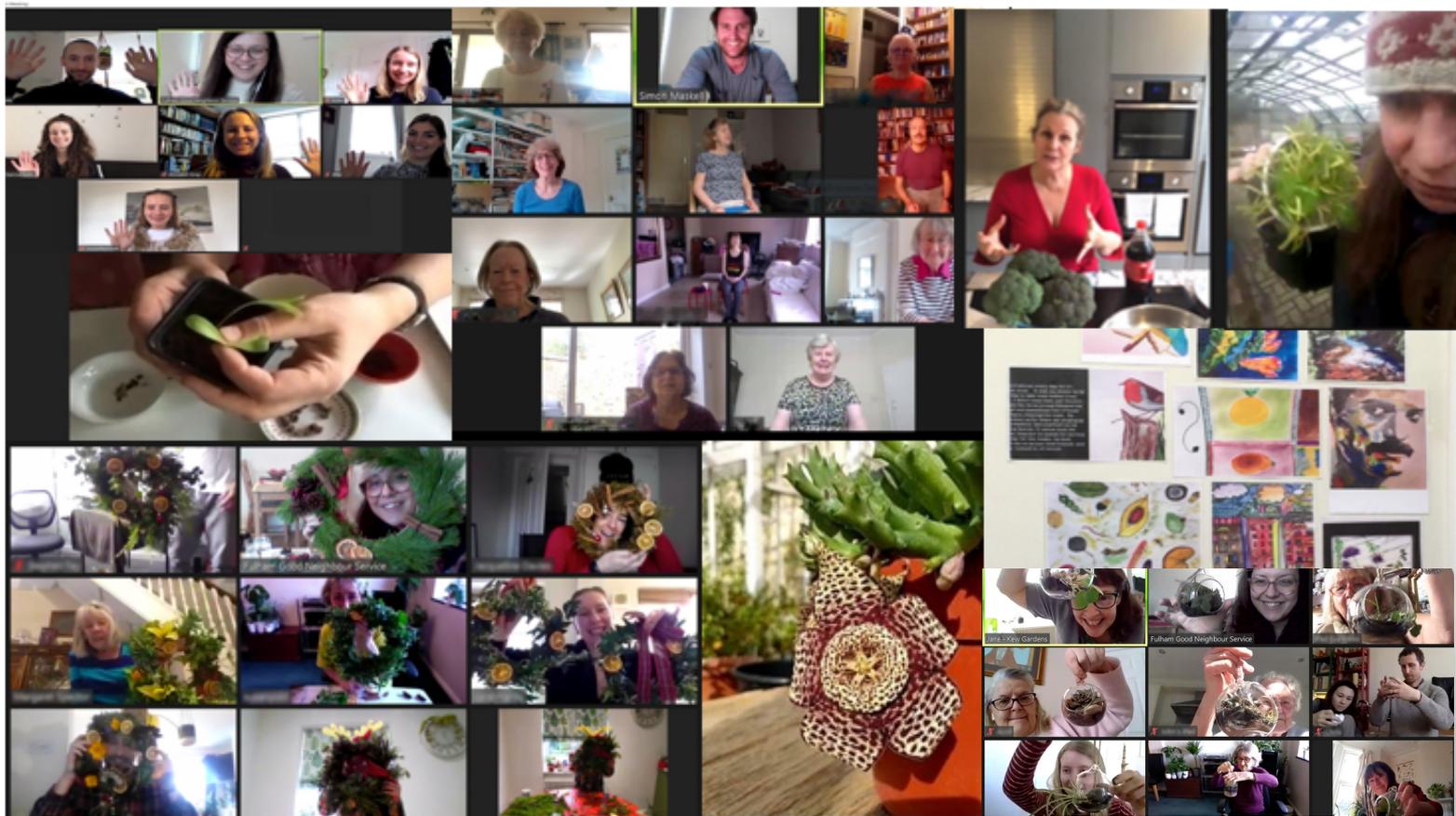


# FULHAM GOOD NEIGHBOURS

# DIGITAL INCLUSION PROJECT

*Year 3 - Impact Report  
April 2020 - March 2021*



# OVERVIEW



- ABOUT THE PROJECT
- DIGITAL INCLUSION & COVID-19
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# ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Digital Inclusion Project with Fulham Good Neighbours started in April 2018. Between April 2020 - March 2021, it benefited from the generous support and funding from the ExPat Foundation, The Albert Hunt Trust and the Florence Cohen Charitable Trust.

