

TACKLING SOCIAL ISOLATION IN RURAL HAMPSHIRE

Project timeline: March 2016 to February 2017

Steve Taylor

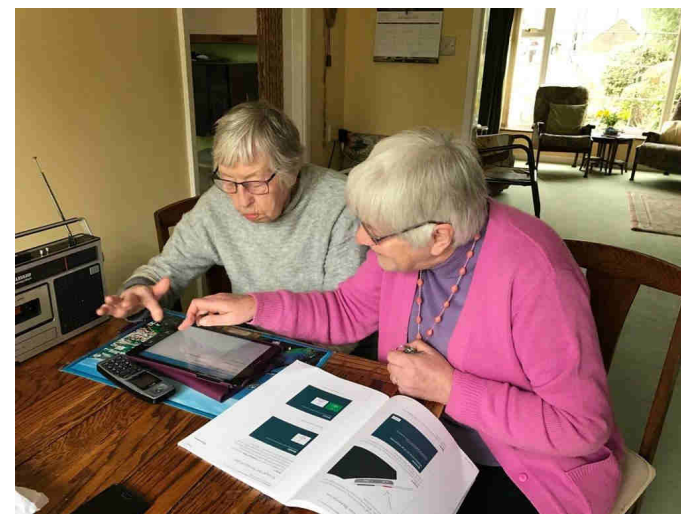
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- 3 How the pilot project was run
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Breezie user and her volunteer supporting her



Training session for volunteers

The project wishes to extend thanks to the Hampshire Library Service, their wonderful volunteers and Nic Morgan who coordinated their efforts.

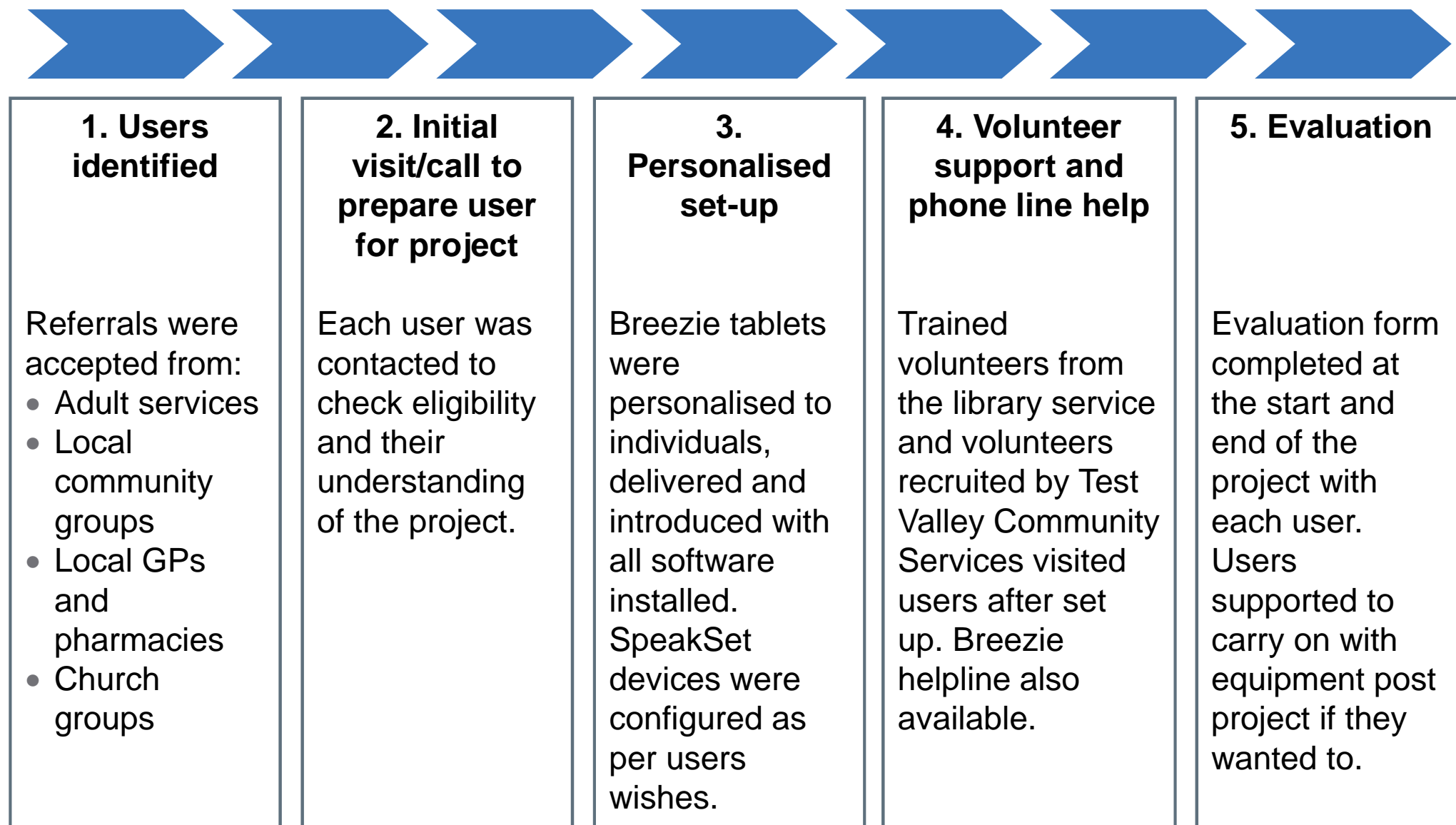
Background to project and context

- Lacking social connections can be as harmful to health as **smoking 15 cigarettes a day** and leads to higher risk of heart disease and diabetes
- The UK has an ever **increasing number of older people**, many living in rural areas such as Hampshire
- It is estimated that 50,000 of the over 65 population in Hampshire are **‘mildly’ lonely**
- A further 20,000 older people in the county reported to be **‘intensely’ lonely**
- Local GP and hospital services as well as social care support will all **struggle to tackle the increased demand** from this group of people.
- Argenti, the Council’s care technology partner, was asked to **design and run a pilot** programme to see if technology could form part of the solution
- The project was **initiated and funded by the Corporate Rural Affairs Co-ordination group** at Hampshire County Council; it formally kicked off in March 2016
- This presentation summarises the **results** now the pilot is complete

Project objectives

- Reduce **feelings of isolation** through use of **technology** in **rural areas**
- Demonstrate an **increase in contact** with family/friends/services as a result of the project for participants.
- **Connect users** with family member further away and relevant services
- Understand if this **reduces demand** on adult health and social care services downstream

The process adopted was straightforward



The equipment was selected for its suitability for a non-technical user



Breezie

Breezie tablets specially modified for use by older people allow easy access to the internet and safe applications with support

www.breezie.com



SpeakSet

SpeakSet boxes turn any TV into a secure video conferencing facility, allowing users to talk to family and clinicians.

www.speakset.com

Social Isolation Project journey: key stats

56
people

Identified through HCC adult services, local GP surgeries, voluntary sector, housing providers and local pharmacies

Increase in people's ability to find out about local services and support

150
hours

Face to face unpaid contact hours logged as part of the project

29%

128
hours

Of call time created (5.5 days), through the use of SpeakSet all over the world

64%

Of end users say that they now have more contact with friends and family because of the technology

80%

Of end users would recommend the technology and project to others

The results clearly show that people found it significantly easier at the end of the trial to:

