



# Mind the *digital* gap: older Londoners and internet use during the pandemic

July 2021



# Introduction

For hundreds of thousands of older Londoners, access to the internet had a powerful impact on their individual experience of the pandemic. The lockdowns galvanised some older Londoners to get online for the first time or increase the scope of their digital skills. Some will embrace their new digital world and never look back. Digital inclusion is a key tool in the fight against social isolation and during the pandemic digital access created opportunities and widened access to vital support.

There is however another side to this story and digital exclusion, its causes and its impacts, are complicated. This is an area in which it's rare to see the 'full picture' and assumptions are common. There are many older Londoners who do not use the internet at all, either out of choice or because it's inaccessible or unaffordable to them. For many, lack of access deepened existing exclusions and meant they faced even more barriers to accessing support. Not everyone who managed to get online during the pandemic will remain so, and others have not even had the chance. Although more people are benefiting from digital access, there is a real risk that the digital divide will continue to widen with profound consequences for us all.

This report presents both new data on older Londoners' use of the internet during the

pandemic and insights from local Age UKs in London and older Londoners themselves. The data used is new analysis of data from the *English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) COVID-19 Substudy (Wave 1)*, carried out in June/July 2020, which looks at the impact the pandemic has had on internet use among Londoners over the age of 65. We also interviewed representatives of nine local Age UKs in London who provide direct support for older Londoners, including digital skills training. Based on this data and these insights, we've put forward some recommendations in this report to ensure that everyone who can benefit from digital technology does so, while not excluding those who remain offline for other reasons.

The London Recovery Board, the body led jointly by the Mayor of London and the Leader of London Councils, has set as one of its 'missions': that "*every Londoner [should] have access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025.*" At a time when there is a focus on supporting all Londoners to get online, we thought it important to collect and share the views and experiences of older Londoners so that they inform the discussion about what a digitally-inclusive London looks like.



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# Summary

The ELSA data shows that the majority of those over 65 use the internet every day (60%), this falls to 40% of over 75 year olds. More Londoners over the age of 75 do not use the internet at all (45%) than use it every day. Older Londoners report using the internet more since the start of the pandemic but the increase is not as dramatic as might be expected: a third of over-65s are using it more - as are 20% of over-75s. In contrast, 7% of over-65s and 10% of over-75s reported using the internet less, possibly due to the closure of public places that offered internet access, digital skills training, or both. More than 200,000 Londoners over the age of 75 do not use the internet at all.

The data shows there is demand among older people to get online, with a quarter of older Londoners wanting to use the internet more. The most frequently cited reason for not using the internet more was a lack of digital skills, highlighting the importance of services such as those delivered by local Age UKs to provide training and support using the internet. Other reasons cited included a lack of access to devices or data; a lack of trust in the internet including fear of scams, or health problems that prevented use of digital equipment.

Feedback from local Age UKs showed both an increased interest in using the internet since the pandemic started from some older people and that others continued to choose not to use it. We heard a strong message that those who chose not to or were unable to use the internet should not be disadvantaged when it came to accessing services.

Local Age UKs provide a vital service in supporting older people who would like to use the internet to do so. This includes running digital skills sessions centred on the specific needs and preferences of older people and providing devices and dongles that provide a connection to the internet. Lockdown measures made it much harder to deliver these services that rely on face-to-face contact. We heard positive stories of how supporting older people to access the internet improved their quality of life. In contrast we also heard from older people struggling to get online because of a lack of skills or confidence, or because they did not have access to a device or have Wi-Fi or mobile phone 'data'. We also heard about negative experiences of older people who do not want to use the internet and feel excluded from society as a result.

**“I was getting a bit down in the lockdown and someone from my local Age UK called me asking if I would like to attend activities on Zoom. I made a few mistakes to start with, but now I just go boom, boom, boom! I get to have a laugh and talk to someone and that’s what makes my day”.**

**“We have connected many older people previously not on line but then they immediately become targets for scammers”.**

**“Why is nothing straightforward when it is digital? Computers are meant to make life smoother and quicker and fool proof. Except that they don’t.”**

**“It can take a lot of motivating to encourage some older adults to think about going online but it is so worth it when you see the difference it can make to their health and wellbeing.”**

**“I have been using [the internet] to listen to music and access church activities... It has made a huge difference to my life.”**

**“There are real challenges with telephone and online communication when issues prohibit clear understanding, such as hard of hearing, language difficulties and dementia among other issues.”**

**“I’m not interested because I can’t understand it, I’ve never been on the internet or looked at it because I have no interest to and don’t really enjoy that type of thing.”**

# Internet use since the onset of coronavirus

In this chapter, we present findings from analysis of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) COVID-19 Sub-study Wave 1, which was carried out during June and July 2020, a few months after the UK's first COVID-19 lockdown. This provides us with information about internet use by older Londoners and can be broken down into two subgroups based on age (65-74 and 75+).

