



Final Report: Age Friendly Island Digital Survey 2021

Who completed the survey?

760 responses have been completed for the digital survey over 2 phases.

478 completed responses to the digital survey were received in February and March 2021 when the survey was available online and to complete by telephone. Most of the responses (98%) were from people who regularly use digital equipment.

282 completed responses to the digital survey were received in July and August 2021 when the survey was available to complete using a paper copy or the online version. The paper copy was available to collect from libraries and was distributed by Age Friendly Island partner organisations. 88% of the responses during this phase were from people who regularly use digital equipment.

The survey was targeted at Isle of Wight residents aged 50 and over.

76% of respondents regularly use more than one type of digital equipment (smartphone, tablet, laptop computer or desktop computer). For those who regularly use only one of these (129 respondents), a tablet was the most popular (32%), followed by a laptop computer (29%).

90% of respondents can connect to the internet at home using broadband. 2% connect to the internet at home using only mobile data. 5% said that they do not connect to the internet.

47% of respondents scored their confidence at using digital technology as high (between 8 and 10 on a scale of 1 to 10); 30% scored their confidence as medium (between 5 and 7 on a scale of 1 to 10); and 17% scored their confidence as low (between 1 and 4 on a scale of 1 to 10).

1 in 4 respondents (28%) said that they felt more lonely as a result of COVID-19. Half (50%) of those who said that they felt more lonely as a result of COVID-19 felt that support with improving their digital skills would help to reduce how lonely they felt.

Due to the lockdown restrictions that were in place when Phase 1 of the survey was carried out, the survey was primarily promoted through digital media and, although there was an option to encourage friends and family who were not digitally connected to complete the survey by telephone, there were very few responses from those who are not already digitally connected.

In Phase 2 of the survey paper copies were available in addition to online completion. These were distributed by Age Friendly Island partner organisations as well as being available to collect from libraries and leisure centres and sent in the post on request.

This needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of the survey.

What would people like to be able to do?

More than a quarter (26%) of respondents said that they would like to be able to book and attend virtual GP appointments and 1 in 7 (14%) said that they would like to be able to order prescriptions online. 1 in 7 respondents (13%) would like to be able to do some online learning.

Of the 127 respondents with a low confidence score (between 1 and 4 on a scale of 1 to 10):

- 1 in 4 would like to be able to book and attend virtual GP appointments (28%), take part in online learning (27%), make a reservation online (for example at a pub or restaurant) (25%), order prescriptions online (24%) or talk to friends and family using online video calling (23%).
- 1 in 5 would like to be able to complete online forms (21%) or access hobbies and activities available online (20%).
- 1 in 6 would like to be able to book a holiday (17%), shop online (17%), or search for information online (16%).

Recommendations:

1. Provide support to enable people to book and attend virtual GP appointments and order prescriptions online.
2. Provide support for older people with low confidence in a wide range of digital activities.

What problems do people experience?

A third of respondents (32%) said that they are worried about scams/online fraud.

1 in 5 respondents (20%) said they lack skills/knowledge of how to use digital technology.

1 in 5 respondents (22%) said they lack confidence at using digital technology.

Some respondents (9%) said their equipment is old and not up to date with current technology.

Some (8%) have health or access conditions that make it difficult for them to use digital technology (e.g. sight, hearing, dementia, learning difficulties).

5% of respondents said that they don't have internet access at home and 4% of respondents said they do not own any devices/equipment.

What digital support would help improve confidence?

1 in 5 respondents (21%) said that support using specific devices would help their confidence improve.

1 in 7 (15%) said that support using specific websites or platforms would help improve their confidence.

For 1 in 5 (19%), a better understanding of how to stay safe online would help improve their confidence.

1 in 6 (17%) said that more opportunities to practice these skills would help.

1 in 7 (14%) said support using the internet would help improve confidence.

Other problems and support requirements that respondents specified ranged from basic support to more advanced, and included:

- Help provided is too complicated; online instructions can be unclear and use acronyms
- Cost
- Unreliable internet connections
- Help when changing equipment
- Help to solve problems when things go wrong
- The need to keep up with constantly changing technology
- Updating computer
- Programming and coding
- Understanding storage
- Understanding the questions that are asked when carrying out an operation e.g. downloading
- Relentless push to doing things online; preference to speaking to someone; inequalities of costs for non-digital; not wanting to use digital access
- Setting equipment up; not able to use things to full potential, including TV
- Lots of passwords
- Accessibility issues including time out function of some websites.
- Confidence gets dented

Recommendations:

3. Provide support to help older people to understand how to stay safe online.
4. Provide a range of opportunities for older people to improve their skills and knowledge of digital technology to meet their specific needs.
5. Provide opportunities for older people to practice their digital skills.
6. Investigate opportunities to provide, or enable people to purchase or loan, up to date equipment that meets their access needs, and opportunities to access the internet.

How would people like to receive this support?

Overall (760 responses), 1 in 3 respondents (32%) would like to receive support through 1 to 1 sessions in person.

1 in 4 would like to watch a video (27%) or follow written guidance in a booklet (25%).

1 in 5 would like to attend a group class in person (21%) or follow written guidance online (20%).

Some respondents would also like online sessions; 12% of all 760 respondents would like 1 to 1 online sessions and 9% would like online group classes.

The preferences for how to receive support were different for different confidence levels.