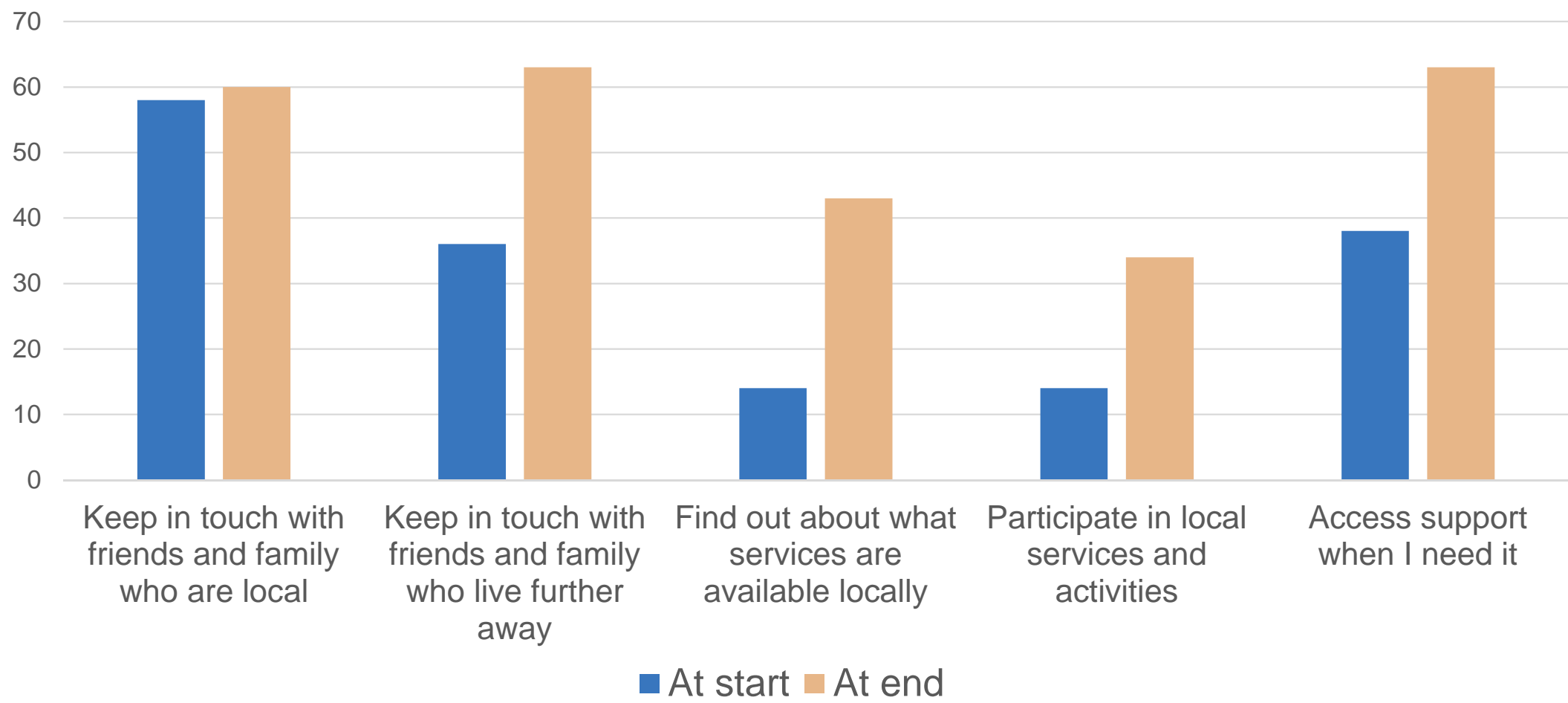
- **Keep in touch** with family and friends living further away
- **Find out about** locally available services
- **Participate** in local services and activities
- **Access support** when needed

Key findings (1): ‘before and after’ impact of the programme

Contact with friends and family

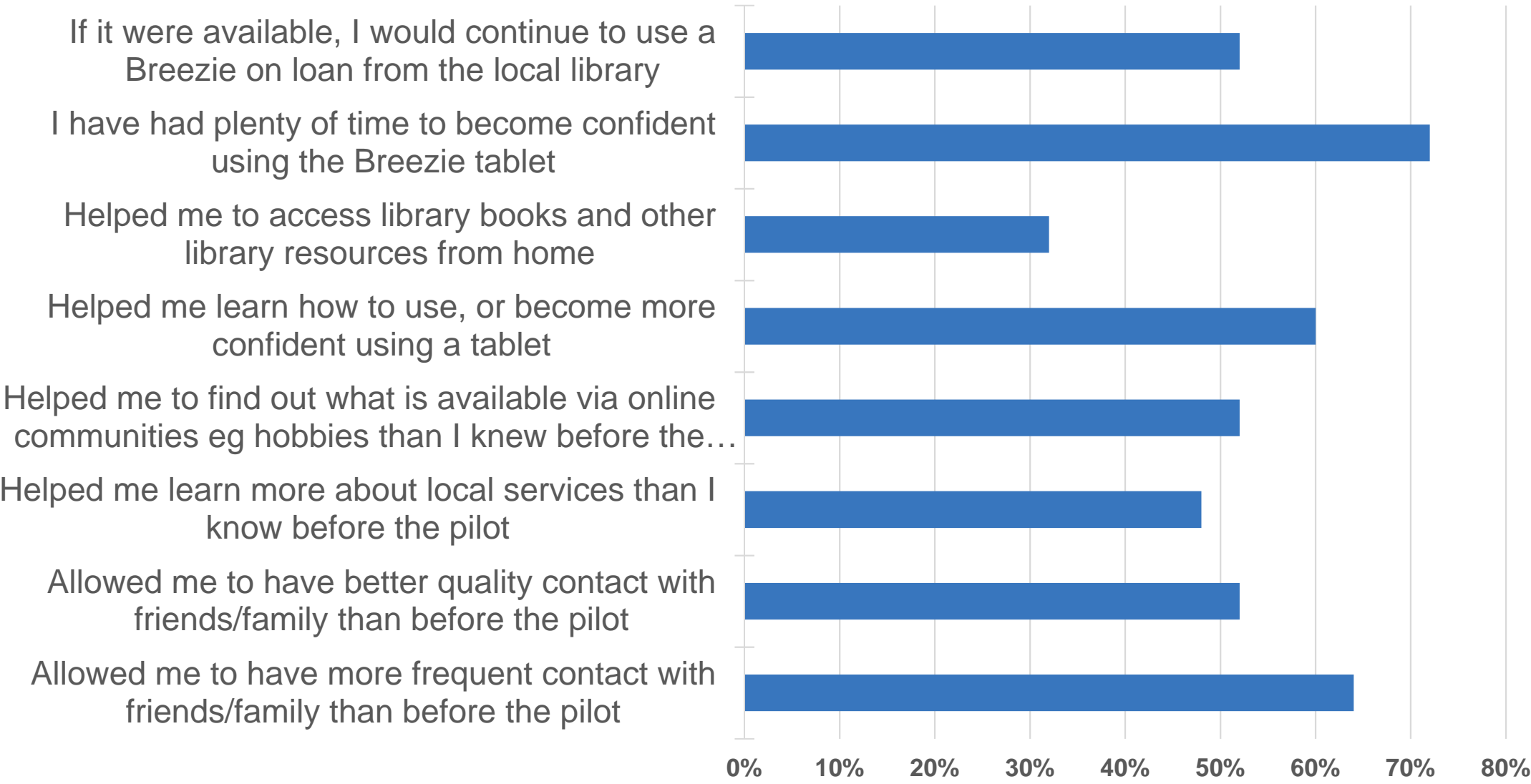
Percentage of people that agreed or strongly agreed with these statements.

The project helped me to:



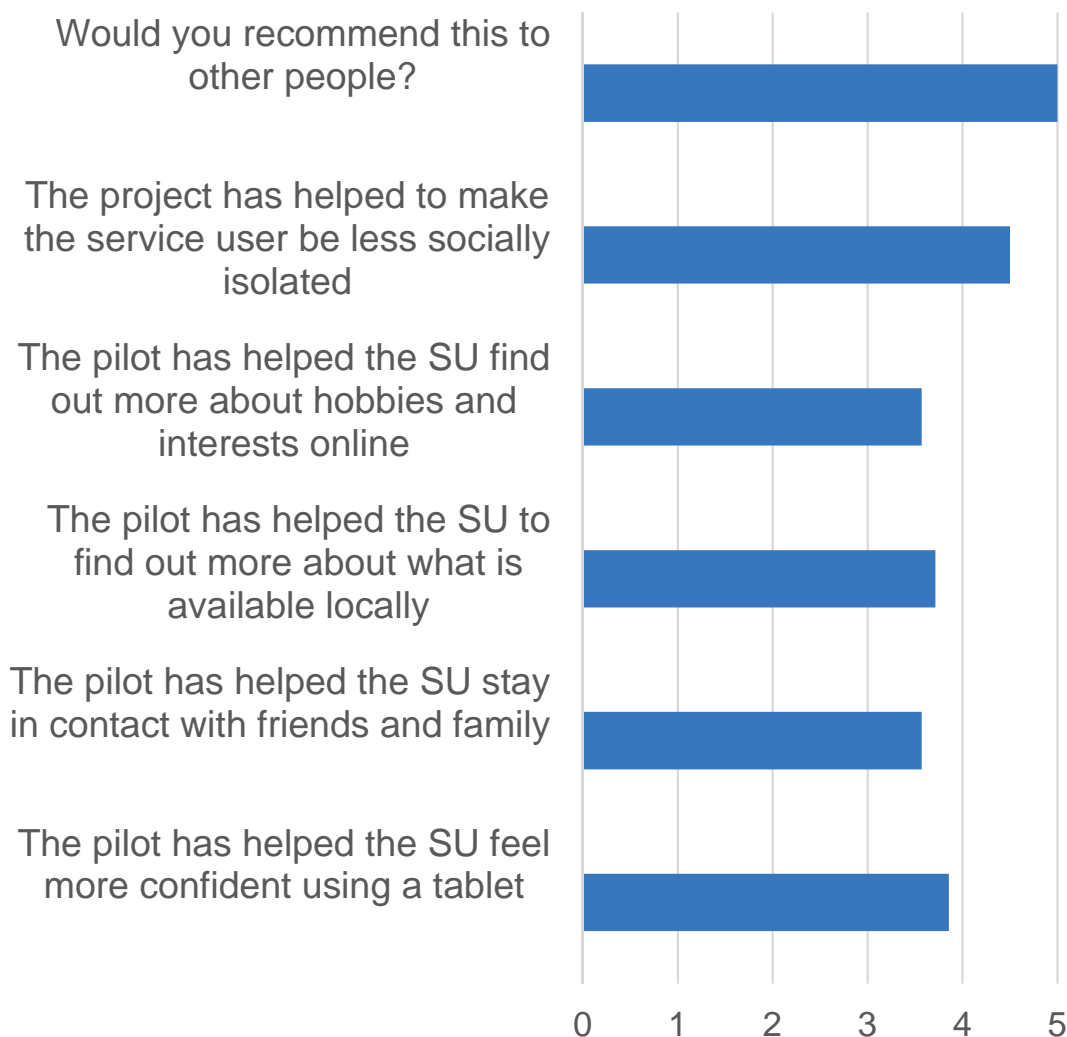
Key findings (2): Service user views on the programme