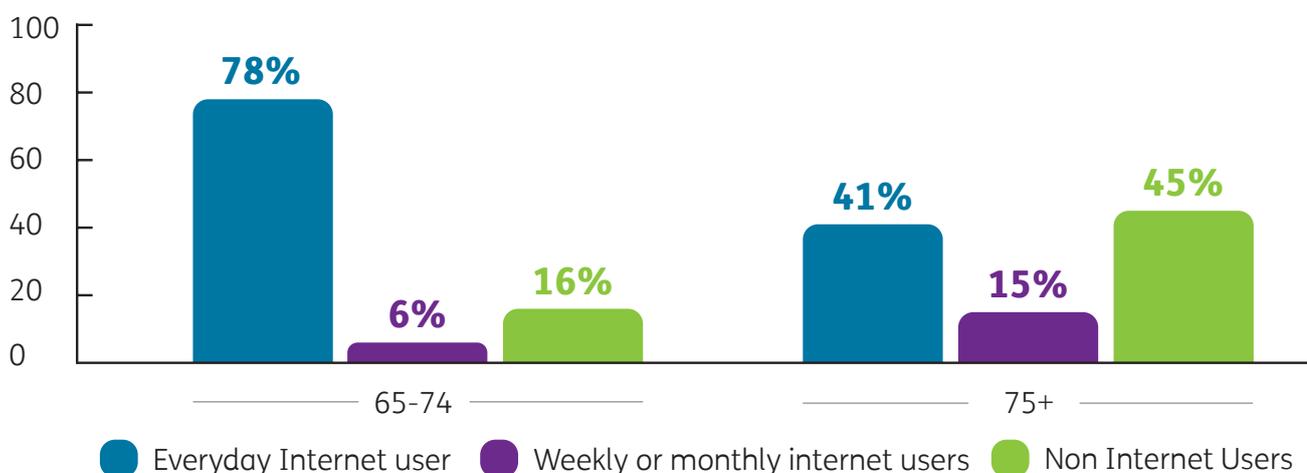
## Average internet use in London since the coronavirus outbreak

Internet use is considerably lower among Londoners aged 75+ than among those aged 65-74. Most Londoners aged 65-74 (78%) are 'everyday' internet users (using the internet at least once a day or nearly every day), compared to under half of those aged 75+ (41%). Across England the figure is 46% for those aged 75+<sup>1</sup>.

The data suggests that the number of Londoners aged 75+ who use the internet every day (41%) and the number of Londoners aged 75+ who do not use the internet at all (45%) is broadly similar. This would mean there were more than 220,000 Londoners aged 75+ who did not use the internet at all.<sup>2</sup>

Across the whole of England, 46% of those over the age of 75 reported using the internet every day and 42% not at all.

## Average internet or email use among people in London since the Coronavirus outbreak



<sup>1</sup>Although the difference between the two figures may suggest a small difference, it is important to note that the England-wide figure of 46% is not statistically significantly different from the London-only figure of 41%.

<sup>2</sup>This figure of 224,813 is a percentage of a projected 499,585 75+ population

for the year 2020 published by the Greater London Authority's City Intelligence team. See table '2019-based projections: Central Upper population' available at <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/trend-based-population-projections>.

