**Transcript: Tackling loneliness through tech**

**Sarah Botterill, Marketing Manager Free Services for AbilityNet:**   
Welcome everybody. I can see people are starting to join us now. So, we're just going to allow a minute or two for everyone to stampede through our virtual doors. And then once those numbers stabilize, I will, introduce the webinar and we will get going.

I'm Sarah, and I'm the marketing manager for free services at AbilityNet.

And I'll be hosting today, but hopefully you won't hear too much from me because we've got some great speakers, and I'd rather you heard from them. So, we'll just give another few minutes for everyone to join and then we'll get going.

Great to see so many people here today. It's obviously a topic that's really struck a chord with people. I know we've had over 250 people register today.

Okay. So, I'm just going to get my slides running.

Welcome everybody to our webinar, and we're going to be looking at the issue of loneliness and technology and how those two things go together, and a focus on getting devices to vulnerable people in the community, which is something that's been happening a lot during lockdown, but also predating that.

We'll hear from Tim in a second about some of the history of their organization and what they've been doing and Good Things Foundation both of whom predate the [pandemic] situation we find ourselves in by some way. So just some brief introductions. I'm really delighted to have such a fantastic lineup of experts here today.

We're joined by Tim Leech, who is CEO of Wavelength, Angela Ellis, who is head of digital social inclusion delivery from Good Things Foundation and who has been very involved in Future.now and Devcies.now, which is what I think Angela will be specifically talking to today, as well as a few more details. We've got Yasmin joining us as well from wavelength, and then we've got Myles who is AbilityNet volunteer for Wiltshire.

Myles will also be explaining how AbilityNet can support people once they've got a device. I'll just move on from there to a little bit of housekeeping. So, you can see at the bottom of the screen, we've got some live captions running.

They’re not perfect and they're being generated by the PowerPoint presentation. Hopefully, they’re good enough for people who need them to follow along. We are asking people today to use the Q and A window and please do pop any questions you've got in there.

We're not using the chat window. If you're familiar with that, and there's a couple of reasons for that one is it just makes it easier for us to manage but the second one is an accessibility reason. Anyone who is using a screen reader, anything that's popped in that chat gets read out automatically. So, it's quite a lot of noise for people who might be using a screen reader to help them. So that's the reason that that switched off after our session today, we'll be making slides, a transcript and a recording available.

They'll all be posted on the website, and you'll all be noted by email and straight after the webinar, there will be a feedback form. Please do give us some feedback on today's session. And if you have any follow up questions, then please pop them in there as well.

So we're going to be looking at, um, the role of devices and technology specifically during the time that we've been living through. But as I say, both organizations have got a really proud heritage in this area, and I know they’re champing at the bit to tell us about that as well, and then we'll also be hearing from our AbilityNet volunteer Myles about the specialist help and support that AbilityNet can provide for people who are using multiple devices.

And then at the end of the session, I'm hoping that we will have time for questions, as I say, please pop them in the Q and A, um, and if we get lots of questions, we'll do a follow up blog posts for any that we don't have time to answer it today.

So, without further ado, I would like to hand over to Tim.

Just as by way of introduction, as I say, Wavelength has got a really long history in this area, so I'm excited to hear about it; lots of data, lots of analysis, and a wealth of expertise to share in this area. So. Tim. So welcome.

**Tim Leech, CEO Wavelength:** Thank you very much. So, we're a charity, which is 80 years old, eight zero. We have been solving loneliness through technology for all that period. Digital is almost a shorthand for technology. We look at everyday devices because they’re replaceable. They're easy to fix. We do tablets, not computers because they allow access and lots of people being able to utilize it.

We’ve run projects across all age groups throughout the UK and we collaborate, and we'd look at co-designing very much within those projects.

And we are very passionate about the people who are our beneficiaries having a voice.

These figures are actually gone up since COVID-19. So, we'll, we're in, you know, about 400,000 people up to this year would intervene with a digital radio help scheme, which was one which was run by the BBC and DCMS and ourselves.

We helped over 4,000 people within that and those applications on one day, which 9,000 applications. So, we screened them, got stuff out to people most in need. I'd like to talk about this concept of vulnerable, a little and all sort of grey areas that people exist in.

Because vulnerability is very much about the situation you are put in.

So, if you don't have internet access and you need to get benefits, or you are unable to have a piece of equipment but you are off doing training courses…and people I am dealing with have their own stories and their own individuality. And sometimes we oversimplify that because of where they present by which I mean, somebody is seen as homeless.

That's the way they get classified but there are multiple things that people need. And a lot of times it's about bad luck and circumstance. And we think about that as well. So I've got a list of what I call vulnerabilities, but I think a lot of this is about the circumstances that people are put in and that’s what we try and respond to.

**Tim Leech:** So, this was a survey we carried out some time ago. It's a fairly balanced survey, but you will see that only 4% of people have access to the internet or [a] computer. And then only 26% were going to a library.

So, one of the things we have been campaigning for for a long time, is to get kit to people. We're very interested in loneliness side rather than getting people online, but we do see this great impact.