Service user feedback on the Social Isolation project



Key findings (3): Volunteer feedback

Volunteer Feedback (5=Very Good, 1=Very Poor)



Learning from volunteers:

“Users need to be carefully selected. My customers:

- One had poor eyesight and could not easily, if at all, read the text on the screen. The text can be made larger but then the user has to pan the text sideways and up and down*
- Health of user was also an issue*
- The user must be committed. It is no good for the volunteer to visit say once a week and the user has not practised using the Breezie”*

“The training programme would have been more useful to me if I had had it nearer the time when I took the Breezie tablets to the clients”

“Mr S said he felt that there was not enough information about details and that there was a lot of 'jargon' that he didn't understand”

Sensory Impairment Team – pilot study

- The HCC **Sensory Impairment Team** (deaf services) carried out an additional pilot study using SpeakSet and Breezie equipment. The Team is based in Winchester and covers the whole of Hampshire.
- The study focused on deaf clients, many of whose preferred means of communication is **British Sign Language** (BSL).
- The team used this equipment to contact users **instead of having to travel** to them in all cases.
- The team **saved regular trips** from Winchester to Aldershot , Farnborough and Basingstoke and in one example a deaf school presentation in Devon).

Lead Team Member Efficiencies During the Project	
Travel time saved during project	54 Hours
Travel Miles Saved during project	1250 (£562.50 @ 0.45p a mile)

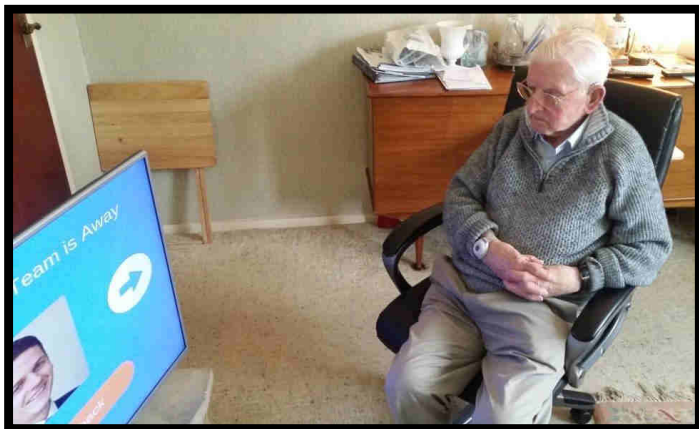
Client benefits

- **Improved communication** from the clients’ perspective as BSL is their preferred language. Some struggle with written English.
- **Greater independence and autonomy** for clients as they can rely less on interpreters and family members.
- Puts deaf clients on a **level playing field** as the SpeakSet/Breezie video call functions as a telephone call would for hearing clients.

Headline Learning Points



Ms HB, 92 year old user of the Breezie tablet. Wanted support for online shopping.



Mr JS, 86 year old user of SpeakSet. communicating with sons in Canada & the US

- Many isolated people have got a form of technology but are **unable to use it** fully
- Hard to identify those that are genuinely isolated. **Almost none of the users** identified themselves as 'socially isolated'
- Mobile internet coverage in some rural areas caused very slow connections and **total lack of coverage** in some areas, leading to issues with connectivity.
- Difficult to get **clinical support** for the technology due to workloads and capacity
- **Definitions of social isolation** caused us to consider our eligibility; we listened to local professionals and accepted some genuinely socially isolated people that fell just outside our eligibility criteria (such as age)
- Sensory impairment and other forms of physical disability caused us to find **innovative ways of helping users** to use the technology
- Video conferencing social groups were **not generally liked** by the users, they much preferred one to one video chats

Overall the project had four key outcomes.

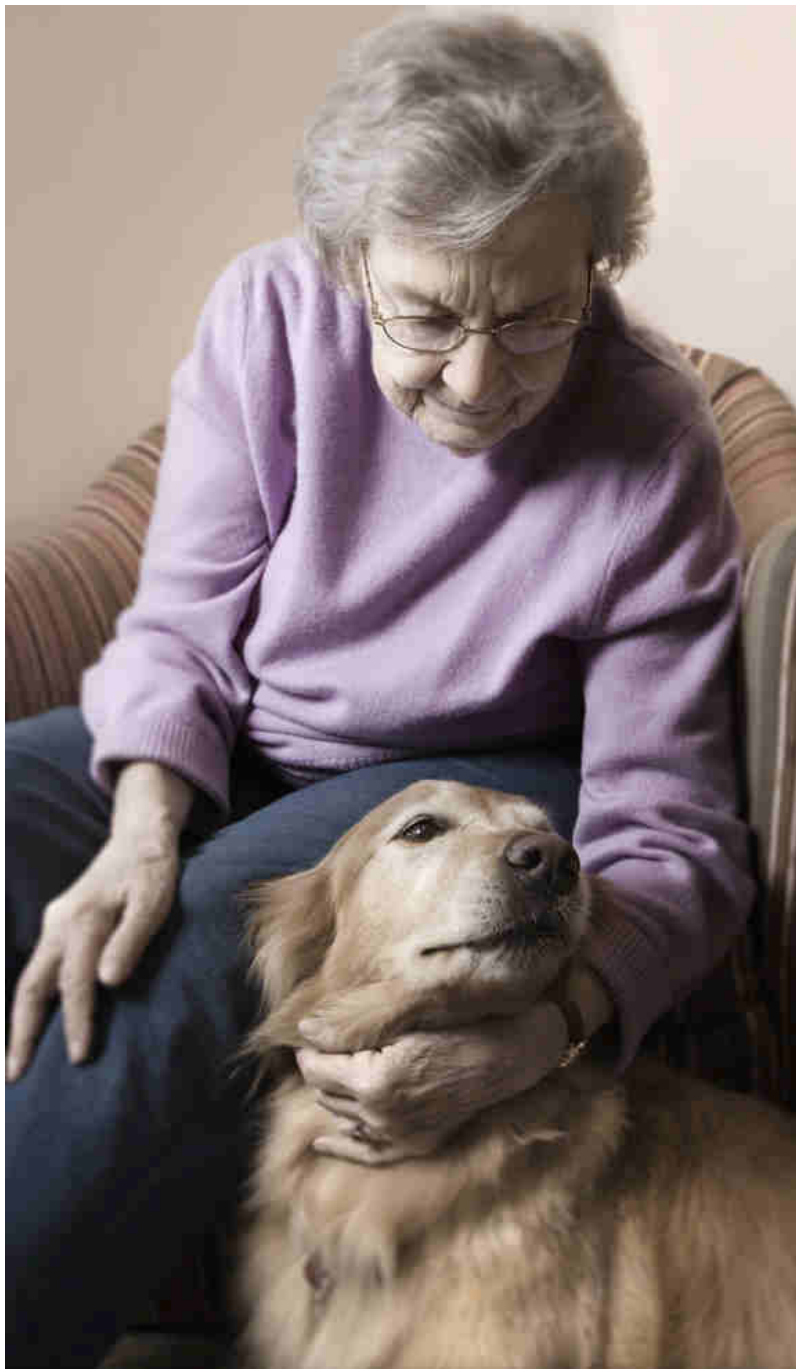
Users found it significantly easier to:

- Keep in touch with family and friends living further away
- Find out about what services are available locally
- Participate in local services and activities
- Access support when needed
- Regarding savings to social care and health costs:

the number of users was small to draw firm conclusions. However, we can infer that the additional independence resulting from the technology and the community/family contacts it enabled will have reduced or delayed reliance on public services.

- The library service was heavily involved in the project throughout. 5-6 new volunteers were recruited and trained to support the project. New app icons were developed on the tablets.
- Tablet PCs returned at the end of the pilot were donated to a Havant primary school.





APPENDIX

More information

Case studies



Conclusions and the way forward

Success of the project

Overall the project was successful in its main ambitions. It did reduce the level of perceived isolation amongst the users, increase their contact and ability to contact others. Some learning around the reduction in demand was made during the project although further work would need to be done with a larger cohort to identify the full savings potential of this work for Adult Health and Care.