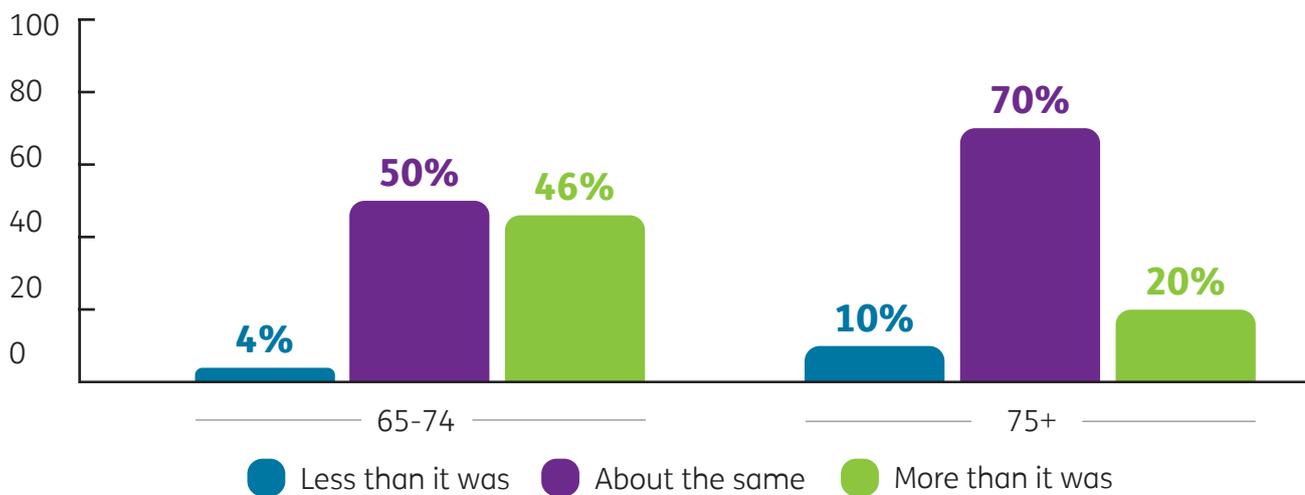
Source: Age UK analysis of ELSA Covid-19 Substudy Wave 1, 2020.

## Change in internet use since the coronavirus outbreak

The study asked if people had changed their use of the internet since the coronavirus outbreak and found considerable difference

between the 65-74 sub group and the 75+ sub group. Of those aged 65-74 48% reported using the internet more while for those aged 75+ just 20% reported using the internet more. The England-wide average for over 75s using the internet more was 24%<sup>3</sup>.

## Change in internet use among people in London since the coronavirus outbreak



Source: Age UK analysis of ELSA Covid-19 Substudy Wave 1, 2020.

Whilst increased internet use is to be expected across the population as a whole with people staying at home more because of lockdown measures, it is notable that more than two-thirds (70%) of over-75s in London report their internet use as being about the same.

Furthermore, one in ten older Londoners aged 75+ say they have been using the internet less. This may reflect less access to support as face-to-face contact has been restricted as well as more limited access to Wi-Fi and digital equipment in public places like libraries.

<sup>3</sup>Although the difference between the two figures may suggest a small difference, it is important to note that the England-wide figure of 24% is not statistically significantly different from the London-only figure of 20%. Therefore, at the 95% level of confidence it cannot be ruled out that the proportion of people 75+ that used the internet more since the coronavirus outbreak is the same across both geographies.

## What activities are internet users carrying out online since the start of the coronavirus outbreak?

The data presents what online activities are carried out by Londoners aged 65+ who have used the internet at least once a month since the coronavirus outbreak. It shows:

- **Sending or receiving emails** was the most common use of the internet (83%).
- **Online shopping** was the next most common use of the internet. Around two in three internet users aged 65+ (68%) used the internet for this purpose.
- **Making video or voice calls and managing finances** were the third and fourth most common uses of the internet. Three in five Londoners aged 65+ used the internet for making calls (60%) and 58% managed finances online.
- Use of the internet for **streaming** and **social networking** were the fifth and sixth most common internet activities for Londoners aged 65 and over.