The project has proved to be popular and addressed the ongoing demand for digital support from the very beginning. The Covid-19 pandemic and increased isolation of older people due to lockdowns and shielding measures has amplified the need for digital inclusion.

Many of those who had never considered using the Internet before, requested our support to bridge the digital gap and be able to access medical and community services or connect with family and friends. Digital skills were recognised as essential to keeping in touch with others, staying informed, addressing feelings of loneliness or increasing one's mental and physical wellbeing.

The Digital Inclusion Project connects skilled volunteers with older people in Fulham, who receive support in learning about how to use technology and the Internet.

The individually tailored sessions are delivered remotely via phone or video chats, helping older people to develop new skills and the necessary confidence in using digital tools such as Zoom or WhatsApp.

Fulham Good Neighbours had to stop all one-to-one visits, in March 2020, at the advice of the UK Government, in order to protect the health and wellbeing of its older beneficiaries and volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic. As both volunteers and older people were either self-isolating or social distancing, the need for support in addressing isolation and loneliness increased, so we adapted the Digital Inclusion project to enable it to continue one-to-one support remotely.



*"I started using the computer a lot; more than I ever had, since I chose to self-isolate. It's satisfying, I like to look things up, Google them."*

**BM, July 2020**

# DIGITAL INCLUSION & COVID-19

Since April 2020, we continued to recruit volunteers to support remotely via weekly individual check-ins, chats and tech support phone calls. Our Digital Inclusion project expanded at the beginning of last year so to wrap itself around our other projects, allowing for their continued delivery during lockdowns. Staff were introduced to using Zoom for meetings, volunteer interviews and trainings; facilitators started using digital platforms so to continue delivery of our Chair Based Exercise and Art Groups online. 75% of the face-to-face attendees moved online and the increased demand for the online sessions led Fulham Good Neighbour to supplement the classes by adding two more weekly online sessions.



*"It is a great privilege to provide these exercise classes online [...] To continue be able to support the older people of my local community from a distance, is truly humbling. Observing how people have engaged with technology so to overcome challenges, meet with one another and take care of their own well-being during this devastating pandemic is inspiring."*  
Simon Maskell (Biokineticist & FGN Facilitator)

New digital services were introduced to address the increased isolation and the needs of our older members by offering regular Virtual Garden Tours, Gardening workshops, nutrition and wellbeing workshops like Eat Well to Be Well. The new online provision created new partnerships and collaborations between our Digital Inclusion Project and other local organisations like the Nubian Life Centre, Fulham Palace, Hammersmith Community Garden Association, the Star Centre, Kew Gardens and Fulham Library. Keeping older people connected with their local services and events, while also reaching out to new individuals who might further benefit from digital inclusion support.

However, we recognise that 25% of our members did not transition online and we continue to support them via Telephone Befriending, food and medicine deliveries to the door and outreach initiatives like delivering Herbal Tea or Christmas Activity packs.

Going forward we will look to increase access to digital equipment, maintain our online projects and return to in-person delivery in people's homes and at our community centre when it is safe to do so.