There were many lessons learned during this project. Above all was the need to target the equipment at the right people to maximise the effectiveness it can have. Volunteers should have been better supported to set up new service users and maintain that contact. Our original ideas around isolation have been challenged. Older people are isolated in all areas of the county (rural/urban) and at times whilst living with others. Those that care for a loved one can also be very isolated and understanding their need to contact others through technology will be an unintended success of this project.

What happened to users after the pilot finished?

All users that wanted to carry on with the equipment were supported to do so through the Argenti service. No equipment was removed at the end of the project from isolated people that wanted to keep it.

Unwanted SpeakSets were returned to the manufacturer as per the licence agreement and unwanted Breezie tablets were donated to a local school at the end of the project.

Next steps for the sensory team pilot?

The use of SpeakSet by the sensory team is still in its early stages and being evaluated. The project has been extended and will be fully evaluated by the sensory team at the end of 2017.

Learning

The Hampshire Library service have been integral to this project in providing and supporting volunteers and helping to develop the use of the Breezie tablets. The library service have since been successful in

securing funding for their own project where they can utilise the learning from this project.

The learning points from this project will also be assessed in the digital isolation group in Adults' Health and Care and the Argenti innovation panel.

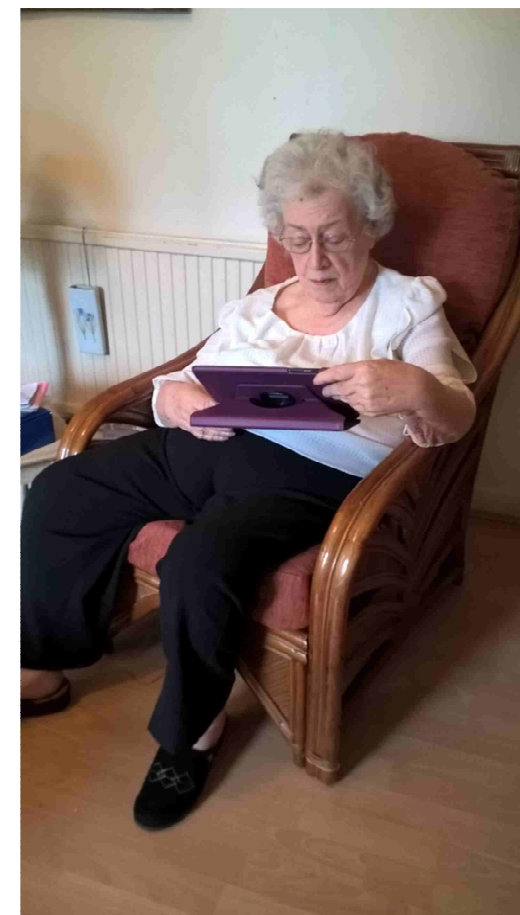
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Users found it significantly easier to:

- **Keep in touch with family and friends living further away**
- **Find out about what services are available locally**
- **Participate in local services and activities**
- **Access support when needed**

Learning points (2)

- It quickly became clear that some referrals were received for people that already had a tablet or computer at home but wanted to benefit from the volunteer support of the project. The project was not set up to provide for these people, but it was clear that many isolated people have got a form of technology but are unable to use it fully.
- Some referrals were initially accepted for the project only later to be told that they could not proceed. This was because those referring were not always aware of some background details of the users relevant to this project, making them not eligible.
- Video conferencing social groups were not generally liked by the users, they much preferred one to one video chats.
- Vetting referrals together with volunteers would have given better results. Volunteers were asked to accept referrals agreed by the project team, when in fact having their input into that process would have been beneficial.
- Because of the pressures around project timescales some users were set up by the Argenti team and then handed over to the volunteers team. Some users reported that they would have preferred to have one person to deal with and not different people.
- Just under half of Breezie users were able to access the internet before the trial via home WIFI. However it became clear that although WIFI had been installed, it was often never used.



Breezie user in rural Basingstoke.

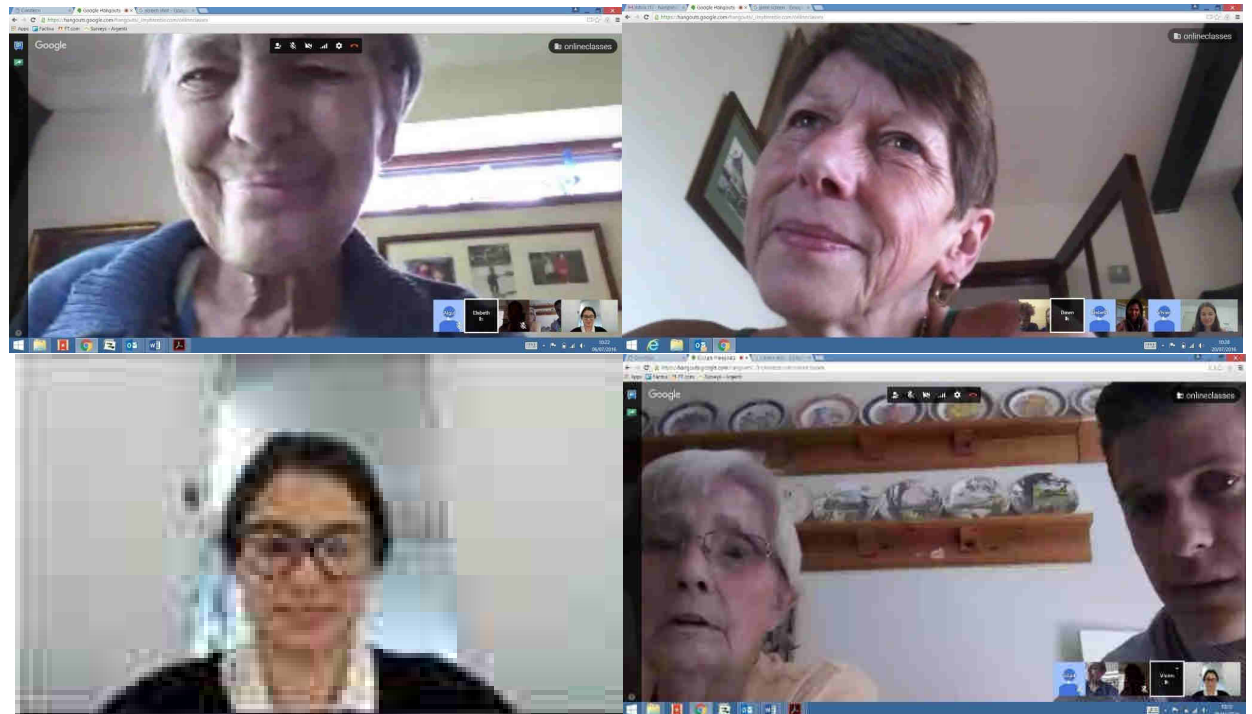
Weekly online social calls



The project experimented with having a weekly online group chat for one month in June 2016. Participants were invited to join in through their tablets.

Participants were then encouraged to share how they felt about using the tablet and ask any questions that they may have had.

Those that chose to take part enjoyed the interactions with each other but struggled with the disorientating nature of online 'skype' like calls. Many said that facilitated 1 on 1 conversations through the tablet would have been better.



Eligibility, evaluation, tracking and support

Eligibility

The general criteria for eligibility were:

- Over 65
- No access to own transport
- Live alone
- Socially isolated (in the opinion of the referrer)

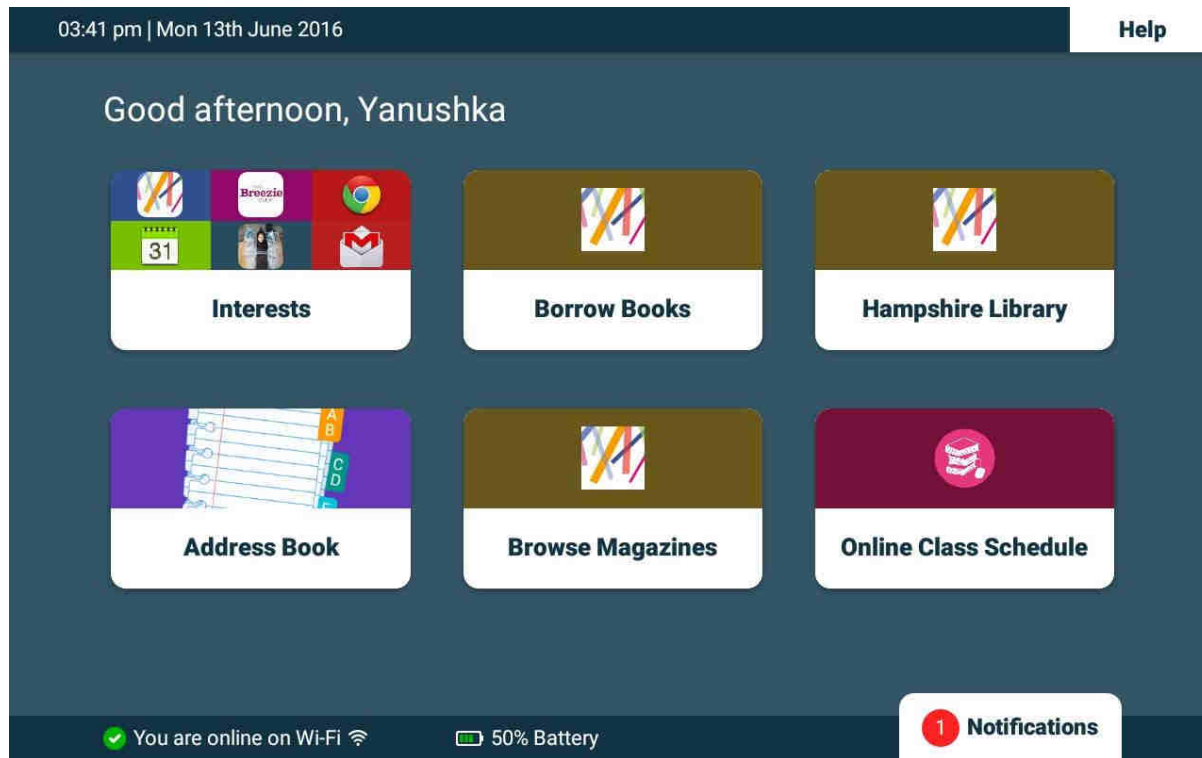
However, all cases were considered individually. Some users were considered to be genuinely isolated despite being just outside the criteria above. One example was a severely autistic man who is 58, but very isolated because of his rural location and lack of contact with others.