We understand that not having that connection can create loneliness and make people feel very excluded. At the moment under the situation we've been analyzing, we're seeing people probably split up into four different groups and low, medium, high, and endemic forms of loneliness. We've found that the intervention of a TV or radio or tablet is highly effective in mitigating those feelings of loneliness and improving people's feelings of wellbeing.

What we're unsure about, we're seeing evidence for is that people are moving at the present from a low level to higher levels, without any rationale. It's not a single progression from one stage to another. We're very concerned that people have been in the highest stages are going to get help now and afterwards and there's a lot of noise which has been created. So, a lot of this is not a cyclical thing.

It seems people are flipping to higher levels and this can lead to mental health conditions. It’s very akin to anxiety and triggers into depression, et cetera.

We have looked at this and there's a couple of surveys, which you can look at ([The Big Connect](https://wavelength.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Big-Connect-report-2018.pdf); [Everyday Technology Fighting Loneliness](https://wavelength.org.uk/everydaytechnology/)); we had the University of York come and study us and examine us on two different levels. One was a very highly statistical one making sure that we have proof about what we say and also one where we were just looking at the qualitative. I was a little bit annoyed that what my beneficiaries were telling me was being ignored by government and other departments within DCMS, department for education etc. we needed some way of saying actually what they are telling us is true.

We saw people moving significantly to a lower state of loneliness; we saw people saying their health was better after that intervention and we didn't see loneliness discriminating by age, sex or region, which I think is a hugely important underlying here may be some cultural differences between countries.

We'll flip over this, but quite frankly, what we're looking at is a very, very high correlation... I'm not going to tell you, like lots of people do though that correlation is actually a causation is not there's high probability looking at 0.01 there’s a fairly meaningful there is a link.

0.05 is a really good indication that there is actually something there.

We looked at drawing as a model was a university work, And I think this is worth, you can refer to this later, if you want to. These are some of the ways that interventions for technology works. It's how it improves people's lives, but it's about familiarity, normality, happiness, it's entertainment. Everybody thinks we're educational charity. No, we're not. We're looking at people feeling more connected, feeling more in the groove of where everybody else is, and I think that's one of the fantastic things we can say. And these different devices help in different ways. So radio was a godsend because not every house in the UK is internet connected, though it should be, it's something I've been pushing government to do. And I hope they will listen to that. Even if people don't have to pay for it, At least the connections, it could be switched on moments of crisis. Like this could happen. Uh, these are the two reports we did. You can find about website. These are simplified versions, but the full text is there.

One's qualitative, quantitative. We tested whether we were doing any damage to the body. And I would say technology doesn't do that. It's fairly welcome conclusive improve nowadays.

So, I think what I would like you to think about is what are you talking about vulnerabilities it's not necessarily the person it's about situation being put in when you're talking about loneliness. I think you've got to start as that as your principal, then see what can build out a lot of the things we, as you provide low to secondary benefits, I don't mind that, but what I am about it, making people happier, making feel better and well. And we have significant barriers in the UK, which have to be solved. There's lots of people who are out there doing training. I can say lots about that. What I [think about it, but there's not a hell of, a lot of people have been providing devices and we have always plowed this furrow.

You need to give people and take the risk on half behalf of people who cannot afford to take that risk, the opportunity to do that.

And what we do is provide a bit of kit, but our kit it's very much about salting loneliness. And an example, examples, that would be one of the first organization we worked with was the passage and the something called home for good, but people who had taken up, accommodation and being dispersed from all their friends were going back onto the street by giving the tablets they were able to communicate with each other. Able to, to meet up over the weekends and do free events, able to find out what's happening in their local communities, able to have a bank account, you know, and get online and sit in a coffee shop. I have a cup of coffee, use the internet and feel that they should be there.

I also think that the final thing about giving somebody a gift is that they feel, feel valued about that. It isn't just about, well, you need to use that to get yeah. That you can't, you need to use that to get a job. You need to use that to get a house. And lots of those things happen. But the incidental, I think, would give people the freedom to just try and use the thing…Start to take account that. We have this relationship with technology where I people exist in what I call grey areas.

We're very good at certain things, but other things were not that good at a lot of our government wants to do. Isn't what most people would go down, particularly my beneficiaries who are properly more.

find it more problematic. The things are always in the written language and the internet has turned it into a written text, rich format, which is fairly impenetrable even if you got screen reader, even if you've got text to speech, if you can't read and you've got cognitive processing issue, around sound and the visuals.

Um, and I think that's one of the things I'm trying to do is relieve that pressure.

But also try and get given to recognize that putting everything in line doesn't work, unless you have the support services to help them. And that's where AbilityNet, really, really, as part of the answer. And I, I really support it for that, but also it's about keeping non-digital services to support people within, you know, banking within all the online services there.

So it's very important we have good access, not just to the internet, but to other services I hope that's given you some sort of insight in what we do and where our motivation is.