# HOW WE HELP...

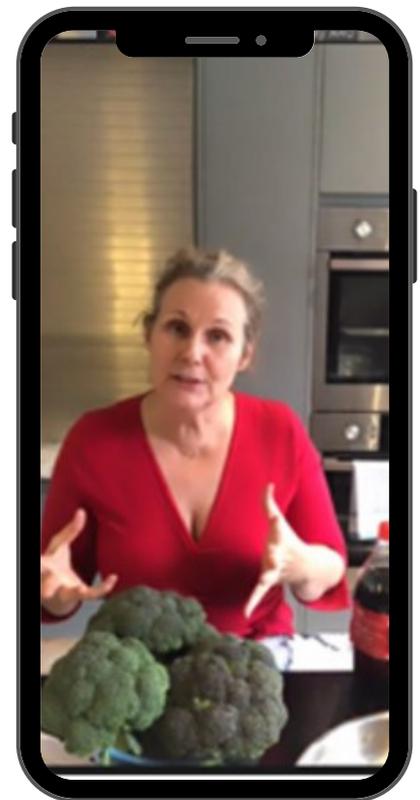
In the last year the majority of our staff, volunteers and beneficiaries had to rely on and incorporate digital into their day-to-day life almost over night. For the older people we support, this sudden change meant that they were potentially cut-off from their family, community, essential services, health advice and treatment, leading to an increased risk of loneliness, isolation and a decrease in the quality of life and personal wellbeing.

Having an already established Digital Inclusion Project allowed us to respond immediately to the suddenly increased demand of digital support and address these issues head on. We had in place the tools, procedures and volunteers which enabled us to help older people to make the transition from face-to-face to digital and remote support.

Each older person can choose how much or how little they wish to learn about the use of digital, and also they have the support to explore which devices and tools are best suited for their individual needs. Our Digital Skills Volunteers are matched to encourage the development of a friendly and positive relationship with the older people they support.

This way of working has made the project very popular for it's practical benefits to helping older people learn to use technology as well as it's benefits in increasing the mental and physical wellbeing of the participants.

*"I really enjoyed the [online] Cookery demonstration... The coke and broccoli information was an eye opener. Thanks as well for the Diabetes information handout."  
NT, February 2021*



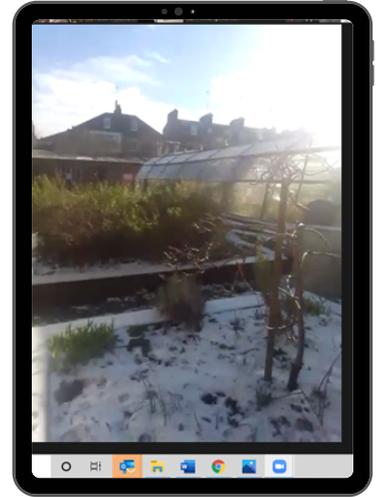
# ...HOW WE HELP

During the lockdown the project continued to be delivered via remote support over the phone or Facetime, and we delivered a laptop and a tablet to beneficiaries who did not have access to equipment. This allowed 27 older people to receive individual digital support and learn how to use technology to access services, stay informed and keep connected to others in a time of great uncertainty and limited in-person contact.

Remote weekly contact provided both emotional and practical support to the older people who were shielding from the pandemic, as well as a sense of purpose and fulfilment to the Digital Skills Volunteers who were also socially isolating. The need for helping older people bridge the digital gap was widely recognised with 39 Digital Skills volunteers supporting the project, 14 of whom have joined us in last year.

This made it possible for us to make 317 remote tech support and befriending weekly calls in the last year.

Additionally, a total of 71 older people became regular attendees of our new Online Social Clubs, Virtual Garden Tours, Online Gardening, Nutrition and Wellbeing events, which registered an amazing 1668 online attendances between April 2020 - March 2021.