Evaluation

- Service user feedback survey at start and at the end of the project – looking to measure changes in their perception of isolation and use of technology
- Questionnaires with volunteers and family members in addition to the referring professional to measure any changes in perceived isolation.
- Measuring data use of Breezie and length of calls of SpeakSet to track usage of devices.
- Measure take up of library services through tablets.
- Establish if these effects are good proxy measures for reduced risk of or reliance on publicly funded social care and health services

Usage of equipment was monitored monthly and users were supported by recruited volunteers and phone calls from professionals and the central team. Breezie also called users to support them in the use of the tablets and offer orientation sessions.

Using library resources



Tablets have been configured for easy access to the Library resources such as Zinio and the main homepage.

Volunteers supported them to use these resources.

Users are signed up to the library when they join the project and the tablet is delivered already signed in and ready to use – avoiding some of the confusion users can experience with logging in to new systems.

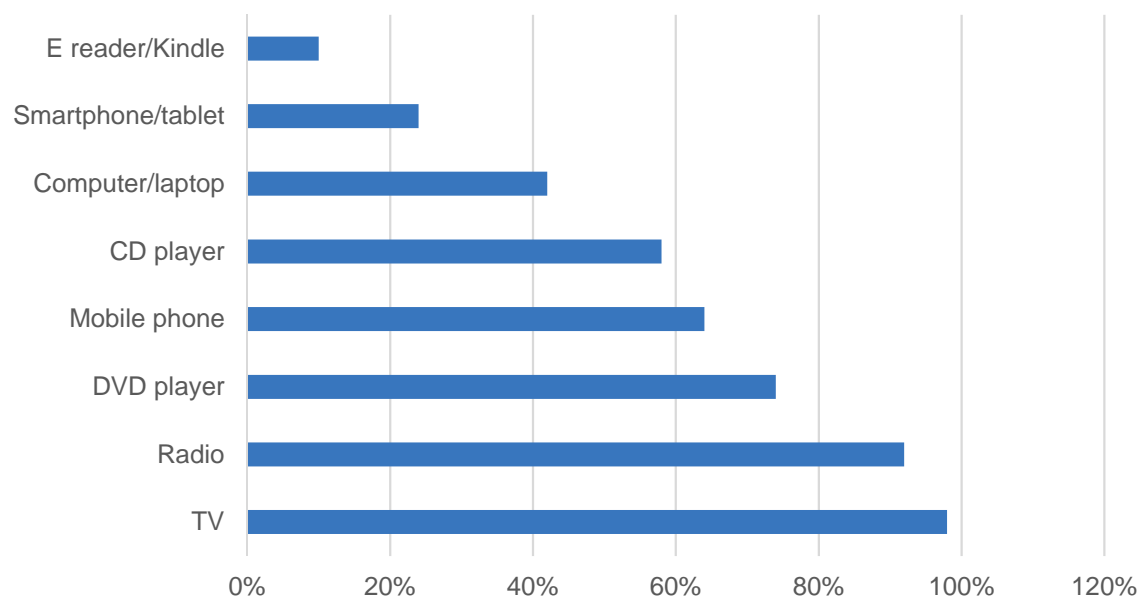
About our participants (1)



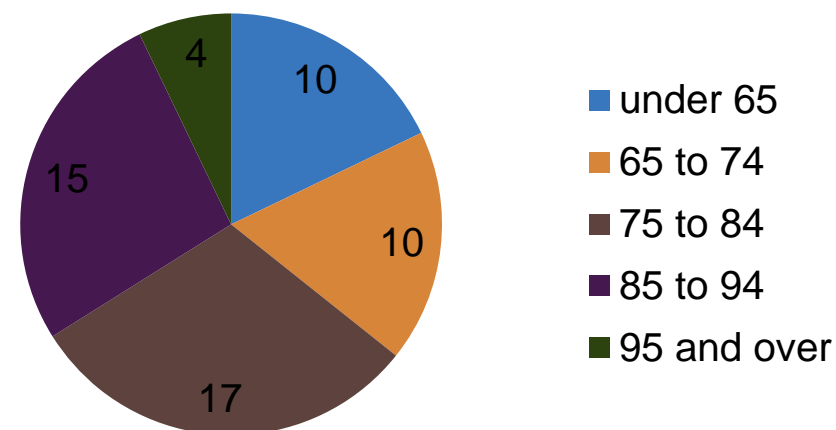
56 people were on the trial during the year. 39 (70%) had a Breezie and 17 (30%) were SpeakSet users.

Here is some information about our participants:

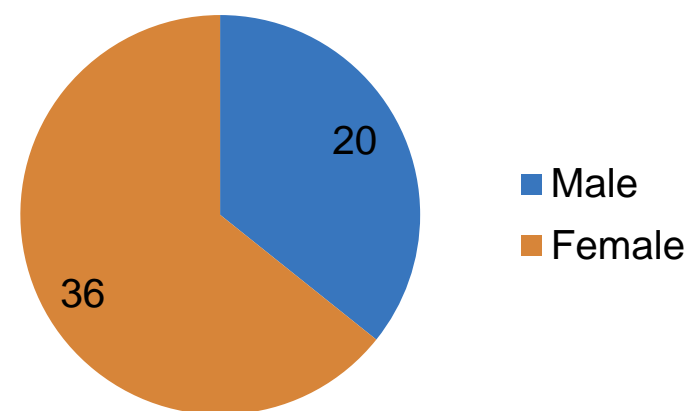
Ownership of technology prior to project



Age



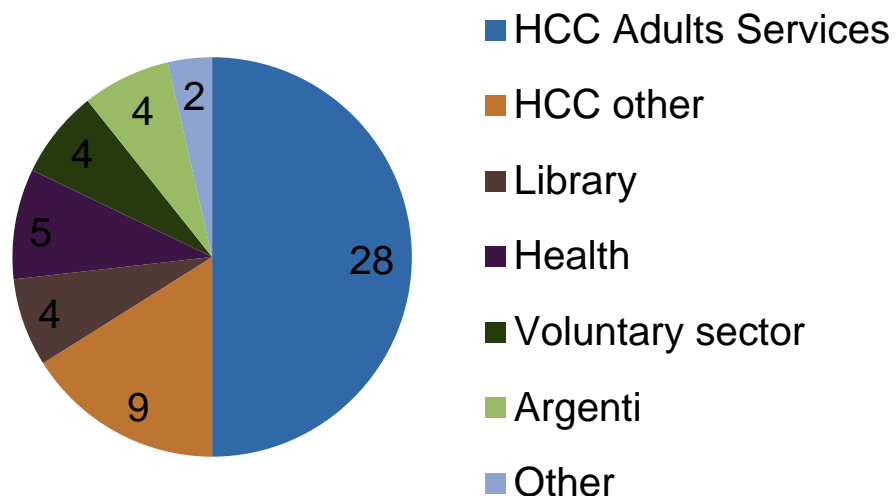
Sex



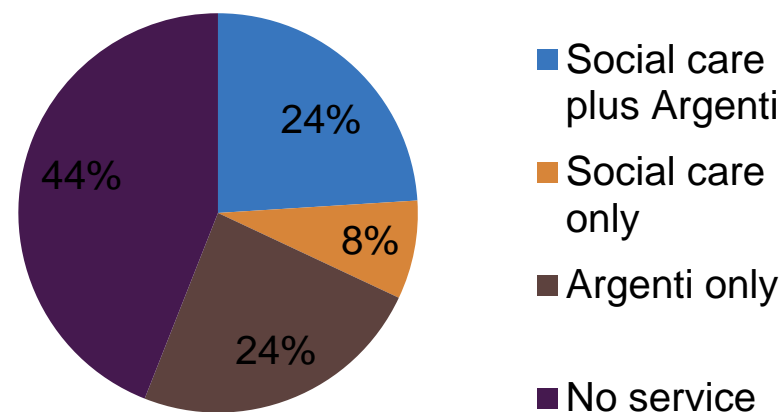
About our participants (2)



Source of referral



Care services received



Most of the referrals (two thirds) came from within HCC.