**Sarah Botterill:** That's fantastic. And Tim, I think you've done an amazing job of painting, such a rich picture in a short space of time. And I just wanted to sort of briefly recap some of the territory you've covered. I think what you've touched on there is that, you know, it's not just about loneliness, but that there are other consequences that are associated with that, that technology used in the right way can intervene.

And that, you know, it doesn't necessarily have to be a high tech solution. I love what you're saying about the radios and the fact that they can provide that, that company to people.

And also, I guess there's two sides to the rich data you're collecting on the one hand. In some ways, it's a shame you're having to prove the case, but it's also fantastic that you've got that rich pool of data there and that you can actually do some of the lobbying that you're talking about in terms of getting the government onside and getting people to really embrace what you're doing with that data.

Thank you ever so much for sharing that, and I can see some questions coming in, but I'll save those to the end if that's okay.

And just pass over to, um, Angela now.

And I'm sure some of those things will come through when we talk about Good Things Foundation and Devices Dot Now, certainly in terms of shared demographic. I think Angela and the people that you're talking to, there'll be some overlap there with what Tim's touched on.

**Angela Ellis, Head of Digital Social Inclusion Delivery, Good Things Foundation:**

Absolutely. Thanks, Sarah. And thanks to Tim. It's great to follow on from what you've already said [and] I've made a couple of points to myself to pick up on the points, particularly around vulnerability. So, if I forget to do that, please do prompt me.

So as I go through this…., as we said in the intros, I'm head of digital social inclusion delivery, at Good Things Foundation, and one of the projects that I'm involved in is devices.now. So I'm here to talk a bit about what good things foundation is, a bit more about devices.now and how you can find out more some of the key insights from that, that we'll find it out. Um, and what we've learned as we've gone on this particular piece of work over the last couple of months from the beneficiaries, and then talk a bit more about how that's impacted on people in terms of loneliness and the isolation that we know we're all facing to a degree.

In this current pandemic, but how that is, um, how devices and connectivity on the support have really helped people who are most at risk of isolation.

So the first of those points was, um, what is good things foundation. So where, uh, Digital social inclusion charity. Um, we've been around for a number of years now.

We’re an organization that's based out of Sheffield, we work in the UK, we work in Australia, um, and we've got a small project that we're involved in, in Kenya. But our model really is working with online centers. Now, when we talk about online centers, um, I'll be very clear in saying that they are not centres that belong to Good Things Foundation. They're not our centres. They are hyper local community organizations that exist in their own rights. And I think it's important to say that they organizations that know their communities. They know what the best model is in those communities. And they know the best way to work with people. Most importantly, they, they know individuals in those communities.

So they've got really good connections with people who traditionally would have visited.

The centres would have gone in and maybe to use the food bank, um, too, you know, be part of a community library. Um, but this time, lots of those online centers are working from home remotely, um, to still provide that support and connections to people in this current time.

At Good Things Foundation, we want people to be digitally able, equal and safe.

And we know there's a lot of people who are left behind and that's creating a digital divide and we think it's really important that we do everything we can to work with our online center colleagues to make sure that gap narrows wherever possible, um, and to lobby, um, to engage with government partners under the partners who are in this space to really raise the profile of this issue and talk about the impacts if people are left behind and what that means for them, and also the broader community

So, one of our main products that people can go online and check out is [Learn My Way](https://www.learnmyway.com/).

*[AbilityNet featured Learn My Way in a previous AbilityNet LIVE! webinar about* [*learning online during the lockdown*](https://abilitynet.org.uk/webinars/how-access-online-learning-during-lockdown)*]*

So that's a resource that anyone can access at any time. At the moment, we've took the need for people to register away. People can go online, find skills and support to help them, develop basic digital skills. So, it's aimed at people who need support to use a mouse, use a keyboard, maybe access benefits, online, those kinds of things….. So people can go online and find those resources there.

And we're always happy to be informed of this content that you think we need to develop further. So please do go on and have a look. If that's helpful.

**Sarah Botterill:** Brilliant. Um, and before I move on to the next slide, which I'm guessing is what you want me to do…. I'll just point out that Learn My Way featured in depth on one of our previous webinars. So, if people want to go and find out a bit more information you can just pop onto the landing page for AbilityNet LIVE!, and see how one of your colleagues kindly joined us to talk about that there as well so people can get a bit more detail on that.

**Angela Ellis:** Fantastic. Thanks Sarah. So, we work at scale. So, whilst we are working in those communities, and we're really pleased that we have so many community partners who choose to be part of that network, we do work at scale. We think it's important as many people as possible and get the opportunity to improve their digital skills.

So, through that model and network that we have, we're able to work at scale with over 3 million people. So fast, since 2010.

So I said, one of the projects that I'm involved in is devices. Now. So devices. Now emerged, on the back of a realization around the time of lockdown, coming about a lot of people, um, didn't have connectivity at home as Tim has so brilliantly said, lots of people don't have that internet at home. A lot of people muddle through on relatively old phones. So, they may be smartphones, but the operating system may not be there.

