

Teaching Digital Skills to a Group

What does a group digital skills for older people session look like?

Face-to-face group digital skills training can take many forms. Some sessions can be quite formal and follow a set curriculum, and others follow a less structured, person-centred model.

Age UK Gateshead always takes the approach of 'a cuppa, cake and a chat'. All of their services have an informal and friendly atmosphere which allows people to feel more comfortable and open up more. Kate Wildish says that they follow a basic course structure for our sessions which consists of:

Lesson 1 - Basics

Lesson 2 - What do the clients want to learn

Lesson 3 - Staying safe online

Lesson 4 - What do the clients want to learn now they have a better understanding

"Depending on the group of people we have booked in for each session it can always look different. We have some clients who have never even touched a tablet before and some who regularly use their own tablet and wanted to bring it along to the session. The beauty of these sessions is that clients end up helping each other and new friendships are made which often flourish outside of our groups."

Top tips for other organisations that want to deliver group sessions for older people

1. While booking clients for group sessions, do a basic questionnaire on their wants / needs this will help you prepare your plan for the sessions. This will also give you an understanding of how many volunteers you will need to help you.
2. Always be mindful that people can only pay attention and take in so much information at a time. Listen and observe your group, and if people seem to be getting bored or overwhelmed, it's ok to change the plans.
3. Building confidence is key. It's better to slow down the learning and focus on applying the learning and practising the skills they've learned.

Challenges about group learning

- If one learner is particularly struggling with a task, this can be challenging. If this happens, stay calm, help that person one-to-one, and ask others to carry on.

- People often forget the time / day of the session. Age UK Gateshead sends a booking confirmation letter, and phones learners to remind them the day before.

Final Thoughts

In group digital skills training sessions it can be difficult to manage different levels of skills within one group, but by planning ahead and getting to know your learners before the session, you can make sure you are able to meet your learners needs. Group learning also allows peer-to-peer support to happen organically, and can be a great social activity for learners too.

Age UK Gateshead

Kate Wildish and the team at Age UK Gateshead offer digital skills training amongst a range of other activities and support for people aged 50+ in their community.

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