One third of the participants were receiving a social care service (mainly PS, domiciliary care) during the study period. Just under half received Argenti telecare, and just under a half had no service at all. Numbers were too few for us to draw any meaningful conclusions about the effect of the Breezie/SpeakSet on the need for social care services.

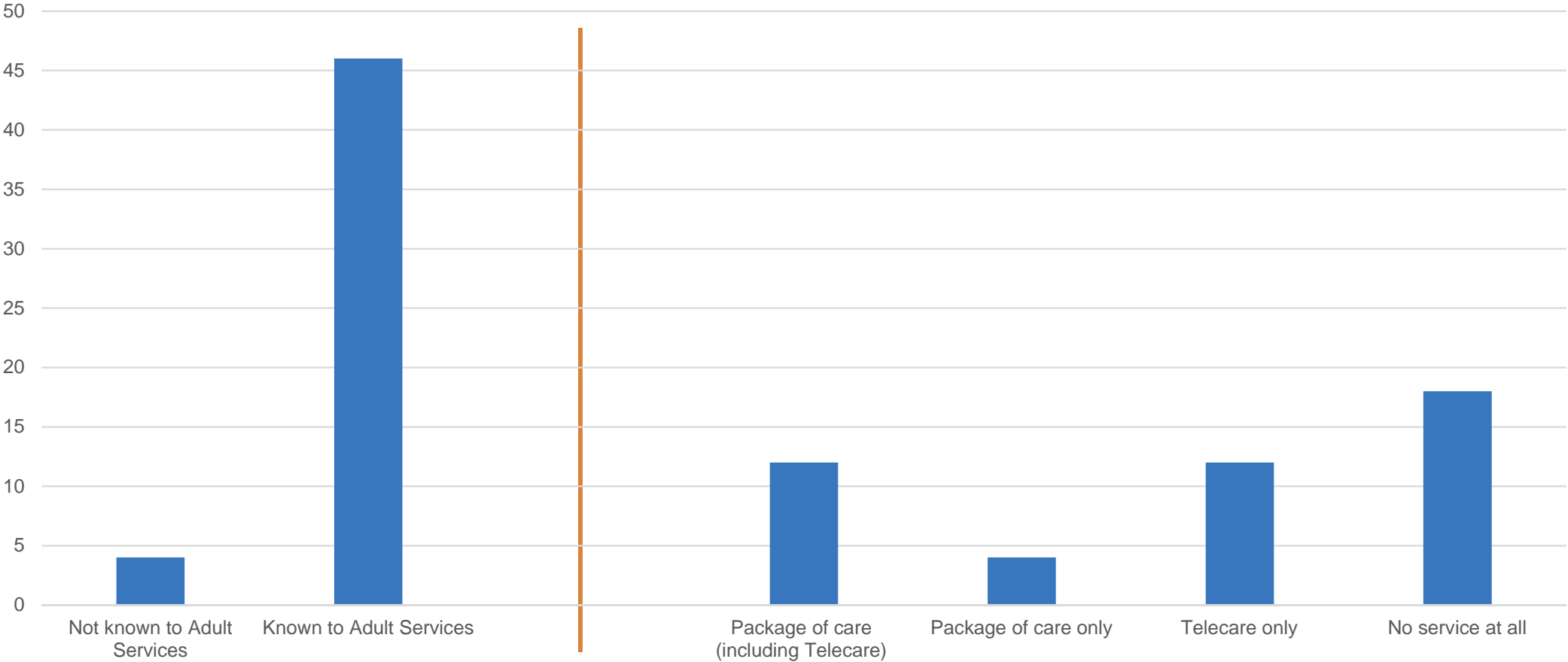
At the end of the pilot study (February 2017) there were 41 participants. Fifteen people dropped out for the reasons below:

- Not happy using the equipment (5)
- Family failed to engage with the project (3)
- Network/internet problems (5)
- Other (2)

We have supported everyone who wanted to continue to use their equipment after the end of the pilot study.



Service user status pre Feb 2016



↑
Breakdown of those known to Adult Services

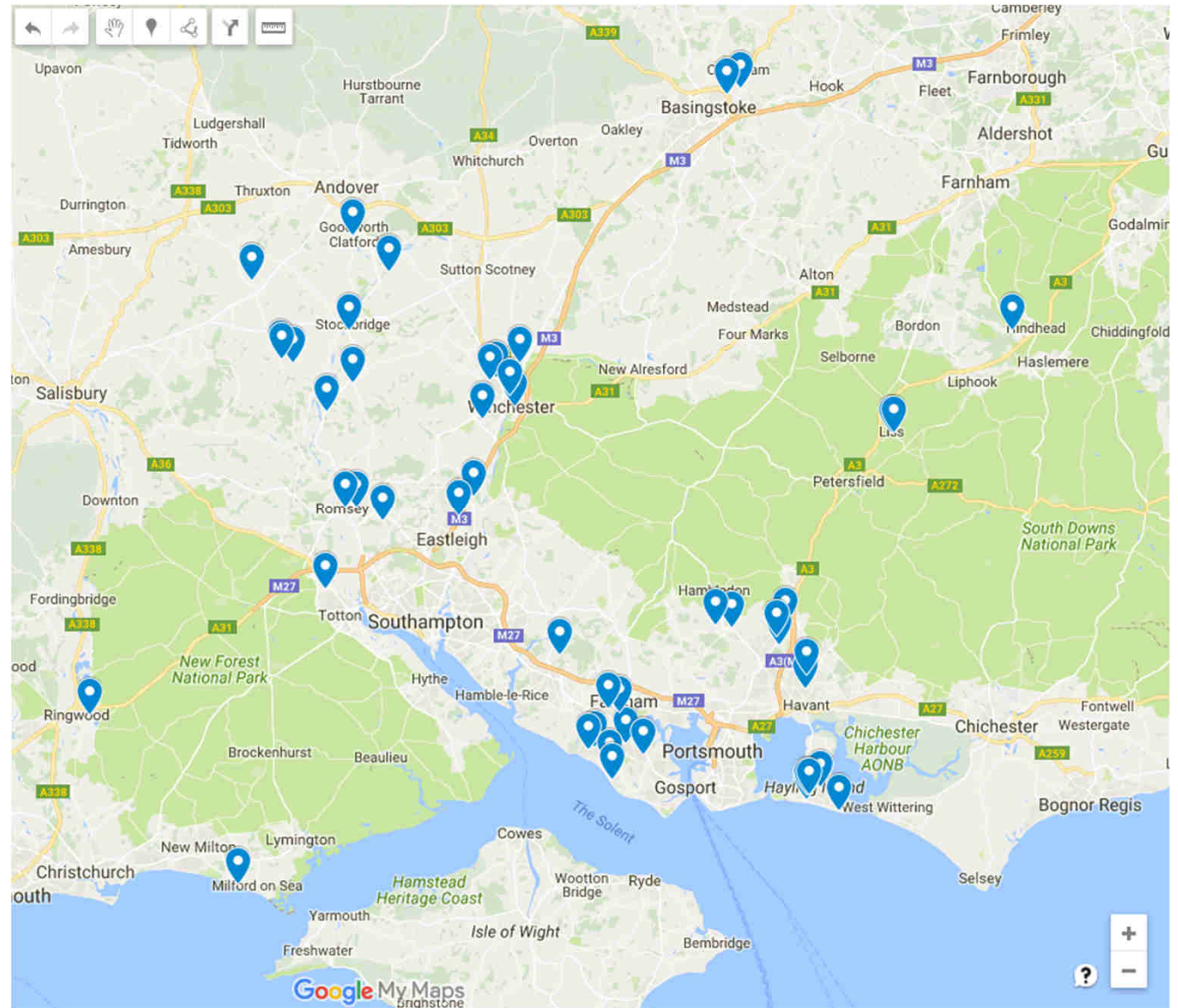


Location of users

Although the project aimed to provide support to rural communities it quickly became apparent that forms of social isolation also existed in more developed areas. Level of isolation was prioritised over location of users.