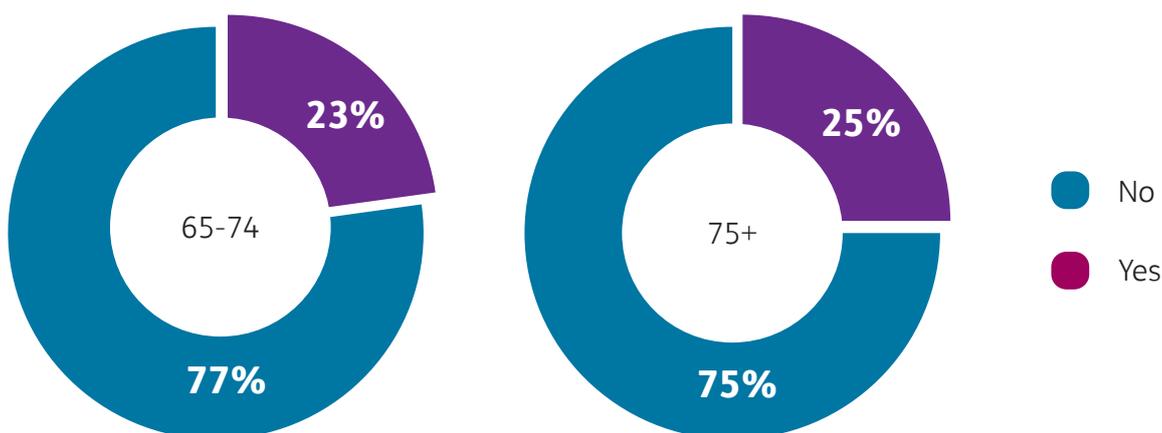
- **Finding information on health-related issues and government services** was the least, or one of the least, common uses of the internet for most older people. Less than half of people aged 65+ (44%) used the internet to find information on health-related issues while 40% of Londoners in this age category used it for finding information on government services).

For those over 75, fewer than one in three people (32%) used the internet to find health-related information and just 30% for information on government services.

## Would people like to use the internet more?

The data also shows the proportion of people aged 65-74 and 75+ in London who would like to use the internet more frequently. One quarter (23%) of those 65-74 and 25% of those aged 75+ wished to use the internet more. For people in both age categories around three quarters (77% for those aged 65-74 and 75% for those aged 75+) said that they did not want to use the internet more.

## Proportion wanting to use the internet more frequently or for more tasks



Source: Age UK analysis of ELSA Covid-19 Substudy Wave 1, 2020.

## Reasons why people do not use the internet more when they say they would like to

The survey data shows that for both Londoners aged 65-74 and those aged 75+ who want to use the internet more, a 'lack of skills' is the most common reason for not doing so (48% and 77%). The 77% figure for those aged 75+ is more than three times the figure of the second most common reason.

For the five next most common reasons for not using the internet more there is a different order for the 65-74 age category and the 75+ age category.

After 'lack of skills', the second most common reason among the 65-74 age category was:

- 'no reason to use it more' (34%).

This was followed by:

- 'I don't trust the internet' (26%);
- 'I don't have access to good enough equipment / access to broadband' (19%);
- 'Health problems stop me from using the equipment' (14%) and lastly
- 'It takes too much time' (19%).

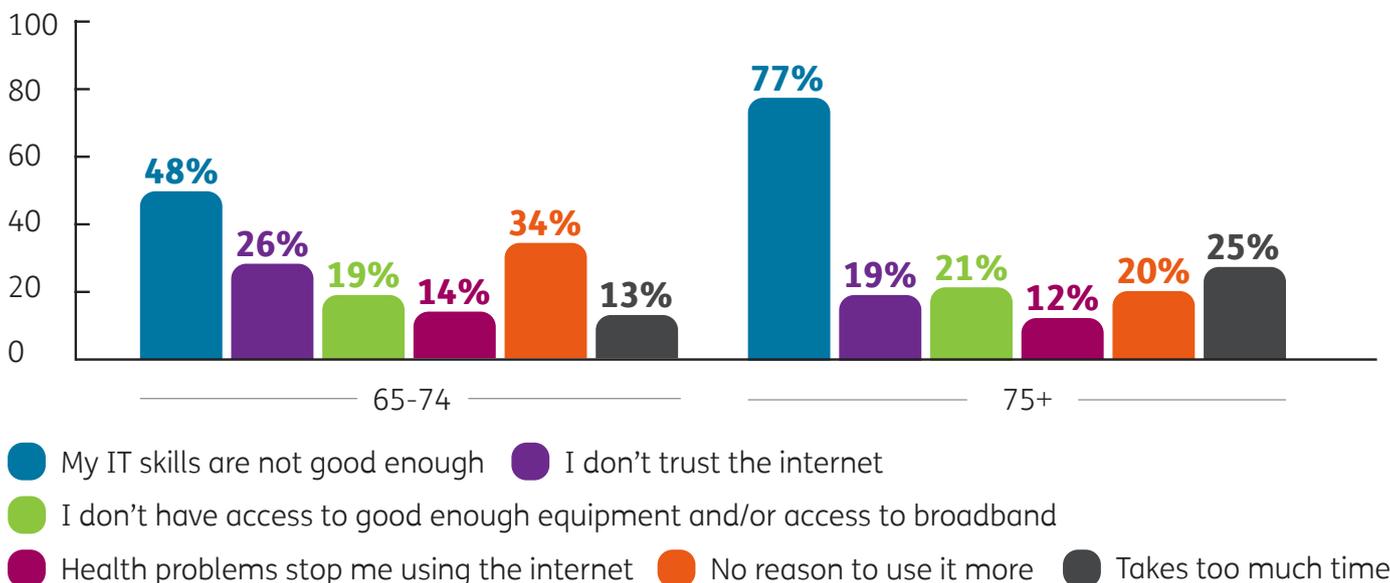
For those aged 75 and over the second most common reason after citing a 'lack of skills' was:

