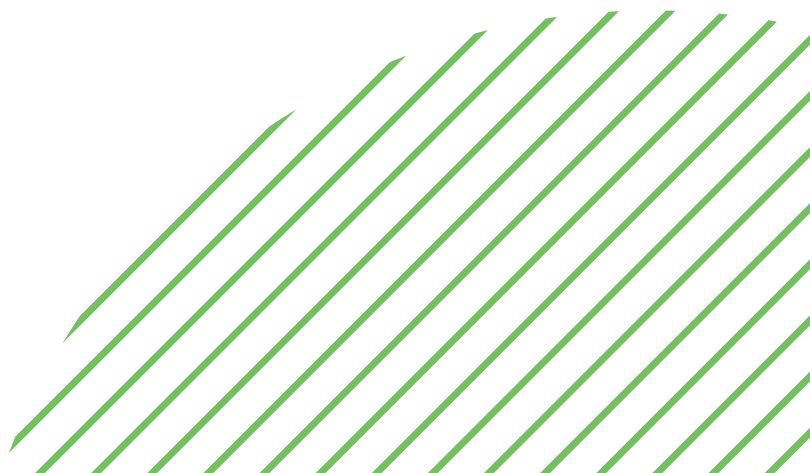


FULHAM GOOD NEIGHBOURS

DIGITAL INCLUSION PROJECT

*Year 3 - Interim Report
April - September 2020*



OVERVIEW



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Digital Inclusion Project with Fulham Good Neighbours started in April 2018. Between April 2020 and September 2020, 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 very popular from the beginning, with an ongoing demand for digital support. This demand has intensified in light of the Covid-19 pandemic with older people needing more digital support to access much needed services to stay in touch with loved ones during these unprecedented times. For some of our older members motivation was originally a barrier to getting online, but driven by the national lockdown back in March 2020, these same beneficiaries and others contacted us ready to learn and start going online. Many of these beneficiaries had never considered using the Internet before.

The Digital Inclusion Project connects skilled volunteers with older people in Fulham, who receive support in learning about exciting and useful technological resources.

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.

"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, 85 years old
July 2020**

DIGITAL INCLUSION & COVID-19

In March 2020, at the advice of the UK Government, Fulham Good Neighbours took the difficult decision to stop all one-to-one visits 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.



Social distancing is making the issue of digital inclusion more acute than ever.

Therefore, most of our matches became focused on wellbeing and remote support via Telephone Befriending, with nine digital inclusion matches continuing their interaction and support via weekly check-ins, chats and tech support phone calls. Moreover, some of the Digital Inclusion volunteers supported new beneficiaries with technical issues such as installing or using Zoom or joining our new online groups for Art Classes and Chair-Based exercise. Furthermore, our Art Group members organised the first **FGNS Online Art Exhibition, which you can preview by clicking [here](#)**. The artworks were shared with over 1,000 beneficiaries across our services, as the Art group wanted to share optimism and inspiration during a very difficult time for the whole community.

Reducing the impact of isolation and loneliness is a key component of our strategy, and is an issue identified by LBHF's Older People's Commission (March 2019). With this in mind Age UK and the University of Southampton's 'Index for wellbeing in later life' (2017) findings are of influence. They found: meaningful engagement, whether through social, creative or physical activity, contributes over 20% to an individual's sense of wellbeing in later life; out of 40 indicators creative and cultural participation contributed most significantly to wellbeing; and physical activity was the second highest factor. Our Digital Inclusion project has developed so to provide meaningful engagement into the home through both creative and cultural engagement (our Art Group) and physical activity (our Chair Based Exercise group).

Between April - September 2020, we had 29 beneficiaries attending our online Chair Based Exercise Group and 16 beneficiaries who attended the online Art Group sessions. Without the Digital Inclusion project this would not have been possible.

Going forward we will look to maintain the online versions of both of these projects on a weekly basis in addition to any in-person delivery at our community centre.

"I was trying to get it (Zoom) to work and luckily enough guess who should call? The volunteer knew just what to do, she stayed on the phone and got it going. Now, I can join the trainer for the Chair Based Exercise class online."

***NB, 83 years old
March 2020***

HOW WE HELP

The Covid-19 lockdown meant that millions of people had to rely on and incorporate digital into their day-to-day life. For the older people who had no digital skills this meant that they were potentially cut-off from their family, community and essential services, leading to an increased risk of loneliness and social isolation.

Having an already established Digital Inclusion Project meant that we were able to respond immediately to the suddenly increased demand of digital support as we had in place the tools, procedures and volunteers which enabled us to help older people to make a transition from face-to-face to digital and remote support.

Our digital project enables each of our beneficiaries to choose how much or how little they wished to learn, but also allows them to develop a friendly, supportive and positive relationship with their designated matched volunteer.

This aspect of the project actually allowed the matches to continue during the lockdown in a remote support format, when the volunteer visits had to be temporarily postponed.

Nine matches transitioned from face-to-face home visits to having weekly contact via telephone to provide both emotional and practical support to the older people who were shielding from the pandemic.