Some users were denied access to the project because of very poor network signal strength in their area, including:

- Lower Stockbridge
- Broughton
- Houghton
- Parts of South Hayling



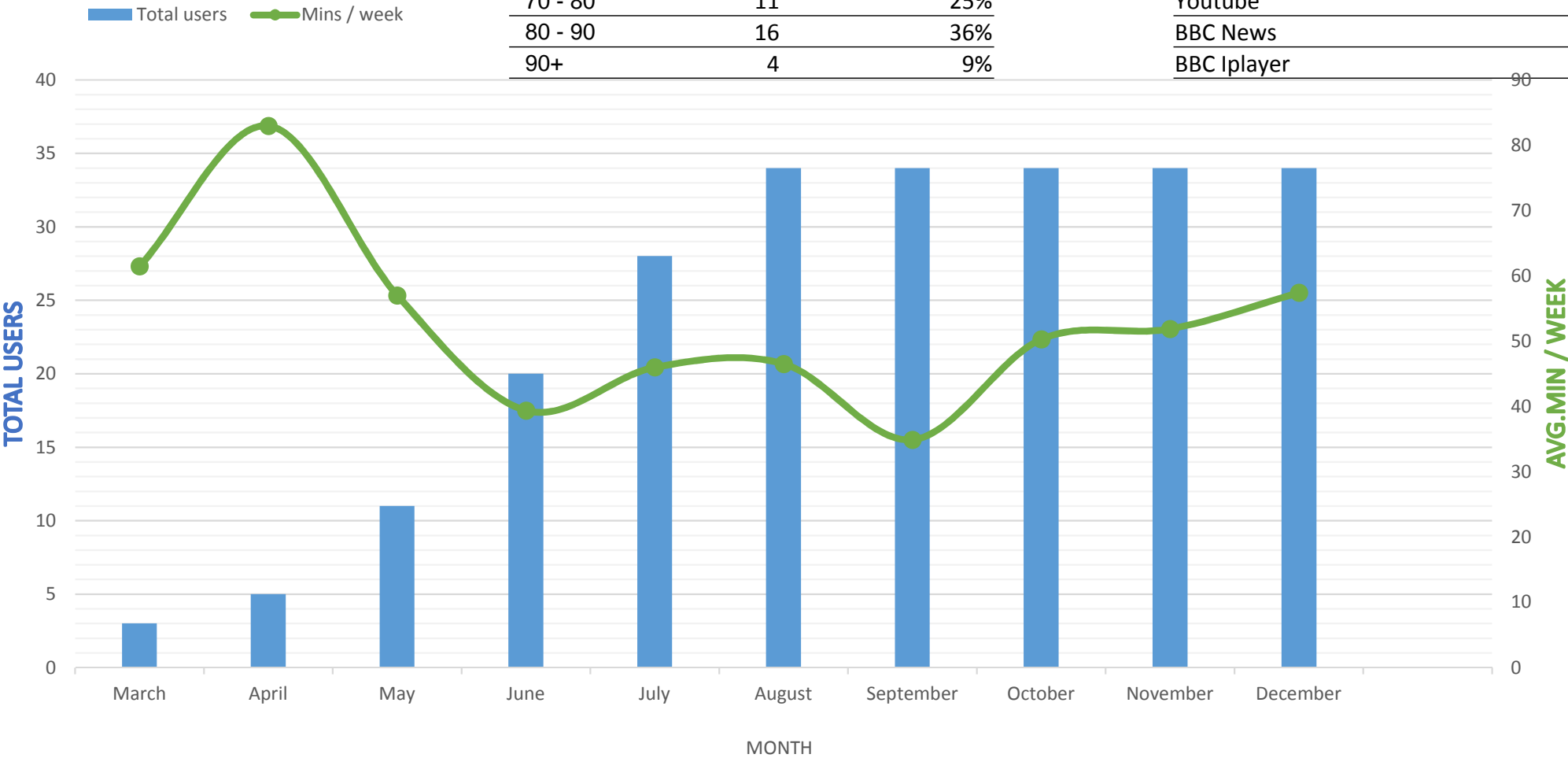
Use of Breezie tablet



User engagement profile

Age profile:		
Total onboarded	44 (minus 5 demo)*	
<70	13	30%
70 - 80	11	25%
80 - 90	16	36%
90+	4	9%

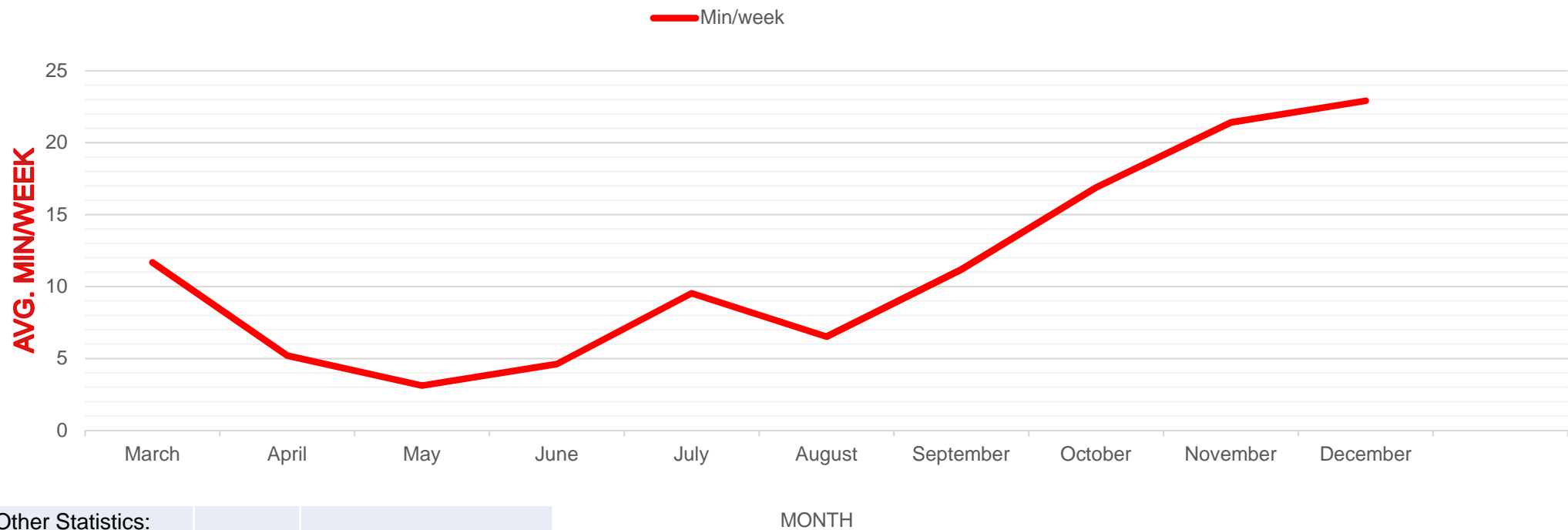
Top Activities:	
Internet Browsing	19%
Email	16%
Youtube	16%
BBC News	7%
BBC Iplayer	7%



Results of pilot study – use of Breezie



Social profile (Email, Skype, Facebook)



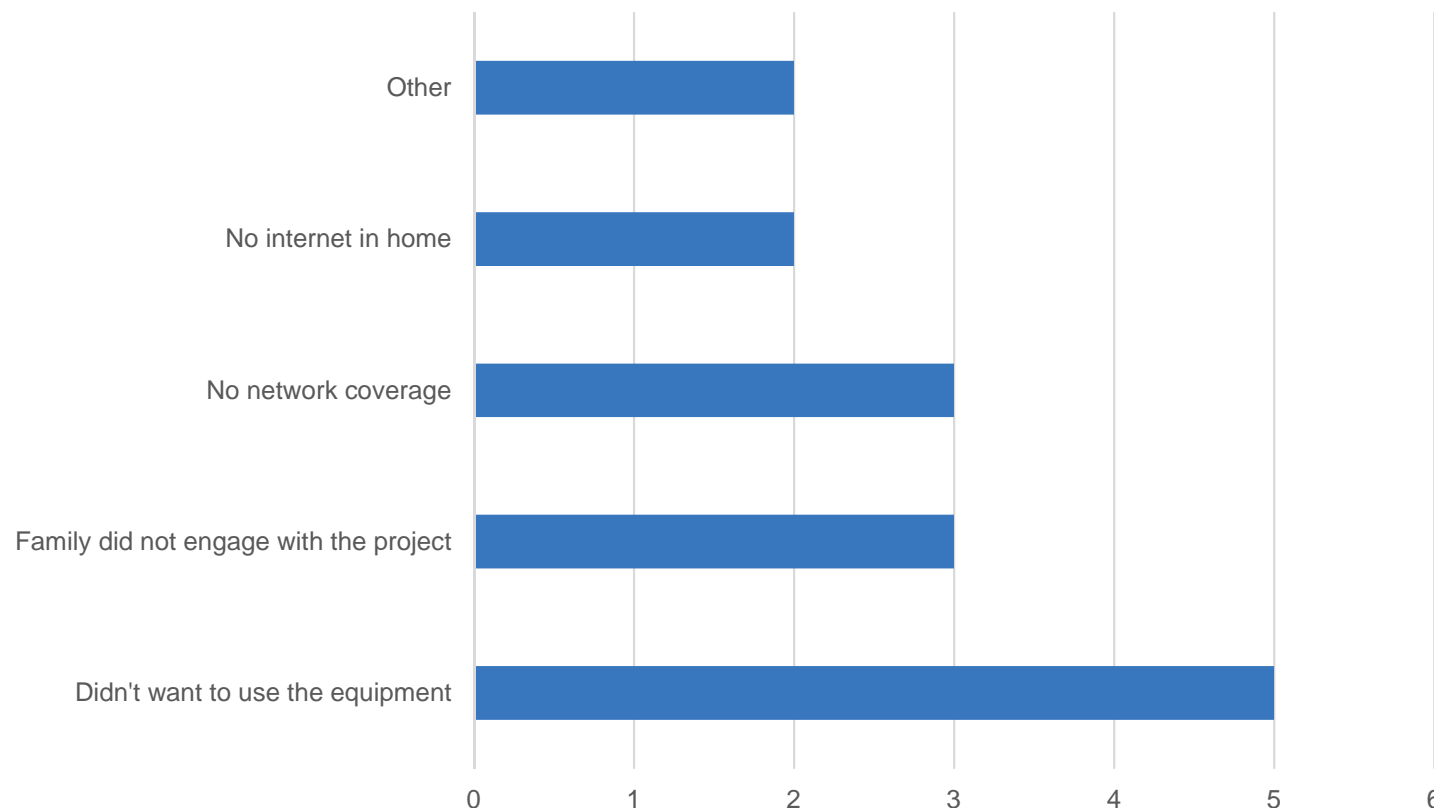
Other Statistics:		
Highest user activity averaging 42 min per day		
20 % of the users called Breezie Support for assistance		
* 34 devices allocated for participants, from which 10 were reused resulting in 44 participants in total.		