- 'It takes too much time' (25%).

This was followed by:

- 'I don't have access to good enough equipment / access to broadband' (21%);
- 'No reason to use it more' (20%);
- 'I don't trust the internet' (19%) and
- 'Health problems stop me from using the equipment' (12%).

## Reasons why people do not use the internet more when they say they would like to



Source: Age UK analysis of ELSA Covid-19 Substudy Wave 1, 2020.



# Insights from local Age UKs in London and older Londoners

Age UK London interviewed representatives from nine London-based local Age UKs about the changes they have seen in internet use among the older people they work with, the barriers they face to using the internet, and the impact of digital exclusion. This insight is supported by what we have heard directly from older people making use of local Age UK services and those we have consulted for their views over the past year.

## Changes in internet use amongst older people

Local Age UKs across London have told us that some older people have started using the internet because of the pandemic, and equally some have continued to choose not to for a variety of reasons echoing the ELSA figures.

Getting online was not a priority for many older people at the start of the pandemic. Instead, their focus early on, as summarised by one local Age UK service manager, was ‘fear and food’ and in the midst of a pandemic many felt it was not the time to start the journey to getting online. On reflection, some older people have reported that would have benefitted if they’d been online during the early months of the pandemic.

*“I wasn’t online much at the start of the pandemic but looking back I wish I had been. I feel like I missed out on a lot of online activities that could have helped with my mental health.”*

**Older Londoner**

*“Before the lockdown, I didn’t even think about using a tablet or the internet, but my local Age UK donated one to me because I really wanted to keep up with my activities. I don’t think I would have ever used Zoom otherwise. I found the weekly chair exercise classes really great when I used to go to the centre, so for me joining on Zoom to her class enabled me to continue to do exercise which I wouldn’t have been able to do.”*

**Older Londoner**

Many Age UKs reported a definite increase in internet usage amongst older people. Some older Londoners became much more aware of the benefits of using the internet – primarily to stay in contact with friends and family and to continue to participate in various social activities. Participation served as a key motivator for going online. These Age UKs reported an increase in older people using the internet for video calling, watching streamed television shows, and using library apps to download e-books and audiobooks.

## Older Londoners told us:

*“I have been using [the internet] to listen to music and access church activities... It has made a huge difference to my life.”*

*“I was getting a bit down in the lockdown and Johnny from my local Age UK called me asking if I would like to attend activities on Zoom. I said that I had never been on Zoom, I don't know how to work it! “I'll help you through it” he said, so I said, “Alright then!” I made a few mistakes to start with, but now I just go boom, boom, boom. I get to have a laugh and talk to someone and that's what makes my day”.*

### Older Londoners

In response to the lockdown measures introduced in March 2020, most local Age UKs began delivering some form of support services online. In some areas, the success and popularity of these services has resulted in plans to maintain a ‘hybrid model’ of service provision in which older people can access, for example, a dementia day centre either through online sessions or in-person, depending on their current needs. As another example, one older person recovering from an operation planned to access activities online from home so he could continue to benefit from these while he was recuperating, before returning in-person to the day centre once he had sufficiently recovered.

In contrast to the positive decisions made by some older people to go online, we also heard about an increase in internet use where it was forced upon people because it was the only available way to access an essential service such as GP appointments. However, accessing the service in this way did not always meet older peoples’ needs.

*“There are real challenges with telephone and online communication when issues prohibit clear understanding, such as hard of hearing, language difficulties and dementia among other issues. It is essential that older people can continue to access GPs for both routine and emergency care of their physical and mental health.”*

### Greater London Forum for Older People

We also heard that there were older people who felt that they were not at a disadvantage pre-pandemic for not being online. However, because of lockdown, digital became the default method for providing support and services. Consequently, many older people suddenly felt that if they were not online, they were missing out and prevented from accessing the support and information they needed.