Six beneficiaries opted out of telephone befriending as they were already supported by or living with their families. They have instead used our support scheme with essential tasks such as shopping, when required.

Ten more beneficiaries joined the project since April 2020, benefiting from remote tech support and weekly calls from one of our friendly volunteers.

Additionally, a total of 52 older people became regular attendees of our new Online Social Clubs by joining our Online Art Group and Online Chair Based Exercise classes.

THE FIGURES

BENEFICIARIES



The Digital Inclusion Project continues to attract new beneficiaries and volunteers, and by offering remote support it enables older people to develop enduring relationships with their matched volunteers.

The Project also has a lasting impact in forming social connections in community even during the Covid-19 pandemic, working to address the feelings of loneliness and isolation that were exacerbated by the national lockdown. It offers its volunteers a way of supporting their neighbours and of feeling connected with their community during this time.

VOLUNTEERS

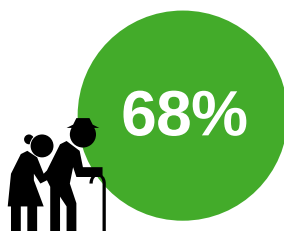


"The volunteer is very nice and has been helping me. We can't do all the things I need, because obviously he can't come over. But he calls and emails and it seems to be working. He is now helping me join the Sofab online art exhibition."

**ME, 78 years old
May 2020**

DETAILS ON

OUR BENEFICIARIES



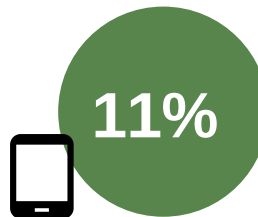
AGED BETWEEN
75 -94
YEARS OLD



RARELY OR
NEVER USED
THE INTERNET



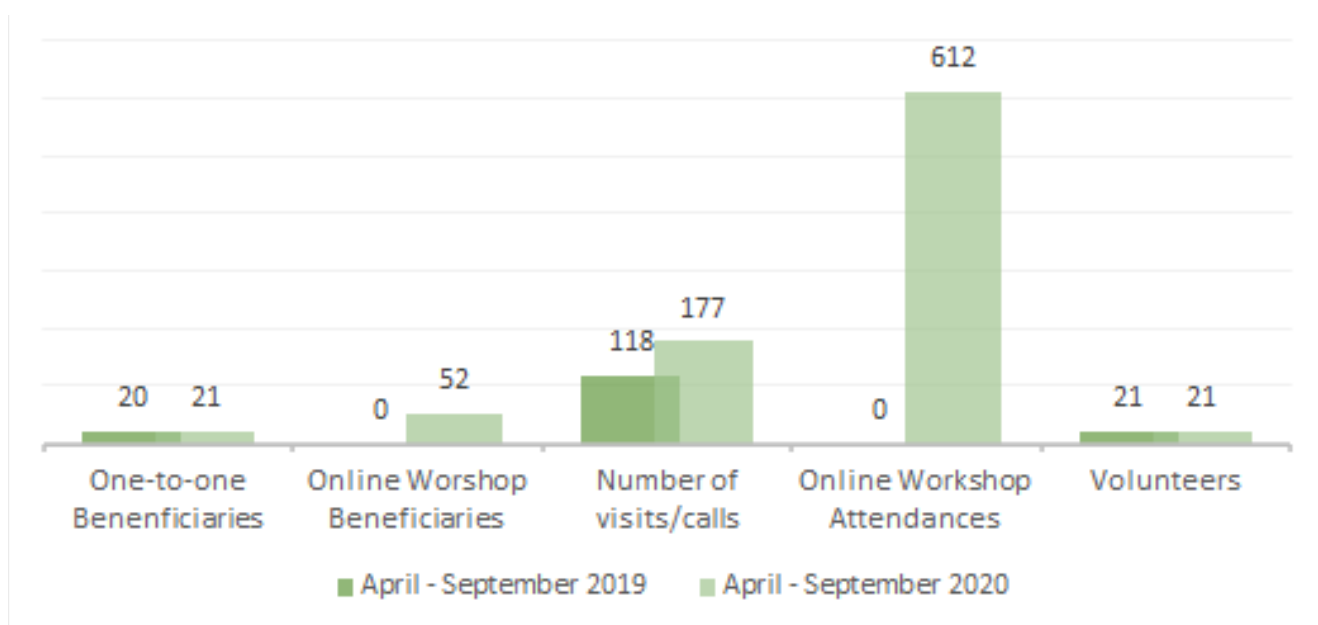
HOUSEBOUND,
SHIELDING



DID NOT HAVE
EQUIPMENT OR
BROADBAND

The figures show us that in the first six months of Year 3, during the Covid-19 pandemic, 100% of our beneficiaries were housebound, sometimes due to shielding. Also, despite the change of the intervention model from home visits to remote phone support, the numbers of volunteers and beneficiaries remained constant when compared to April-September 2019. Just as noteworthy is a **48% increase in the number of individual contacts** from one year to the next. This was due in part to the volunteers making weekly calls to ensure the beneficiaries were well supported, but also due to an increased variety of digital needs for the beneficiaries. By being able to offer **online social clubs** this year we enabled 52 beneficiaries to join the events which they attended weekly, with the online social clubs recording 612 attendances in the last six months.