*"I much enjoyed the virtual garden tour with Zoe... I would like to try and visit when the weather is a bit warmer so will be in touch with HCGA. Many thanks for arranging the « outing »"*

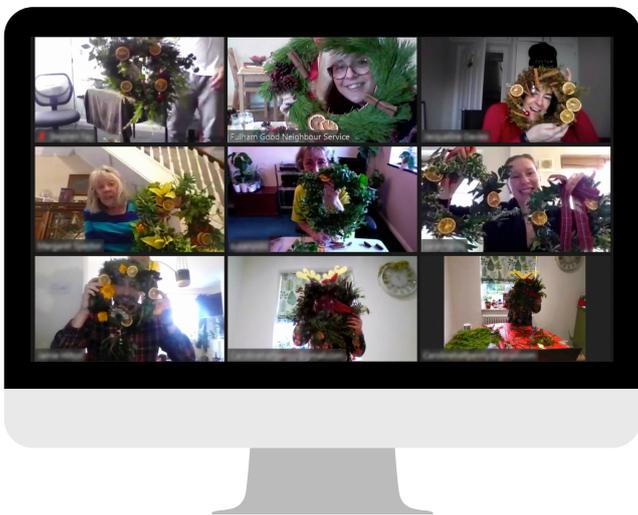
**RJ, February 2021**

*"I really enjoyed the session and the wreath making was made relatively simple and easy to follow. Very pleased to have it on my door. Thank you."*

**SM, December 2020**

*"It was good to see you again the other day albeit virtually".*

**PS, December 2020**



# THE FIGURES

## BENEFICIARIES



We continue to attract new beneficiaries and offering remote support enables access for those who are shielding or housebound, with **107 older people accessing our Digital Inclusion Project between April 2020 - March 2021.**

The project has a lasting impact on the local community by creating social connections even during the lockdown, addressing feelings of loneliness and isolation, while increasing community participation. The initiative increases the wellbeing of those involved, by offering them a way of creating meaningful relationships and supporting their neighbours and community.

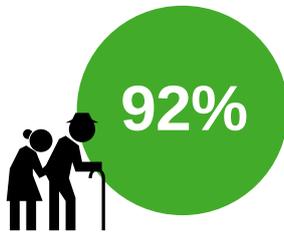
## VOLUNTEERS



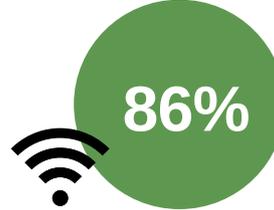
*"The volunteer is very nice and has been helping me. We can't do all the things I need, because obviously he can't come over. But he calls and emails and it seems to be working."*  
ME, May 2020