There may be ones that have kind of helped them to stay online at home, but the main source of internet connectivity would have been a local library.

So, I know until relatively recently I lived opposite a library and I'd see those people sat outside in the morning waiting to get online there. They may have, did have a smartphone, but it's, it's not fit for purpose really. So, we know there's lots of people in that group. **There's 1.9 million people across the UK who don't have internet connectivity at home.**

So there's a real need for that. We also know that lots of people don't have those devices.

So many, many families are now homeschooling and don't have the devices to enable them to do that effectively. So, you can see many ways that that gap will widen there. Um, so yes, devices.now was stood up to focus on this agenda to campaign, to industry and government sponsors for phones and for access to devices so that we could get those out to people as quickly as possible. And with the online centres, being the distribution point for that, we thought that was really important. What we didn't want to do was get devices out to people and then be sent out from a distribution point. These devices go direct into people's homes and there'd be no one there locally to support people with those.

Um, so slightly different models to Tim's. But of course, it's critical for both models that that support is there. And I know that's an important element of both models. Um, so you can find out more about the online sensors and devices dot.

Now, by following that link there, I'll ask Sarah to move on if that's okay.

So who's?. Um, we're fairly, um, bold in saying that we know there's different ways of classifying people, and we know that that's an important element of DCMS and others collecting data and classifying and quantifying this, um, issue. But for us, we have, um, trusted our online sensor partners to date, to work out who is most vulnerable in their communities at this point.

Um, so to be eligible as part of the scheme, you have to be someone who doesn't have the means to be able to buy a device. So, you have to be in a position where you cannot afford to do this yourself. We don't ask for any evidence of that. We don't ask for evidence of people's benefits. We ask that someone cannot afford to have that device themselves.

And we say, it's anyone who's vulnerable. Now again, we've taken the online senses, um, word this and know that they are best placed to understand that someone who may not have been that vulnerable, uh, for want of a better phrase may find themselves in a position where they've single mom, three kids at home and no devices or connectivity.

Clearly at the moment, they are in a very vulnerable position in terms of being able to homeschool and support those children. So, um, what people get is a device connectivity and support. We feel it's important to get all three. So that's the offer that we make out to people and online sensors can express an interest in supporting people to get those, to date.

The online centres haven't received any money for that support, what they are committed to is making sure that this benefits people in their local community, and they aren't doing this for the financial gain. Clearly, we want to sustain the network and we want to see them continue but we know online sensors wants to support people and wants to do that long term. And part of that is reaching out and making sure that those people get a device now. We've got over 2000 devices out in the last couple of months, but that's not enough.

And the demand is absolutely huge. I talked to at the beginning of this, about the being 1.9 million people without connectivity at home, um, we know that the need for this, um, kind of support and this, um, the devices is huge.

We have over 8,000 people at the moment who have expressed an interest in getting a device. Um, so we cannot fulfill that need right now. And it is a really urgent need. Thanks, Sarah, we'll move on. Um, so what have we done to evidence the benefits and the impact we've had to date where we've produced them in, um, impact reports?

The first of which is the, um, and if Sarah doesn't mind, we'll move on to the next slide. That gives an overview of some of the stats from that. And we have published the new version of this and I'll include it in the Q and a panel in a moment.

So the last version of the impact report was published yesterday.

Similar demographics of people that are receiving the devices. Um, lots of people, um, are fully self-isolating, but you'll see from that lots arms, um, and we've not been, we've not discriminated against one group. We've said again, that it's the online sense. You know, this group of people, um, more than us.

Um, you'll see lots, haven't received the NHS letter to say that they need to shield. Um, and lots have, um, again, late Tim, you know, we're always a bit cautious about using these vulnerability terms. Um, but we have asked online sensors to you, these broad brush terms here in terms of socially vulnerable and then socially, clinically vulnerable.

What we mean by the social clinically vulnerable is people who've have received that shield in letter. So it largely follows that. Thanks. So we'll move on now, what I wanted to finish with. Um, and I won't show this now because there's bound to be problems with the technology and there's lots of other great stuff to cover as part of this webinar is maple story.

Um, so as I say, I won't, um, show this now, but I would urge you to go on and look at Mabel story, um, after, after this session. So just to explain a bit about Mabel, Mabel is a woman who lives in the stock court area of greater Manchester. Um, she's a woman who, um, is an older person. She, um, has a. she's always spoke to on the phone.

Um, clearly there's an expense to that. Um, she's someone who accessed a local community center where she knows the staff there.

And so when the scheme came about, they, um, said that it would be great to get a device to enable one of the digital champions at the center. And you may bill already, um, they were able to hygienically deliver the device to Mabel and that's something we do.

We issue hygiene protocols for all of this. They dropped it off a door and had a brief chat to Mabel, arranged to speak to her on the phone. What Mabel didn't know was that they had already preloaded that device with an app. The enabled me able to click on it and speak to a daughter in Australia and to see a face for the first time in 20 years.