Other local Age UKs told us that internet use amongst the older people they support did not increase markedly during the pandemic - although there were early signs that some people who previously were not interested were now more open to the idea. However, they added that the pre-pandemic barriers to getting online - discussed in greater detail below - remained and that an increased interest in using the internet would not become reality unless they were tackled.

There also remains a group of older Londoners who are not interested in using the internet, or using it more than they currently do, and their needs must not be given a lower priority or even forgotten.

*“I’m not interested because I can’t understand it, I’ve never been on the internet or looked at it because I have no interest to and don’t really enjoy that type of thing.”*

**Older Londoner**

*“The problem of digital exclusion is much more complex and many sided than currently understood. Services which now have exclusively digital pathways are inadequate and discriminatory and this is going to increase health inequality and inequity.”*

**CEO of a local Age UK**

## Barriers to internet use

### Skills

In line with the findings from the previous chapter, we heard from those delivering local services that a significant barrier for older people in using the internet is a lack of skills and confidence. As mentioned in the previous chapter, older non-users of the internet in London are more likely to report that they would like to use the internet compared with those outside the capital.

Basic skills that can transform a person's experience of the internet include everything from understanding internet jargon and knowing the key steps for setting up an online account such as email, to logging in to websites and using a search engine. The frustration caused by an error with a website, running up against a 'brick wall' and not being able to find the information you need can all significantly discourage beginners and lead people to feel it isn't worth it.

Speaking about their frustrations going online one older woman told us:

*“Why is nothing straightforward when it is digital? Computers are meant to make life smoother and quicker and fool proof. Except that they don't. The websites are out of date, as are the phone numbers and other information.”*

**Older Londoner**

### Confidence and trust

Digital confidence such as knowing where to seek help if something does go wrong can make a dramatic difference. Local Age UKs in London perform a vital service providing training courses and support for older Londoners to develop the skills to use the internet in the way that will most improve their lives. We heard from older Londoners:

*“I don't feel confident learning digital skills, but if someone will show me step by step, I would be willing to learn. Everything is now online so even if I have to report a repair at home, I don't know how to, but it would make my life easier to know how to use the website. But I will never use online banking because I'm scared.”*

*“Before I retired, I worked in a job that allowed me the opportunity to use a computer. However, if I was still working, I would have struggled working from home because any problems with IT there weren't others on hand to help me solve the problem.”*

**Older Londoners**

A broader lack of trust in the internet, including the fear of falling victim to a scam, can exacerbate the existing anxiety around using the internet that some older Londoners experience because it is unfamiliar and requires new skills. This most often manifests in an understandable reluctance to undertake financial transactions online.

*“Although I’m happy using email and even passed a computer literacy course about 12 years ago, I really don’t feel able to understand and maintain security on devices linking to the internet.”*

**Older Londoner**

*“We have connected many older people previously not online but then they immediately become targets for scammers”.*

**Local Age UK**

Given the increase in reported online scams over the past year, this fear is not misplaced and highlights a need for better security systems and information from both internet providers and businesses about how to carry out these sorts of tasks safely.

## **Volunteers**

Several local Age UKs we spoke to told us about digital skills services they delivered that relied on volunteers. Yet there are challenges in recruiting and supporting volunteers: volunteering is not easy and volunteers themselves need training and ongoing support.

Finding good volunteers can be difficult. The best digital support volunteers need good digital knowledge, the ability to effectively communicate this knowledge and other skills such as the ability to develop trust and problem solving. Some digitally excluded older people face multiple barriers such as those for whom English is their second or even third language, or those who have a disability that makes using devices more



difficult. Local Age UKs and other service providers face challenges to recruit volunteers with specific skill sets, including language skills. Furthermore, the number of people applying for volunteer roles has decreased since the start of the pandemic.

Several local Age UKs told us that investing time in supporting volunteers was a key reason why funding needed to be available for longer periods of time. Longer-term funding would make it easier to plan for the future, develop strategies and integrate digital inclusion across all aspects of service delivery.

## **Access to data and devices**

The cost of devices and data is a barrier for many older people to accessing the internet. London has the highest level of pensioner poverty in the country, so cost is a greater factor than elsewhere in the country. Older people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to live on a low income, so this barrier affects them more.

