alive

Lighting up later life

Supporting Older People to use Technology

Alive's aims

Alive is a charity dedicated to improving the quality of life of older people and their carers.

Our vision

A world where older people live lives full of value, meaning and connection.

Our mission

To prioritise health and wellbeing into later life.

Alive:

- **Engages older people creatively through meaningful activity**
- **Trains and supporting carers to enrich the lives of older people**
- **Reduces older people's social isolation by connecting them to their local communities**
- **Speaks up for the rights of older people to those with the power to improve their lives.**

Our values

User-led: We strive to ensure our work meets the needs and aspirations of the older people we serve. We consult regularly with older people and develop and deliver projects and activity in line with their wishes and views.

Dedicated: We deliver, we train, we connect, we influence. We are a group of people who never give up and are fully committed to improving the quality of life of older people.

Adventurous: We are a charity who likes to try and test new approaches, new partnerships, new ways of working and aren't afraid of making mistakes and taking risks.

Community focused
We fully understand the value of belonging and work hard to connect older people to their communities – wherever that may be. We value our own community and strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment amongst our staff, volunteers, and colleagues.

Adaptable: We constantly review, evaluate and adapt our work to ensure it is meeting the needs of those we serve. We are quick to change and find new ways of working when needed.

Compassionate: We love what we do, and who we work with. We are passionate about improving the quality of life of older people in whatever way we can.

Collaborative: We believe in working with others. We make more of an impact when we work together.

Contents

Introduction to this Guide

Some older people might have lived their whole lives without using modern technology like laptops, computers, smartphones, the internet and related apps and will likely find this process of learning technology rather daunting.

Alive believes strongly in empowering older people to have as much control over their lives as possible and that translates into how we want them to approach Tech to Connect. We want to support them to independently navigate the guidebooks to access various skills taught throughout this course. In considering this, we are also aware that our older learners will also require your assistance in supporting them through their learning.

This guidebook is intended to provide you with some useful considerations for supporting the older person you care for. This will enable them to learn to use technology and feel more confident doing so.

We will be covering:

1. Some considerations for you to note in supporting the learning experience for older people.

2. Accessibility issues, such as:

    * Difficulties using technology
    * Accessibility features on phones, computers and tablets.

3. Impairments:

    * Sensory impairments
    * Cognitive impairments
    * Physical impairments.

Considerations for training older people in tech

✚ Be patient

Being caring and patient is crucial to ensure that an older person feels supported to learn new skills involved in learning new technologies. Considering they may have certain assumptions and apprehensions about technology, it is important to remind them that you are there to support them at any point, if they need it.

In being patient and supportive, it is important to remember that an older person might want to take the time to independently familiarise themselves with a certain skill they have learnt and therefore, you must give them the freedom and time to do so. This means giving them the opportunity to ask you for help, instead of offering it beforehand. This allows them the opportunity to be inquisitive and learn more effectively, keep them more engaged and give them the knowledge to learn faster and explore on their own.

All the above considered, you must be careful not to seem extremely reluctant to assist because if you do not follow up on the progress, they might give up on the entire learning process if they find it too complex.

✚ Emphasise the benefits

Many taking this course will likely know of the benefits and possibilities of using technology, although might feel overwhelmed at the idea of learning how to use these technologies. Hence, it is helpful to highlight the benefits before launching into the training. This will help motivate them and make them feel more inclined to learn the new technologies.

The guidebooks contain quite a lot of content and might overwhelm the older person taking this course. It might be useful to briefly talk them through the benefits of using technology and being online, such as dealing with their daily needs like online banking services to access their finance and pay bills, booking GP appointments, finding educational and entertaining content and connecting with loved ones through social media and video chat.

➕ Emphasise technology as a means of enriching their daily life

Ensure the older person you are assisting is not just aware of the benefits but can see technology as an applicable solution to making their daily life more convenient. As you help train an older person in tech, show them how it can enrich their social lives, such as keeping in contact with their grandchildren through video chat, reconnecting with old friends or joining a local gardening group.

➕ Avoid using jargon

There are some useful tech terms in both guidebooks, however, in explaining these terms, avoid using too much jargon. Jargon is a useful tool to ensure efficiency but might have the opposite effect of overcomplicating things for the older person. Instead of confusing them, try and use simple, everyday language to explain terminology.

➕ Make the learning environment fun

Remember to keep things fun, friendly and relaxed. Avoid making the learner feel pressured as this might discourage them from wanting to keep learning. The last thing you want is for them to feel forced, or like they're back in school. A useful tip is to show them what games and fun applications they can access on their device. This will encourage them to see that the device is generally fun to use and has these enjoyable applications.

➕ Know your learner

It is important to learn the expectations and interests of the older person you are helping train, before starting. Every person has a different approach to learning and you will need to try and tailor your approach to their learning style. If you haven't already, it is important to build a relationship with the older person you are supporting so you know how best to support them in this journey and identify the perfect approach for them. You can even try to use certain analogies that they are familiar with, so that they better experience the learning process.

➕ Celebrate the little victories

Just as a student of any other demographic, the older person you are supporting would certainly appreciate recognition for their achievements. It is important to show them that you recognise any progress they make towards learning to apply technology in their everyday lives. Be sure to compliment them on their efforts and celebrate all the little victories with them. This will inspire them to stay motivated to keep learning and feel supported in their journey.