Um, so that's had a brilliant impact on Mable’s life in terms of loneliness and isolation. Mabel was someone who could get to that community center, meet people face to face, speak to a daughter on the phone. Right. It's a lot down. And obviously lots of those things went to [00:31:00] that time of locked down.

So, to see our daughters faces had a real impact on Mabel.

She's now connected to her grandchildren in Australia too, and just one of the many stories that we're starting to hear about from people. Um, and, and I think that's the thing for me, you know, we can talk about the statistics around loneliness.

We can talk about specifics around numbers of devices going out, but for us as a project team, the thing that keeps us going and wants us to achieve more with this is that there's people like Mabel who get these devices.

Um, another story would be one from Ron. So, Ron is a gentleman in the London area who's received a device is now connecting to family and friends through that. And he's able to check his premium bonds online. He's making doctor's appointments. And this is someone who had very basic digital skills prior to lockdown.

So, the device has really enabled him to connect. In many different ways, not only with family and friends, but also with medical services is doing financial tracks transactions online. [00:32:00] So there's a real impact on people. Um, and obviously the key parts of that is, um, making sure that they're not lonely anymore, but just feeling like the parts of that community, as Tim said, people feeling that they are able to engage in the same way as, as, as the rest of us can.

So, thank you for that. I'm going to stay around for question and answers too.

**Sarah Botterill:** Brilliant. Thanks ever so much for that. And, um, I think a couple of things just to pick up on that one is that community focus that you've got, which is something that definitely resonates with, AbilityNet, but also a word that's come through really strongly in your presentation, and Tim's is that one of *impact* .

It’s not about the tech, is it it's about what it can do, which I hope is where, the lovely Myles comes in area of expertise, and I know that your role is very much about not just people having these devices, but what they can do with it.

So, I'm just wondering if you could tell us why you decided to get involved with AbilityNet, and a little bit about what it is that you do for us, in terms of working in the community and helping people make more of the devices they have.

**Myles Pilling: County Co-Ordinator for Wiltshire, AbilityNet:**

Thanks, Sarah. I'm really enjoying the text bit at the bottom. It's really quite amusing. So, so what do I do for AbilityNet, and how did I join?

Well, let's start with the idea that I joined.

I was an advisor.

In education for a long time, I've been a teacher for 27 years in a special school context, and then an advisor for 10 years for a local authority. And then I left start up my own business. And it was about that period that I got involved with ability that I've known about ability net professionally for many years, but I'm actually sort of. Got to the position where I could actually join. So, uh, I was more aware of their work in helping people individually through centers. So that was, that was how it began. But now this is different. This is about helping people. And I wanted to pay back, uh, to the community, the skills that I'd learned.

And so, it began as a one to one thing, I'm a County coordinator for AbilityNet.

And I look after seven volunteers in the Wiltshire County, there is a network of volunteers across the entire nation. Um, but what we do as AbilityNet is that we match the need to the solution, or we solve technical issues and problems for free.

I think that's what most people know.

So that's how I got involved. And. The range of things we get involved in is from solving printer problems, to logging into Google, to addressing issues regarding their equipment so that they can then function with their, um, their lives.

And it does involve this empathy.

Empathy is critical, a knowledgeable friend approach.

**Sarah Botterill:** Things to pick up on that Myles is just to say that it's an individual approach and that we work with people who might be older and might have a disability, um, and help adapt the technology to their specific needs.

And as you say that empathy, it's not about doing things to individuals.

It's about empowering them to do the things they want to themselves. I hope that resonates with, with your experiences.

**Myles Pilling:** Absolutely. It's listening and it's that it's that ability to match that need and that, that's why we as volunteers and more than just techies, uh, were actually people that. People actually become not dependent on us, but they value as, as a source, a knowledgeable friend to call on when they experience a difficulty.

So, our tickets that's the way we get it. Come back time and time again. And our aim is to help people not to impose things on them, but to help them in a one to one fashion. And I know there's lots of people you've helped, but I wonder if you could pick out maybe one or two examples of some of your biggest achievements, um, in terms of impact again, I guess because often it's the small interventions that do have a big impact.

Yes. Um, I think particularly of Maggie, who, uh, features on our website, um, she's an author in our eighties and she has macular degeneration. Um, we're often getting people now with quite complex disabilities as well. Um, so Maggie's need was that, uh, she couldn't see the work that she's writing a book at the moment on history of a local area.

Of which she is a recognized expert and she was getting frustrated at not being able to do that. So, we found a solution using iPad and Siri to input her work. Uh, but then her highest continued to deteriorate. And then she couldn't read her own research.

So, we introduced a device called an Orcam, which actually is a Israeli origin and what it is, it's something clips to your glasses.

And when you point in front of you, it reads back to you through an earpiece.

And that helped her to actually read around research. And then we have problem that every time we did something, something else needed to be solved. So, it's a continuum of relationship and solving individual problems, the nitty gritty.

So though, Sarah, you mentioned simple little things. If I just mentioned one other, which is basically, um, the one that we have a number of people with the same problem as Maggie and introducing a smart speaker.