*“I am aware many older friends over 60 don’t have access to the internet or have a laptop or tablet. Many older affluent Londoners are OK but poorer Londoners have struggled.”*

**Older Londoner**

*“Moving our services online was much easier in one area as it’s much more affluent and older people there were more likely to have the technology to allow them to do this. It was much more difficult in the more deprived area where internet use amongst the population we serve is much lower.”*

**Local Age UK CEO**

The length and complexity of broadband contracts is another barrier; it’s a significant commitment to sign up to something for a year or sometimes longer if you’re not certain you’ll get much use out of it. To help prepare people to become more independent online many Age UKs deliver digital ‘MOTs’ that include supporting people so they know where they can find good deals and understand contracts, which can often be intimidating and hard to decipher.

The loss of access to libraries and other public spaces that offer free internet and/or use of computers has been a big problem for those who used the internet but did not own a device of their own or have access to broadband at home. The closure of these spaces has removed the way they are most comfortable accessing the internet and temporarily digitally excluded them.

An older woman who could not afford to have broadband at home but used the internet at her local library told us that when lockdown began:

*“I couldn’t read my emails, I couldn’t find out any information about what was going on and I had no idea when this nightmare would end.”*

**Older Londoner**

In sheltered housing, lounges and other communal areas are sometimes the only places on site where broadband is available. Unfortunately, during the pandemic many of these spaces have been closed for prolonged periods of time, leaving residents without any internet access at all. This has led to further digital exclusion and is often compounded by other measures such as restrictions on social visits from friends and family. In some locations, broadband was switched off entirely to prevent people congregating in the spaces where it was previously available.

*“Many sheltered accommodation schemes actually cut off the Wi-Fi completely to stop residents congregating in public spaces e.g. lounges where the router was situated which was very cruel as this was the only way that the residents could stay in touch with their family and friends – three sheltered schemes I’m aware of did this in the borough. We had calls from very distressed people living in sheltered accommodation.”*

**Local Age UK**

## Impact of digital exclusion

*“I am old and trying hard, but feel completely excluded from life by all the digitisation.”*

**Older Londoner**

All the London Age UKs we spoke to expressed concern that older people without internet access would not have equally straightforward access to services as internet users. There were particular concerns about services such as those provided by the local council or access to a GP. One local Age UK reported that the talking therapy service in their area went completely online, excluding anyone without internet access.

*“Digital health services do not work for older people. Either they can’t access them and they find it so unhelpful they give up, or they have to spend twice as long getting help. As a small example, being asked to take a picture of a lump on your back when you are 90 and living on your own is not helpful (there are other words I could use!). Being sent links to YouTube videos is not going to be useful to people with no idea what YouTube is, don’t have it downloaded and don’t have clear enough vision to see it properly.”*

**CEO of a local Age UK**

*“I was shocked that the council only allowed online applications for blue badges, housing benefit and council tax benefit.”*

**Volunteer at a local Age UK.**



Local Age UKs told us that phone lines were often at full capacity and could be frustrating. Many people rely on phone lines as an alternative to an online form in order to access a service or other form of support. Calls not being picked up or a poor user-experience can prevent people from accessing vital support such as checking eligibility for a benefit entirely. These problems were even greater for older people who do not speak English confidently.

Many Age UKs in London spoke of the striking difference in physical and mental health between those who had been able to access the services they offered online throughout lockdown and those who had not.

*“It can take a lot of motivating to encourage some older adults to think about going online but it is so worth it when you see the difference it can make to their health and wellbeing. We have a 90 year old woman who engaged with activities online. Once we started safely opening up our day centre, she was so ready come back and still strong and active. In contrast those that had not connected with any activities online were very anxious about leaving their homes and frailer than they had been before.”*

**Local Age UK service manager**

Digital exclusion can be both a consequence of and further exacerbate poverty. We heard service managers of local Age UKs express concern that older people who were not online didn't have as much choice or access to more affordable goods or the best deals. This problem is especially acute when it comes to fuel poverty as the best tariffs are generally only available online, as are tools to compare prices.

The pandemic saw a significant increase in the number of older Londoners applying for out-of-work support, with many older Londoners losing their jobs or being furloughed for prolonged periods of time.

Older jobseekers that are digitally excluded face a number of barriers. Many jobs are only advertised online whilst training opportunities are often only available as online courses. Both older jobseekers and those in employment find it difficult to access the digital skills training required to make career changes and fear being left behind or discriminated against because they are not offered training by employers. Local Age UK's have been supporting older workers and jobseekers as part of their services.