TOTAL NUMBERS



MAIN DIGITAL NEEDS

We distinguished three main areas of interest for the beneficiaries of our Digital Inclusion Project:

Communication

Our Digital Skills volunteers offered remote support to older people who learnt how to use tools like emails, WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook and Messenger in order to contact and stay in touch with family, friends and feel connected to the outside world more generally.



Online Safety

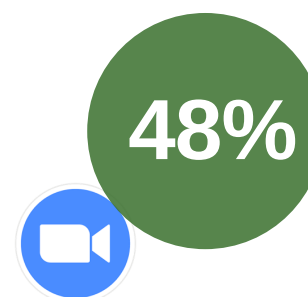
We sadly saw during the lockdown an increase of online scams and our volunteers helped our beneficiaries take appropriate online security measures, regain safe use of their accounts and increase their confidence when using digital tools.



Accessing Online Services

Covid-19 pushed a lot of services to an online delivery model. With the help of our volunteers, older people learnt to access health information and use digital tools like Fitbit or online classes through Zoom to engage in physical activity and increase their health and wellbeing from the safety of their own home. Beneficiaries also learnt to use the Internet for leisure by using Netflix or joining online screenings, shows and concerts.

Community participation was also enabled by helping older people join our Online Social Clubs, having them contribute to our first FGNS Online Art Exhibition and get them involved in community online initiatives like the art competition fundraiser ran by the Society of Fulham Artists and Potters for Charing Cross Hospital.



GRACE'S STORY

Grace* is 79 years old and she joined our Digital Inclusion Project wanting to meet a volunteer who would patiently help her to learn how to use the digital devices she had at home and how to use the Internet to do online shopping. She was matched with David*, one of our Digital Skills volunteers and they started the lessons straight away. With the volunteer's assistance, Grace regained access to her Gmail account and installed shopping apps for Waitrose and Sainsburys. However, our volunteer had to stop his home visits once the Covid-19 pandemic reached the UK and a national lockdown was in place.

The situation was particularly worrying for Grace as she lives alone, has pre-existing health issues and was at the time recovering from an operation. She was told by her doctor to self-isolate and shelter. However, she was happy to continue to have weekly phone calls from David and have someone to converse to during her self-isolation. They had weekly chats, not just about tech issues but about day-to-day life difficulties such as contacting the GP and worries about needing healthcare with the NHS seeming to be so overwhelmed. They also discussed her concerns about not being able to go out and get food and David was not only able to help her learn about online shopping but also to inform her about the support Fulham Good Neighbours offers, like help with small local shopping, referral for food parcels and cooked food from local partners. As the days and weeks went by, things seem to come together for Grace, who received a new fridge from her local church and started receiving regular food deliveries. She also became confident in using online shopping:

"I've been ordering food and things on the Internet. I cannot go out for shopping because of my health and I can't carry it back, but I managed with the Internet so far, waiting for a package all the time, it's like having a present!"

During the weekly calls, the volunteer supported her to use the Internet, something she was determined to learn now more than ever. With remote phone support, Grace learnt how to reconnect her Wi-Fi and how to use her Fitbit app to keep active, which was important to her as she used to walk two miles a day before the lockdown. Grace also learnt that a friend was streaming his concerts online, so David helped her install and use Zoom to join the music events, enjoy the shows and interact with her friend:

"My friend is in Australia and he does concerts, but of course he can't travel. So, he puts on shows on Zoom, it's all he can do now. He was supposed to come this year to perform at the Royal Albert Hall, but everything stopped."

Also, when her TV box stopped functioning and Grace did not wish to contact her provider and deal with the hassle of sorting this out during the pandemic, our volunteer helped her install and use Netflix on her TV. The volunteer also researched how to find more Audiobooks and compiled a list of potential reading materials, as well as Netflix shows Grace could watch on Netflix, which he shared with her via email.

As the months of shielding went by, Grace was able to talk about her worries about Covid-19 during the weekly calls with our volunteer and how the anxiety had affected her capacity or mind space for dealing with technical issues.

"I've been stuck inside for six months, but I started walking around the communal garden at the back about a month ago. I have the garden and a balcony. I can open for air, I can sit on the balcony, fortunately. I don't know what I would have done without it. In fact, I was just looking on the Internet when you rang, the people on the beaches, there's not a lot of social distancing or masks wearing. I would need some help and someone to do the cleaning, but I can't have someone in here now."

In the last couple of weeks, the two have mainly focused on conversations and friendly talks. But once she is ready, Grace looks forward to set up a new Ocado account and she got a new iPad which David will assist her in setting-up.

"The volunteer is very good, he rings every week and has been helping me with a lot of things. He's very sweet and checks in on me."

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

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