

# What does success look like, and how do we measure it?

When you're supporting older people to use digital, what does success look like?

At our Community of Practice meet-up in January 2022, members shared their views on what success looks like.

## **Overcoming Barriers**

There was a general consensus that if someone overcomes the initial motivation barrier to give digital a go, that can be considered a big success.

## **Reduced Loneliness**

Many said that their idea of success was reduced loneliness, e.g. digital skills enable them to connect with friends and social activities online.

## **Person-Centred**

If the person you're supporting can do what they need or want to do with digital as a result of the support provided, that can be considered a successful outcome, whether that's doing a daily crossword, streaming videos, online banking or video calling a relative abroad.

## **Learning Skills**

Most agreed that the Essential Digital Skills Framework can help us to define success in terms of learning, but that they might not be appropriate for older learners and that success should be defined by **what these skills empower older people to do, and how they feel as a result of that.**

How might you measure success?

Our community of practice recommended a number of existing tools that organisations might find useful to measure impact on social isolation and digital skills:

- [Campaign to End Loneliness Scale](#)
- [What Works Brief Guide to Measuring Loneliness](#)
- [The ONS Loneliness Questions](#)
- [Essential Digital Skills Framework](#)

Many organisations use their own initial assessment or baseline surveys before someone receives support, and a follow up or impact survey after they have received support to see what effect the support has had on their level of skills, confidence and general wellbeing.

A number of organisations also said that they focused on the attendance numbers, and feedback from service users to evaluate the success of the service they provide.

## A new approach

The team at Leicester Ageing Together took the Essential Digital Skills for Life Framework as a starting point, and developed an approach that was person-centred and built on other existing models like the Campaign to End Loneliness Scale, the [ONS Personal Wellbeing Questions](#), and eventually incorporated this into a [Most Significant Change](#) approach.

At an early stage they realised that the Essential Digital Skills Framework would be helpful to understand improvements to skills, but that they wouldn't tell the whole story. They were particularly interested to learn about people's motivation to get online, and what impact being online had had on their lives.

Most Significant Change is a story-based approach to evaluation, which asks participants to talk about the **most significant change** in their lives as a result of the support they received. This is an innovative approach, in that it allows you to define your measure of success through what the participants perceive to be important.

Through their evaluation, they found that **gaining confidence** was both the biggest **motivation** and the most important **impact** of the project. Confidence grew both through learning new digital skills and through the relationships that people built with volunteers and staff.

## Final Thoughts

While success is often defined by funders, taking time to determine your own definition of success can help to shape both your support model and how you evaluate your impact.

The Most Significant Change model enabled the team at Leicester Ageing Together to use feedback from the evaluation to improve their support model throughout the project, and to get a better understanding of motivations and emotional outcomes for the older people they supported. However, this approach is time-consuming and therefore might not be the right solution for all organisations.

## Leicester Ageing Together and Reaching People

Friday and the team at Leicester Ageing Together and the Reaching People consortium led a range of highly successful digital wellbeing activities and support for older people to get online. Friday and her colleague Mark took a new approach to evaluating their work, adapting the Essential Digital Skills Framework and using the most significant change model.

<https://www.reachingpeople.co.uk/>

<https://www.leicesterageingtogether.org.uk/>