# DETAILS ON

## OUR BENEFICIARIES



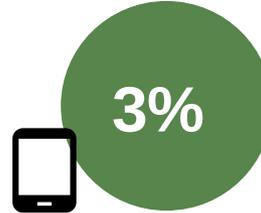
AGED BETWEEN  
75 -94  
YEARS OLD



RARELY OR  
NEVER USED  
THE INTERNET



HOUSEBOUND,  
SHIELDING



DID NOT HAVE  
EQUIPMENT OR  
BROADBAND

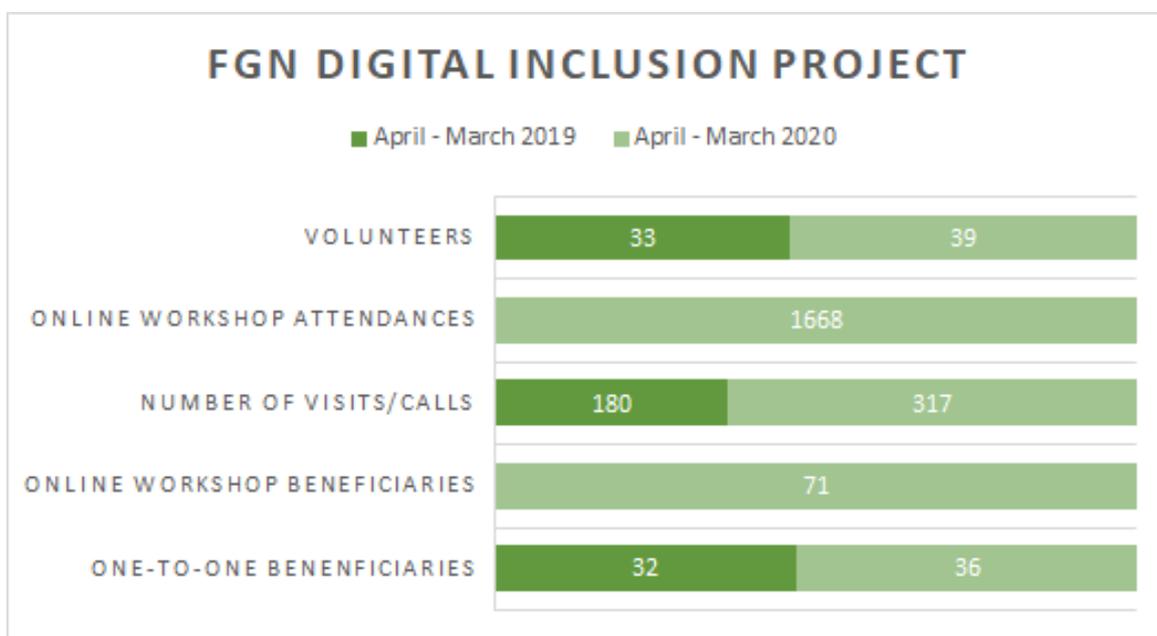
Between April 2020 - March 2021, 97% of our beneficiaries were housebound, sometimes due to shielding. 3% of the beneficiaries signalled an issue with lack of equipment, although we were able to loan them tablets and a laptop, going forward we want to work more with those digitally excluded through **lack of the necessary equipment and connectivity**. We want to pilot a sub-project in which we provide ten 4G tablets to the most digitally excluded of our beneficiaries, partnering them with a Digital Inclusion volunteer and funding six months' worth of data. As part of this we want to track beneficiaries at key data points along the way to monitor: improvements in accessing services; reduction in isolation and loneliness; and other KPI's. At the end of the six months we want to provide the right pathway for the individual, which may include further loan of equipment, support in reducing cost of telecoms package/adding internet connection (many older people are stuck on old tariffs, and could in fact save money by adding internet); further one-to-one/group support; introduction to our other services. The evaluation data will inform the next stage of the sub-project.

*"I received the FGN tablet, it looks sturdy. The volunteer will call again and we will look at setting it up. It seems things are more and more online these days. I'm trying to adapt to that, not just because of the lockdown but being housebound anyway, and the tablet will be very useful." JP, March 2021*



# DETAILS ON

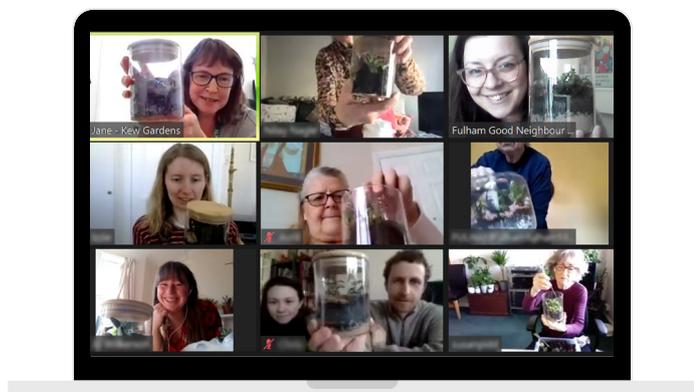
## TOTAL NUMBERS



We recognised that, even with access to equipment, older people risk to remain digitally excluded due to lack of digital skills and self-confidence when using technology. In addressing these issues, we notice **the total number beneficiaries who accessed the project for regular lessons, one-off support or joining an online activity was three time higher than last year.**

Also, by offering online social activities this year, we enabled 71 beneficiaries to join weekly online events, **recording 1668 online attendances.**

We also notice a **100% increase in the number of individual contacts**, with volunteers making weekly calls to ensure the beneficiaries were well supported, but also due to an increased variety of digital needs for the beneficiaries.