Can enable them to make phone calls really easily without the need to remember holding a magnifying glass or typing in numbers, they can just say call Frank or whatever.

That's made a huge difference in many people's lives. Fantastic. Um, and, um, keeping an eye on the time, but I was wondering if you could just briefly tell us about, um, what you've been doing during lockdown, particularly in your community. Cause I know you've been helping, um, a whole congregation to get online.

Perhaps tell us a little bit about that. Yeah, well we, we soon transferred to zoom within week of, uh, lockdown and, and, uh, our church is very socially wanting to connect with people, and we had a couple of, um, Well, a few elderly people. And I mentioned this because it really resonates with what we've been talking about earlier.

And one particular lady, she had no internet, she had no smartphone and she [00:39:00] was making calls into conferences like this through the telephone. Which is fine, but it leads to all kinds of difficulties about background noise, uh, being able to hold the phone for a length of time or even all sorts of issues like that.

Um, so the chess decided to purchase a few tablets. We didn't know if your organizations have wavelength and a devices dog now. And so, the church invested in that and we invested in tablets. And portable Wi-Fi. Several of the questions are referring to that. And so, we, the church has invested in that now to begin with, it was a step by step instruction.

Obviously, we couldn't meet face to face. And so it was basically guidance through windows, not the computer program, but physical windows and a set of instructions that we sent out to enable them. And the first few weeks. Um, it was mainly getting the WIFI to connect to the tablet. That was the issue. And I'm pleased to report.

And I'm absolutely delighted that we had two ladies in this context.

And now I don't get the calls because what is critical if you're introducing technology support just in that initial phase to make sure that everything's working fine and that was needed now it's not.

And I'm so delighted because these people have come from nothing to this status.

In other words, it's probably ground zero in terms of how we help people. So that's been really important.

**Sarah Botterill:** Brilliant. Thank you, Myles. Thanks, so much for that. Overview.

Um, I'm not going to read all of this app, but there are some details here about, um, how'd you get in touch with ability net as well as some of the, um, online resources as Myles.

And I have said there's a lot of self-help available as well.

My Computer, My Way, similarly, to learn my way has got lots of information on there that can help people. We also have some free fact sheets to help people there as well. Um, I just wanted to briefly touch on how we're making a difference to our clients.

And we similarly are collecting, uh, figures around the impact that we have. You can see some of those on screen here. So, um, 80% of clients are saying that they are better able to use technology thanks to support from people like Myles.

Um, and as he said that he gives his time for free, which is fantastic.

So, thank you very much. Um, and then, um, you know, more. You know, we've talked about fun, but in terms of independence, as 76% of people feel more independent and 69% feel less isolated. So again, I think that's just reiterating that it's, um, it's not necessarily about the tech per se, but it's about the impact that it has on, on real people's lives.

Um, so yeah. So, Q and A, I can see we've got a lot of questions and I'm going to go through those in a second, but first I'm going to take chair's privilege and just ask Tim first. And then Angela, I wondered if you could give me your thoughts on. Whether you feel that the time that we've been going through has, um, but in acceleration in terms of getting devices to people who need them and also how much further you think we need to go.

So just briefly, Tim, if you've maybe shared some thoughts on that.

I think it, I think what we saw historically, and we've analyzed actually looking at the sociology of this is that people are very resistant to technology in, um, and that. The natural way. I think you look to Japan; they have a different, a different culture and relationship as an adult.

Well, it's, we look at it in different way and immediately elicit bit of a Luddite.

We want to break it. We don't want to use that sort of thing. Um, and that's I think has led to what I talk about. Um, when I look talk, people talking about social media, Facebook, and whatever, and they blame the computers, but on the internet to play more that, and these go back, people blaming the radio for causing that skin and weapons.

You know, the and it was going to be the devil's curse to the, to the teenagers and parents didn't like it. And they did the same thing was a novel, you know, so you, you can see this historic builder. I think some of that negativity has been ripped out. Uh, I think, um, the issue I have is that government beforehand, Did not invest in the internet.

Didn't invest in making sure that the devices were available for people and just free money was in terms of training. And I'm not saying that trend is not needed. I'm just saying, if you can't afford to get onto the web, you got very little options at the moments we have a problem. All right. People can't go to the coffee shop and do that.

You can get portable technology. We have linked up. You know, very happily linked up people with David's wife, which was one of the answers, but I mean, I've been doctoring the loneliness commission and decent mass and saying, look, let us get some tablets out to people. Mmm. And you need to make sure that people we could preloaded, like Angela's saying, pop them through the talk them through.

We could put link them ability, net bang, they're online, the less isolated, the surviving lockdown. So. You know, I think there has been traction. I want that traction to happen. I do want sensible conversations with governments, and I think that's why, you know, it's important for Wavelength and AbilityNet…..

You know devices.now to actually start lobbying together. As government are saying, look, we can do so much more. We can bring solutions and. I think it's also why I welcome. She taught doing devices. Don't now, um, there's more need than we fought.