*“A client recently has been set up with an email address and has been able to access a range of websites advertising jobs. She's now able to browse through job adverts and we've helped her to upload her CV to them so she can submit applications instantly. These are all things she was struggling with before.”*

**Local Age UK service manager**



# What needs to happen next?

The purpose of this report is to share information and insight about older Londoners' use of the internet during the pandemic, so that it can inform future policy decisions about how to support those who want to get online. We want the experiences and views of older Londoners expressed in this report, and more widely, to form part of the discussion on digital inclusion in the capital.

Action is needed more than ever. To contribute to discussions and to in order to address the profound challenge of digital exclusion we propose important actions that would help to address the problems and barriers outlined in previous chapters.

## The Mayor of London

It is a good start that older Londoners are specifically mentioned in the 'Digital Access for All' mission that forms part of the work of the London Recovery Board. We welcome the work that is being undertaken as part of the mission to map in more detail the nature of digital exclusion across London and hope that this report forms a part of this.

This mission must continue to actively consider the needs of older Londoners in all aspects of its work. We hope to see the specific training needs of older Londoners considered as part of the roll-out of the new digital skills entitlement in the autumn of 2021.

The Mayor has a role to play in providing leadership and coordination to bring together

internet providers to support the creation of social tariffs that are either free or genuinely affordable, and that meet the specific needs of older Londoners. This is most needed in the most deprived areas where free Wi-Fi hotspots are harder to find. The Mayor should also coordinate the London-wide provision of long-term, sustainable programmes to make high quality and appropriate devices available to older people who need them, bringing together the wide range of different schemes that currently exist.

'We also urge the Mayor to consider the impact of digital exclusion on older Londoners as part of updates to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.'

Those who do not have access to the internet should still be able to access public information, so the Mayor must ensure that information provided by the GLA is available to all, and support Boroughs to meet their statutory duties to provide offline access to public services.

## Internet providers

The cost of data is a barrier to digital engagement for many and therefore internet providers who do not already offer them should introduce social tariffs for older Londoners that are either genuinely affordable or free. These tariffs should be built around the needs of older Londoners and be actively promoted so that those who would most benefit from these tariffs are aware of them.

The complexity of broadband contracts is another barrier to digital inclusion for some older people so internet providers should review the wording of broadband contracts to ensure they are written in accessible, plain English (and ideally available translated into other languages) to make them easier to understand for those who have not signed up to one before.

Internet providers should also train staff in how to best support older clients and make their customer service more attuned to the needs of older people. There are good examples at a local level of shops working with local Age UKs and others to become more age-friendly and this work should be replicated across London.

## Local authorities

Public spaces in which older people can access computers and free Wi-Fi must remain open and accessible. This would enable those who before the pandemic



only accessed the internet at places such as libraries, because they do not have a device or internet access at home, to do so again. We would also urge council-run sheltered housing schemes to offer full Wi-Fi across their residences.

Council web pages for the most common queries should be as user-friendly as possible. We recommend an accessibility audit of online forms, using input from local organisations supporting older people including local Age UKs. Local authorities should proactively share trends on digital needs, for example which digital forms or processes people are having the most problems with and therefore having to call the council about rather than completing the task online.

Local community groups deliver much-needed digital skills training for older people.



These schemes could be more effective and reach more people if they were commissioned on a longer-term basis rather than via short one or two year contracts for schemes. Many of these programmes rely on volunteers and so local authorities can support them by sharing opportunities for better training for volunteers, particularly for any volunteers who could deliver skills sessions in various community languages.

Alongside taking steps to support older Londoners who would like to use the internet more, local authorities must also ensure that those who cannot (or chose not to) use the internet are not disadvantaged in their access

to public services or being an active citizen. Maintaining phone lines so that those who do not access the internet are still able to access local services and engage actively as citizens is vital.

Local authorities can also play a key role by mapping in greater detail the extent of digital exclusion and the needs of those who are digitally excluded. Recording whether or not an older person has internet access when conducting social care needs assessments would help to provide a far more detailed picture of digital exclusion than currently exists.

# Acknowledgements

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Age UK London is a charity that campaigns for an age-friendly London.

We campaign for specific change to improve the lives of older Londoners. We also work to ensure that their experiences, needs and contributions are heard and taken into account by decision makers.

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