*"Thank you for class and opportunity to try something new, that had it not been for FGN, I would not been included in such an awesome creative event, I am happy and grateful for all the time, effort and consideration put into this workshop and all projects that keep us going, active and included in our local community. I highly recommend the service, Flora's [Art] classes and this was so empowering!"*  
KM, March 2021

# MAIN DIGITAL NEEDS

**In the last year our Digital Inclusion Project has offered support around three main areas of interest:**

## **Communication & Social Connections**

Our Digital Skills volunteers offered remote support to older people who learnt how to use tools like emails, WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook, Facetime in order to contact and stay in touch with family, friends and support groups, to feel connected to the outside world and part of the local community. Beneficiaries learnt to use the Internet for leisure and join online screenings, shows and concerts. Community participation was also enabled by helping older people join our online social clubs and activities.



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## **Online Safety & Misinformation**

During the lockdown we saw an increase in worries about online scams. Our staff, volunteers and e-newsletter helped our beneficiaries take appropriate online security measures, maintain safe use of their accounts and increase their confidence when using digital tools, as well as accessing online official information on health.



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## **Accessing Online Services**

The Covid-19 pandemic pushed services to a remote delivery model, face-to-face support and advice became only accessible online. We supported older people to access health information online, stay in touch with medical services by using digital devices and use technology to engage in physical activity and increase their health and wellbeing from the safety of their own home.



# MARINE'S STORY

\*Marine is 77 years old and she contacted our Digital Inclusion project in February 2020 for help with installing her new laptop and learning how to better use her smartphone, including WhatsApp to stay in touch with family and friends abroad. She was matched for support with one of our Digital Skills volunteers but before their first meeting, the UK was put on a national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. \*Marine suddenly had to shield in her home, with no visitors, without face-to-face access to her GP or chemist, nor the support of the regular carers, who at the time did not have access to protective equipment.

Fulham Good Neighbours reached out to her and after doing a welfare check over the phone, she was listed for a weekly food delivery to the door and informed that she can also access our other services like shopping and medicine delivery. She was matched for remote digital support over the phone. After the initial introduction call, Marine and the Digital Skills volunteer spent a few hours going through the process for installing her new laptop. The remote digital support over the phone meant everything went a bit slower, but with patience and perseverance over the course of a few calls, \*Marine gained access to her laptop, installed and accessed her email and was able to contact family and friends and stay connected at a time when everyone was physically unable to come together.

Being aware of her long-time medical conditions, \*Marine was very concerned about maintaining her health and wellbeing. With the support of our volunteer she installed and learned how to use Zoom to attend the weekly Online Chair Based Exercise group with Fulham Good Neighbours. Since then, she maintained a regular attendance on over 25 online sessions. She was also invited and attended our Virtual Garden Walk at Fulham Palace Garden and the online Eat Well to Be Well session on managing diabetes. She was engaged in the sessions and maintained correspondence via email and accessed more recipes after the session.

***“Thank you for organising the online garden walk with Fulham Palace. It was really good, we have been to the park a couple of times after the lockdown. There is no lockdown now, but it looks like there might be one soon. It was so good to see the garden and listen to the stories, I know other people would like it. There are events for older people, but we have to take public transport to get there. And technology is so much better now, it will be nice to see this again. Maybe other places, even further away.”***

\*Marine continues to be active with our digital inclusion project, she regularly attends the weekly online chair-based exercise sessions and maintains weekly contact with our remote support volunteer having had over 50 befriending and tech support calls and hoping to one day meet each other in person, when the lockdown is lifted allowing us to resume home visits.

\*The names of the client and volunteer have been changed for confidentiality reasons.

# CONTACT US



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