There was out there just over the radio thing. There's this myth that everybody had three great years in the home.

Well, we found thousands of people who had nothing. You know, that has a real impact to this. So, I think it's been a wakeup call. I don't want people to forget, wake up cool government to respond. And I think that's going to have to be a lot of people knocking on that door. That's great. Thanks, Amanda. And what do you think, do you think that this has been, it's almost like a massive proof of concept in a way, isn't it?

That actually this stuff works. It absolutely isn't as good things foundation, you know, like we've said, you know, people had [00:46:00] that WIFI connection, so muddled through prior to lot down. So, we're at the internet cafes or libraries or, you know, sitting outside. The buildings that have WIFI connection left on overnight, you know, sitting outside and, and, and jumping on those clearly that wasn't, um, as much of an opportunity, particularly at the start of lockdown.

So, it has, it's really proved that concept for want of a better phrase, that this is a real issue. Certainly, good things foundation. It's something we firmly embedded in our strategy now, you know, devices, wasn't something that was a priority for those. There was lots of other priorities prior to lots of lot.

Oh, wait, certainly there now. Um, and, and we, like we've said, we know the massive impacts on people. So, um, I was just looking at some stats from the new impact reports and 82% of people say they've used the device to keep in touch with family and friends. So. There ain't much else you can do to keep in touch a family and friends at the moment other than a good old telephone and, um, you know, writing letters, but at the moment, you know, with that immediate need, you know, people want to connect with the friends and family.

So yeah, there is, there is that great need there. And I think touching on what Tim said about, about the government and his lobbying, um, in Scotland, there's been a 5 million pounds investment from the Scottish government, um, for the connecting Scotland agenda. And while it's DCMS of supportive of devices dot, now there's been no funding to date, to, to, to enable us to get these devices out, all the funding that we've received today, and all the donations have come from industry as good things, foundation of future dot.

Now, um, that that's where the funding and the donations has come from. That's brilliant. Thanks ever so much for sharing those thoughts there. Um, I just wanted to run through a few questions from people who've joined us today is an interesting one here from, um, Gloria and talking about a younger demographic, 16 to 24, um, being brought up on technology and pointing out their loneliness.

It's still an issue for them. Um, which resonates with me. I know in some of the statistics is actually a bigger issue for that demographic. And it just, the question is do either organization have any findings or research about, um, a younger demographic and loneliness?

there's a number of places where I think on the, to. Uh, directly too. So, um, there's a very good law report on, uh, technology, particularly social media and young people. And it picked up on work, which was done by two academics at Oxford university. One now is at Cambridge. Um, And they did the young people's diary project.

And that sort of busted the myth about young people and loneliness. I'm going to give reasons why that this may be from NYP as a case. [00:49:00] Um, but a lot of this started the ground. Zero was a researcher and. The U S who has completely kept on saying, um, single access devices, screen technology was bad for young children.

It was causing all different problems it's causing loneliness. And I think one challenge to reveal her research. She hasn't. And secondly, a lot of this stuff, which is now being done by the Oxford papers shown social major is the last of the words it's more to do with families and connections. There also sorts a report called screened out, um, which was fundamentally thought there's anabolism of the English data, which has held up, I think assets, university.

And the problem was that was it. We did the comparison of active children against non active children. What non-active children were doing because they wanted to maintain and creates friendships were going online. [00:50:00] So that was blamed for something this way. It was trying to make absolutely clear. I was talking about correlation, not causation, lots of people are freeing that up.

Um, Uh, as a, an issue, which isn't doesn't take access. So going back to the other thing, which has lately happened, there is there was a big online before by the BBC that I have to say I'm extremely interested and particularly affected by what we can do around young people come to that later. Why? But there's research which was done, um, was it BBC?

And through that, it freed up the young people that are lonely, but more key. Was it older people reporting. They were lonely. When they're younger. Part of this, you see with urban demo democratics, when people either leaving, going to secondary school or the leaving for university or going into the first employment and it moved to the place, they [00:51:00] feel extremely lonely.

Loneliness was our culture seems to be connected to population density as much as, um, Okay, big open spaces and different cultures works slightly differently. So that's one of the things which threw up for that report. Um, older people groups are said, well, this didn't count because of the online surfing.

They weren't able to take part in it, but I think there is some, some issues there as attractions. I think the other thing is one way to solve loneliness. Is actually to give people the skills when they're younger. So the first time it hits, they are prepared for it. If you not. And they have lots of other pressures, which we know there's triggers, which correct loneliness.

You also can trigger and transitive can trigger into depression and can trigger it into this field of non friendship. And all those are happening at periods where you see particular changes, particularly, and people come [00:52:00] very vulnerable around mental health conditions and lots of that there's hormonal change, which is happening.

It isn't so much about leaving school or going to new groups, et cetera. That can be some. Fundamental changes within the back brain chemistry too. So all these things I think are connected with why you have the reports. I think you could do things to prepare people for it. And I think you asking me how you solved loneliness in older age, as you've got start with children.