➕ Emphasise Internet safety

Although safety online is covered in quite a lot of depth in the guidebooks, it is important for you to highlight internet safety to your learner, especially at the start of their internet journey. Remind them that they should refrain from sending any personal information to strangers on social networking sites or via email. Teach them how to identify scammers and focus on addressing the most important things to note for them to stay safe on the internet. In doing so, ensure not to make it sound too scary or impossible, as this might discourage them from wanting to use the internet independently.

✚ Use pen and paper

Writing things down is something many of us, including older people, prefer to do. Hence, as you help train an older person in tech, encourage them to keep short and clear notes of any new information they feel is important to note down and that might not be explicitly stated in the guidebooks. This is particularly important for storing passwords that they might forget, which is also highlighted in the section on passwords in the guidebook. This will allow them to jog their memory when you are not around to assist them.

✚ Practice, practice, practice

Lastly, all the personalised guidance will come to naught if your older learner does not continue to work to hone their newly acquired tech skills. It is your duty to assist in encouraging them to keep applying what they have learnt.

Some easy ways to encourage this is to have them use technology at whatever opportunity they can, so they become used to doing so on a regular basis. As stated above, getting them to see the positive and fun applications that technology can offer, such as staying in touch with loved ones, playing games, listening to music and finding activities in the community to get involved in etc., will keep them motivated on their tech learning journey.

Accessibility and impairments to consider

Accessibility

All devices have accessibility settings to make them easier to use. Different devices and operating systems have different ways of allowing you to change settings. You can find them all in the Settings section of your device.

Support with viewing:

- **Text size.** You can make all the words on the screen bigger so that they are easier to read.

- **Bold Text.** All the text on screen can be made slightly darker and larger, and easier to see.

- **Zoom.** This makes everything on the screen larger. Most devices allow you to 'pinch to zoom' in or out.

- **Magnifier.** This allows you to use your device's camera like a magnifying glass.

- **Voice over/Spoken Content(iPhone)/TalkBack (Android).** This will read out the words on the screen.

- **The RNIB** has some information on using technology. (See also AbilityNet below.)

www.sightadvicefaq.org.uk/independent-living/technology

Support with hearing:

- **Hearing Devices.** If you use a hearing aid of any sort you may be able to link it directly to the device.

- **Audio Visual.** This section will offer you choices such as Phone Noise Cancellation (reduces background noise.)

- **Mono noise.** If you have reduced hearing in one ear, choosing the mono rather than stereo option will enable you to hear the full signal through either ear.

- **LED Flash for Alerts.** If you receive a message, alert or email when your device might make a sound, your device will give a quick flash.

- **The RNID** have information **here** on using technology to hear better (See also AbilityNet on the right).

'Zooming!'

Support with verbal commands: Voice Activated Digital Assistant

All smart devices offer a Digital Assistant. You can ask questions and the device will reply. The best known are Siri from Apple, Alexa from Amazon, Google Assistant and Bixby from Samsung.

You can set up Digital Assistant to help read emails, check time and date, play music, get calendar reminders and connect other devices in your home. You may have to read out some sentences to start with so that the machine can learn to understand your voice.

AbilityNet has numerous **guides to using Digital Assistants**

The charity AbilityNet have a comprehensive list of accessibility features on a range of smartphones, tablets and computers.

https://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/

Teaching Tech to Older People

You are all professionals and know your clients well so I will only make a few comments here.

Using tech is a very physical activity. So, remember that you are teaching people a new physical skill. Demonstrate the gestures when you talk about them: the double tap, the swipe. Try to use the same gesture and terms each time. You may need to use "hand over hand" teaching for some clients.

Repetition. You may find yourself needing to repeat information. They will learn to use what they enjoy using. If you are teaching e mail, make sure to send the clients a few e mails each week so they have something in them in box when they open it up. Use your work email address or ask if your employer can set up a special e mail address that all staff involved in teaching this can use.

If your clients are easily confused or distracted then keep sessions short but more frequent, possibly 20 – 30 min but twice weekly.

Seniors Guide to Computers: **https://www.seniorsguidetocomputers.com/ accessibility.asp**

Impairments to consider:

The main barriers to tech training for an older person are cognitive and physical impairments. Below are a few easy things you can do to make sure everyone has the best chance to be fully involved.

Supporting someone with a hearing impairment

- Does the room echo?
- Is the room bright enough for people to see you?
- Are you in a good position for people to see you, interpret your body language and lip-read?
- Are you using visual prompts?

Supporting someone with a visual impairment

- Is someone available to explain and describe what is going on?
- Can you use sound prompts and effects?
- Are there objects that people can handle?

Supporting someone with a physical disability

- Are they able to enter and leave the room independently, or do they need support?
- Can they reach or access all the materials you are sharing with the group?

Supporting someone with a cognitive impairment

- Are you using clear language?

- Is there someone to support and explain what's happening when needed?

- Can you use objects to bring things to life for people?

- Keep activities short and focused

- Allow people time to process and share their thoughts.

This booklet was produced with the support of Healthwatch North Somerset

healthwatch
North Somerset

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services.

Our aim is to ensure that the voices of people in North Somerset are heard and can influence improvements to their health and care.

We are here to listen to what you like about services and what you think could be improved. No matter how big or small the issue, we want to hear about it. We share these views with those who have the power to make changes including those who run the services. You can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you. Whether you would like to share your feedback about health and care services, or you are looking for local support contact us on:

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