

# Thematic Bulletin 1. 'Virtually' together? Replicating place- based provision? 2020



**T.E.D.**  
Ageing Better  
in East Lindsey

## Virtually Together

This is the first thematic bulletin from a more detailed learning report on Digital Inclusion during COVID 19 from the TED Programme. Other thematic bulletins include:

- The role of enjoyment in digital upskilling and inclusion
- Championing digital inclusion

A recent Centre for Ageing Better Briefing Report (2020: 2) gives a useful starting point for understanding 'digital inclusion':

*"Digital inclusion is about ensuring people are able to use the internet and online technologies to meet their needs. This includes:*

**Infrastructure** – being able to afford or have access to a device (whether a mobile phone, tablet or computer), as well as being able to afford or have access to the internet through broadband, Wi-Fi or mobile data.

**Skills** – having the ability, confidence and digital skills to use digital devices and the internet.

**Accessibility** – having access to services that are designed to meet users' needs, including for individuals with disabilities that require assistive technology to get online."



TED is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and is managed by YMCA Lincolnshire

## About TED

Talk, Eat, Drink (TED) Ageing Better in East Lindsey is part of Ageing Better, a programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Ageing Better aims to develop creative ways for people aged 50 and over to combat social isolation and loneliness. It is one of five major programmes set up by The National Lottery Community Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.

Ageing Better learning nation-wide has captured the fast moving and unprecedented nature of the COVID 19 pandemic. TED have been adapting and reviewing the programme's service offer to fulfil its original aims and objectives, building both relationships and communities. During COVID 19, digital skills and 'digital inclusion' have frequently been cited as integral mechanisms for keeping relationships connected and people resilient both in the 'here and now', as well as facilitating future recovery from the pandemic and progression. These issues are also reflected in learning activity in the East Lindsey District, including a TED resilience and recovery themed conference, National Ageing Better reports, academic research and briefing papers.

A recent TED learning report featured four thematic areas on relationships which indicate and facilitate resilience in our communities. They are:

- Reaching out not 'hard to reach': Flexible, person-centred work in building relationships
- Exploring the role of activity in creating collaborative community resource
- Local awareness, credibility and social networks
- Resilience through 'digital inclusion'

These also enable understandings of 'digital inclusion' within ageing populations in the District. In this bulletin we present ways in which to understand, incentivise and support digital inclusion.

## Background: Understanding 'needs' and preferences

The preference for face-to-face/place-based services are not necessarily restricted to people belonging to a 'residual core', those unable or unwilling to develop digital skills or use devices. TED Friendship groups were hoping to re-convene in person and not draw on platforms for virtual meetings.

*"Older people prefer face to face – many older people who I have worked with would prefer seeing someone face to face as they feel they can explain their situation easier. I have seen this in the past when telephoning and signposting clients to other services and they would rather see someone than speak on the phone" (Citizens Advice Lindsey, delivery partner project case study)*

*"The best thing is to see them, it's difficult not to see them" (Friendship group chair, inland market town)*

*"(People) prefer calls, not all have got computers or laptops... prefer to have a chat, that's a bit more personal... once it's all settled down, relatively normal, we'll go back to what we are doing – not deserted overnight" (Friendship group volunteer, coastal town)*



Whilst providers and people were experiencing a sense of loss through restrictions as a result of government measures relating to the pandemic, our research highlighted examples of services and ageing populations adapting to generate and embrace togetherness and support. Essential needs formed part of this, such as ordering prescriptions and arranging for delivery, online banking, food shopping and home delivery.

*“(We) continue to phone our users and check what support/help they need. Many are grateful for the call and are feeling more isolated than ever. We have a chat and see who else they know within the area to put them in touch with. One of our volunteers is excellent at connecting people together and is supporting us in this vital work. Continue to FaceTime/Skype/Zoom support to individuals as needed/signposted to us. More people are finding us as they hear we have helped a friend... helping with more FaceTime setups of printers/phones/computers” (Lincs Digital, TED delivery partner)*

Meeting ‘essential needs’ and the ‘wants’ or preferences of ageing populations blur. At least in-part, ‘digital inclusion’ was and remains instrumental in replacing and replicating pre-COVID 19 activities, ensuring ‘needs’ being met. **Digital communication has a key role in creating and maintaining interpersonal contact with families, friends, peers and others. This, was not, however, solely driven by essential ‘needs’. It was also driven by both the need and preference to be part of a community:**

*“Our garden group kept in contact with each other through WhatsApp. (A staff member from Magna Vitae, a TED Delivery Partner) who ran our exercise and nutrition friendship group has worked really hard regularly contacting us, letting us know what was online that we could access. Really felt that it was very helpful” (Lincolnshire Resilience Mapping Survey)*

TED continues to innovate. Whilst being mindful of Government guidance, digital ‘arms’ of service delivery were combined with other aspects. ‘Blended delivery’ gives a means of fulfilling the original aims and objectives of TED and, in addition, to reflect on and re-enact elements of pre-COVID 19 provision. Components include socially distanced visits, work with people on a one-to-one and/or group basis, through telephone support and online provision.