Respondents with high confidence scores (360 respondents) would prefer watching a video (37%), following written guidance online (31%), following written guidance in a booklet (23%) and 1 to 1 sessions in person (21%).

Those with low confidence scores (127 respondents) would prefer 1 to 1 sessions in person (54%), following written guidance in a booklet (29%) and group classes in person (29%).

Other suggestions for how to provide support included:

- A step by step printed guide from basics
- Guidance without jargon/difficult terminology
- Telephone helpline; email support
- A trusted place to go when needed
- A support group
- A monthly forum with an IT expert and where people might be able to help each other
- Remote support using screen accessing software

1 in 3 respondents (34%) had received support to use digital tools, most frequently from friends or family (23%), or an employer (10%). Some had received support from a college/training organisation (6%), local charity (3%) or bank (3%). Others mentioned a tutor or private help, and some stated that they were self-taught or used online learning.

50% of respondents said that they would search online for help or support with the use of their digital technology. A quarter of respondents (26%) said that they would ask a friend or family member for support. Some respondents (6%) would use a local organisation and specified local IT companies and local community organisations or charities that they would use. Respondents also said that they would go to public buildings (9%) and banks (5%) for support.

A small number of respondents (1%) said that they do not know where to go to get digital support.

Some respondents would face challenges if accessing digital support services:

- 1 in 8 respondents (12%) have reduced mobility which would make it difficult for them to access support or training in person.
- 1 in 8 respondents (13%) have no access to transport which would make it difficult for them to access support or training in person.
- 1 in 4 respondents (25%) would face at least one challenge if accessing digital support services in person.

Other challenges for accessing support in person included:

- Failing eyesight
- Poor hearing; most training does not support BSL users
- Caring responsibilities
- Health conditions so do not want to leave home
- Memory problems
- Internet problems (for online support)
- Needs to be accessible for public transport
- Stairs

Recommendations:

7. Support should be available in a variety of formats and consider access needs.
8. Support for all levels should be available as 1 to 1 support in person, videos and written guidance in booklets.
9. Support for those with high confidence should also be available through written guidance online.
10. Support for those with low confidence should also be available in person through group sessions.

Where should support be advertised?

Local newspaper (63% of respondents), newsletters of local organisations (53%), noticeboards (49%) and local radio (48%) were the most popular suggestions for where we should advertise help and support.

Numerous other suggestions were made for where to advertise support including:

- GP surgeries
- Libraries
- Social media user groups and community pages
- Specific websites
- Local organisations
- Post / leaflet through door
- Pub / theatre / bus stops
- Have a stand in a supermarket

Recommendations:

11. Available support should be advertised to a wide audience using local newspaper, newsletters, local radio and/or noticeboards.
12. An advertising campaign should also consider the various additional methods of reaching older people through local groups and communities.

Who is not interested in Digital Connectivity?

27 of the 760 responses (4%) were from people who are not interested in participating in any of the suggested digital activities (4 of these respondents do currently send text messages, but these respondents were included in this section as text messages can be sent from a basic mobile phone).

None of these 27 respondents used Smartphones, tablets, laptop computers or desktop computers regularly.

Reasons for not using any of the listed digital equipment included:

- Not interested / not required to live simply
- No equipment
- Cost
- Relatives do any digital activity needed
- Age
- Not IT literate / unable to understand it
- Unable to due to visual impairment
- Concerns about sharing personal information online
- Cannot manipulate them
- Media "chat" websites lead to arguments and ill feeling because comments are not thought out before they are sent.

Some respondents were happy communicating the “old fashion way” by mail and landline telephone.

A respondent said that they “just don’t want to learn at my age” and another suggested “No digital technology no problems”. Others are put off by the possibility of scams.

One mentioned that they have to pay higher utility bills as they do not use the internet and would like there to be some provision for people who cannot use the internet or don’t want to.

Two of the respondents had received some support or training. Some of the respondents said they would look to friends and family for any support needed.

8 of these 27 respondents (30%) said that they felt more lonely as a result of COVID-19, but only 2 respondents (7%) felt that support with improving their digital skills, or access to digital tools, would help to reduce how lonely they felt.

Recommendations:

13. Provide support for those not digitally connected themselves, to access services that are online.
14. Encourage service providers and businesses to provide / consider equality of services for those who are not digitally connected.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. Provide support to enable people to book and attend virtual GP appointments and order prescriptions online.
2. Provide support for older people with low confidence in a wide range of digital activities.
3. Provide support to help older people to understand how to stay safe online.
4. Provide a range of opportunities for older people to improve their skills and knowledge of digital technology to meet their specific needs.
5. Provide opportunities for older people to practice their digital skills.
6. Investigate opportunities to provide, or enable people to purchase or loan, up to date equipment that meets their access needs, and opportunities to access the internet.
7. Support should be available in a variety of formats and consider access needs.
8. Support for all levels should be available as 1 to 1 support in person, videos and written guidance in booklets.
9. Support for those with high confidence should also be available through written guidance online.
10. Support for those with low confidence should also be available in person through group sessions.
11. Available support should be advertised to a wide audience using local newspaper, newsletters, local radio and/or noticeboards.
12. An advertising campaign should also consider the various additional methods of reaching older people through local groups and communities.
13. Provide support for those not digitally connected themselves, to access services that are online.
14. Encourage service providers to provide equality of services for those who are not digitally connected.