That's great. Thanks ever so much really comprehensive answer there. And I would also just say from an ability net perspective, I know there are some statistics. If you go to the scope website and others as well, I'm saying that disabled people are also more prone to loneliness. And as the saying that that's something that, um, is close to the heart of ability.

Now, Angela, did you have anything you wanted to add that. Just a final link is to, um, off come every [00:53:00] year. Um, have a responsibility placed on them to carry out research, intermediate literacy, and they produce an annual report about the use of media by children. Um, so you can go on and look for that. Um, it's it's on the off con website.

I mean it now. Um, so if you search for making use of media making sense of media, rather you can find a link to that. It talks about adults, media lives, children's media lives and what exactly the doing online. So if you want to see the way that different groups are engaging, and then you can do that. Um, although that doesn't answer the question really about, um, loneliness, it's helpful to see what kind of ways that people are engaging with it, because there are differences between children and adults.

Great. Thanks very much. And I'm afraid we're really close to time, but there is a question here, which I think I know the answer to, but I would just want to very briefly put it out to Tim and Angela and possibly miles as well about do, does the beneficiary need to [00:54:00] have a basic understanding of tech? Or at least an interest in learning.

Um, and I guess the question from Colin there is in order to receive a device. So I'll just throw that out to both organizations there. Yeah. So, so one of the things that we know is good things foundation, we look at motivation, um, as a factor in, um, stopping people, wanting to go online. So we know in particularly in the age group 65, plus there's never really been that motivation.

And I know that's a very general statement, but motivation has been lower in that age group than any other age group. Um, But we found that that has changed during lockdown. You know, people are starting to hear older. People are starting to hear that, you know, it is a way for them to connect. They want to be part of that.

So that has changed. I mean, know that motivation is, um, to be online and to engage digitally, um, has become less of a factor during lockdown. Great. Kim, did you have anything to add there?

[00:55:00] Uh, people learning along slate to, and whether they can afford the actual equipment, we are not a charity that supports education. Um, so actually we want people to have fun and be connected with it and meet us and, um, enter into real life situations. And tech does do that, but you know, technology doesn't work without people.

That's what I, I would say. It's um, as long as you see it's pitch with centric, We'll give to people who are combating loneliness, great and miles over to you. Cause I know, I guess that just echoes what we were saying earlier about the fact that, that, that patience or most the time that you're willing to invest, it's not a test.

Is it? You're there to support people to empower them, to do things at their own pace. Yeah. And so those ebb and flow between the person who wants to join in and then decides not to join in and then decides they [00:56:00] want to join in. And we're having a lot of that going on as well. Um, with, with technology. Um, one of the questions that come up and I wonder if we could briefly answer it because it says my wifi, mobile wifi, where'd you get it?

Well, You can find it from most suppliers and it's a little device, there is a cost each month. And if you're running a meeting like this, we recognize it's running at no 0.2, five gigabytes of data for an hour's meeting. So there is running costs and, um, yeah, I think. Basically people, um, particularly in the learning disability group, we're finding that there is a lot of emotional impact of coming out of the pandemic scaredness about going back into society.

After that, it sounds huge. Emotional impacts. And we supported those people by actually getting them to talk to each other through the media with this kind of means. [00:57:00] So I think we might have a, not a pandemic way, but we're certainly going to find that people will lead the need to connect with people.

Get over the fears of going back in society when you have a disability, which isolate you by definition. Yeah, that's really interesting point. And just to reference another of our previous webinars last week, we heard from, um, grace heir who actually have been, um, connecting, learning disabled communities through a friendship group online.

So they were just so many ways that I think, um, technology can help a whole range of people. Um, and it's fantastic to have heard, um, a snapshot of that today. Um, I'm just going to skip through it and see if there, um, It's another quick question that I can just squeeze in and see if there's anything. Um, there's a comment here actually, which might be useful.

I know there was a comment about Scotland saying that connecting Scotland devices have [00:58:00] been allocated to local authorities and people can apply to H S CP or councils to access those devices, which might be useful for anybody, um, in that area of the country. Um, Oh, so saying that mentor health, social groups are not meeting.

Um, and so it's important for those types of organizations to reach out online. Um, So I think time has defeated us. Um, so I'm just thinking through, um, and I also am aware that when I click the right button, um, this meeting ends very abruptly. So I would just like to on a personal level of my, thanks to all of the panelists who have joined us today, I think it's been a really interesting webinar.

And as I said, all of the video. And the transcript and the slides will be shared afterwards. So you can find out more about the organizations and also, [00:59:00] um, about ability net there. And as miles has picked up on, there are a lot of questions about portable wifi and getting connected. So I'll, I'll take that on.

Make sure that we follow up with some information about that after our session today, but people can also ring the ability net helpline, um, and, um, there's support there. Um, yeah. So that's it. Um, so thank you from me, um, to everybody. Um, I will sign off now and thank you also to everyone who's joined us today.

So thank you very much and good bye everybody. Take care.