**A multi-pronged approach is important, not only in terms of reaching people and showcasing the adaptations of providers and users, it also guides strategies at motivating people to engage digitally.**



*“We have been contacting each individual beneficiary, ‘checking in’ in terms of their wellbeing at this difficult time and offering individualised information advice and support where needed – including signposting to organisations: providing delivery of food and groceries, local information hubs, Online support etc. and we will continue to check in on beneficiaries throughout this period. Whilst chatting to the beneficiaries, I have managed to gain verbal consent for their inclusion into a Men Do... Chat Directory... The Directory will include the beneficiaries name, age, town and a short profile about them including their interests or hobbies. Along with the Directory we will be sending a simple guide to downloading and using WhatsApp to increase their connectivity with one another.*

*We will also be sending out other useful documents including a directory that lists all supporting services in their area... This new offer will go out on Facebook and all Carers First communications, which covers a database of 10,000.” (Men Do project, Carers First TED delivery partner)*

For Men Do, 'digital' provision replicated aspects of peer-to-peer support experienced as part of their original 'pre-COVID 19' group breakfasts and innovative place-based events (for example, snooker masterclasses, brewery trips and air rifle shooting). This also indicates ways in which the pandemic has led to service diversification – including positive impacts with people beyond the project's original remit. As featured later in the full report on digital inclusion, we see how the importance of joy and activities engage people with communities, even if the digital aspect of delivery is managed by a third party.

**'Digital inclusion' has a significant role in the replication of relationships, activities and communities, and this takes place alongside the role of 'partnership work' in promoting 'digital inclusion' and 'community engagement':**

*"Learners without devices were experiencing a sense of loss and deep unsureness of the current situation and how they would cope without being able to go out. We were able to connect them with partner services that we already work with, or we looked into what services were available within their area... Most of the groups that suddenly arose out of COVID 19 had made community groups on Facebook and these proved to be very useful in the very early days of lockdown. As the weeks have gone on, resources online have been put together by our working partners Magna Vitae and East Lindsey (District Council) which not only are an excellent resource for ourselves, but we are able to direct our learners to them and advertise them on our website and all our social media sites... Social media has proved to be invaluable during COVID 19, both for finding information to share with others and to share our own information with others" (Lincs Digital, project case study)*

**Collaborative work and the integration of a digital aspect specifically has also enabled greater reach into communities to foster relationships.** Fitness, Food and Friends – a project run by Magna Vitae, a delivery partner – reflected on this in their case study:

*"All but 3 of the 34 participants have been able to provide an email address, either their own or one of their family members or friends, so that contact can be made this way...The new ways of working has increased partnership working, for example we are working with Arthritis Action and have introduced 6 participants to online resources (with) which they can engage to increase their knowledge and self-help around their Arthritis. In the long term this will help them manage their condition, improve their pain levels and help to reduce GP appointments and use of medication. These people have also been introduced to Zoom so they have learned new IT skills" (Magna Vitae, Fitness, Food and Friends project case study)*

TED continues to share resources, including online information and cross-posting on social media. In relation to partnership work and programme delivery this 'reach' has included finding ways of upskilling ageing populations that builds on the aforementioned content. National Ageing Better learning has referred to the 'hook' – a way of conceptualising how to attract and maintain the interest of (ageing) populations in digital skills and inclusion.

**In the context of TED, a core feature of the 'hook' is not purely about necessity or fulfilling essential needs, but predominantly engaging people in upskilling and digital inclusion through enjoyment, curiosity and fulfilment – aspects of the original service offer.**



# About East Lindsey



# T.E.D.

Ageing Better  
in East Lindsey

East Lindsey is a large, sparsely populated district within the county of Lincolnshire, which includes the popular coastal seaside towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe.

East Lindsey has a higher than average ageing population with 29% of people aged 65 and over. High numbers of older people move to East Lindsey in their retirement years and many have multiple chronic health conditions and few social and familial connections in the region. Public transport across East Lindsey is poor and therefore accessing services can be challenging, especially for older adults.

The overarching aims of the TED Programme are to:

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Help older people to become better connected with volunteering, social, leisure and health improving activities
- Provide opportunities for older people to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of both the services and businesses available to them

We currently have over 1800 registered TED members, and over 100 businesses across East Lindsey hold an Age-friendly Business Award.

## Further information...

To find out more about TED or to get involved visit our website [www.tedineastlindsey.co.uk](http://www.tedineastlindsey.co.uk) or start a conversation and share your views online: Twitter: [@ted\\_EastLindsey](https://twitter.com/ted_EastLindsey)



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