Results of pilot study – outcomes

Reasons for drop out



One unexpected piece of learning was the three people that had to end their contact with the project because of the lack of support from family that supported them. In those situations we could not continue without that support.

A general sense of fear did exist amongst many older people with using new technology. In five cases this lead to them ending their contact with the project.



“She really likes playing with it and ‘just finds stuff’ “(daughter about her mother Mrs L, Breezie user)

“It’s a marvellous thing, it’s going to be a wonderful thing for people like me and people in worse situations” (Mrs R, SpeakSet)

"Very positive experience, loved it. 90th birthday in January. All family together. Did the candles and birthday song through the device. Saw all the family together for the first time. Very positive experience. Because we are isolated this has been wonderful!" Mrs R (SpeakSet)

“It’s wonderful...I can talk to my daughter... I didn’t used to talk to her and now I can” (Mrs I, SpeakSet user)

“Mr R would like to pass on his appreciation for your help and for providing him with the Breezie Tablet. He has found the whole process extremely good and is now emailing and skyping family and friends.” (CIT team member)

"At the age of 90 years (widowed) it has been and still is a great daily asset. I would be lost without it" "The Breezie and support was excellent and I thank you all" (Mr R, Breezie)

“It makes us feel closer, like they are with us and not thousands of miles away. My son (who is two and a half) had never seen his great grandmother before and having the opportunity for him to meet, chat and talk about her after our calls has been wonderful.” (granddaughter of Mrs R, SpeakSet user)

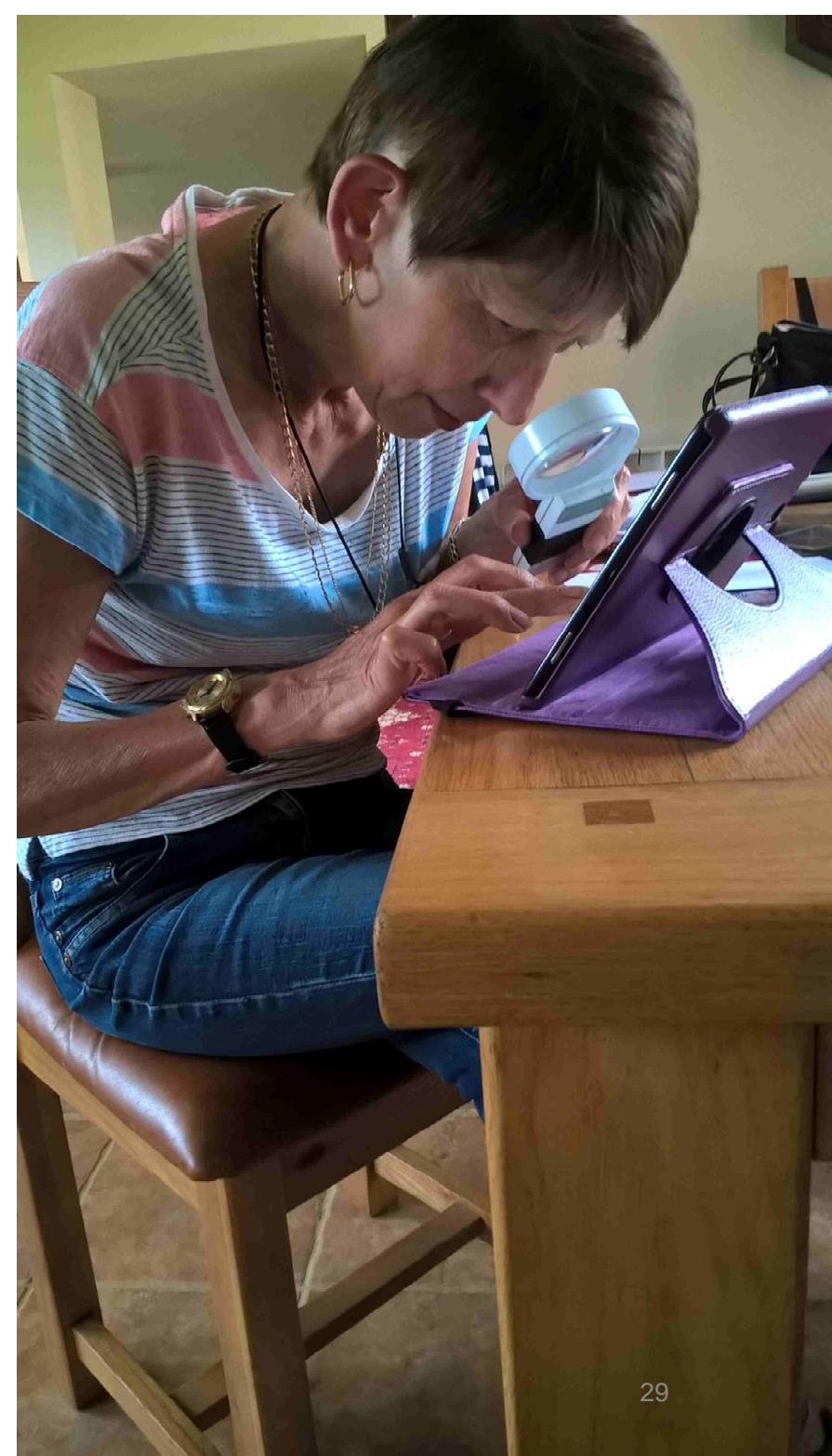
I can do my own shopping again

Living in the rural part of the test valley Mrs I's husband recently passed away. Because of her serious visual impairment she can't drive anymore or get out to visit family because of the trouble with rural public transport.

She is able to use her Breezie with a special magnifying glass to contact her family through email and has already used it to send pictures that she takes to her daughter.

She is really excited that she has been able to do her online shopping, meaning that she doesn't have to rely on others to do it for her.

"This means an awful lot to me", she says. "It means I am less isolated and able to look after myself".



I'm lonely and want to connect



Mrs H's husband had a stroke 20 years ago and she has been caring for him ever since. In recent years her health has suffered Mr H had to move into a care home. She visits him as much as she can in his care home in Andover, but as she can no longer drive and really struggles to get out to see him. She has lived in a small Hampshire village for 33 years but because of how rural the area is she is very cut off.

"I'm lonely here, all tucked away. I can't get out. I want to be involved, I recently had to give up running a club for disabled people that I had been running for years".

This device can help me to connect with people and see what is going on. It will be good for me as I'm a sociable person".

With her dog Alfie at her side, Mrs H got help to use the Breezie from volunteers.



Gardening alone

Mrs S has lived alone in Kings Somborne since her husband passed away in April last year. She feels isolated and is unable to get out much to attend her much loved gardening groups.

She has started to use her Breezie tablet to email her gardening friends and do research on the internet. She can also watch Gardener's World which she really likes.

She says: "What I really need is a big strong gardener to help me, but this is the next best thing. I can email people and stay connected".

She has also started to do her online shopping through the tablet and hopes to be able to skype her daughter who lives further away.

References

An evaluation of the 'helping hands- co-creation of a digital application for elderly people' project

Dr Paul Hepburn, Heseltine Institute for Public Policy and Practice, University of Liverpool, March 2015

Loneliness is not just for Christmas - warn councils Local Government Association Media release - 23 December 2016

Campaign to end Lonliness

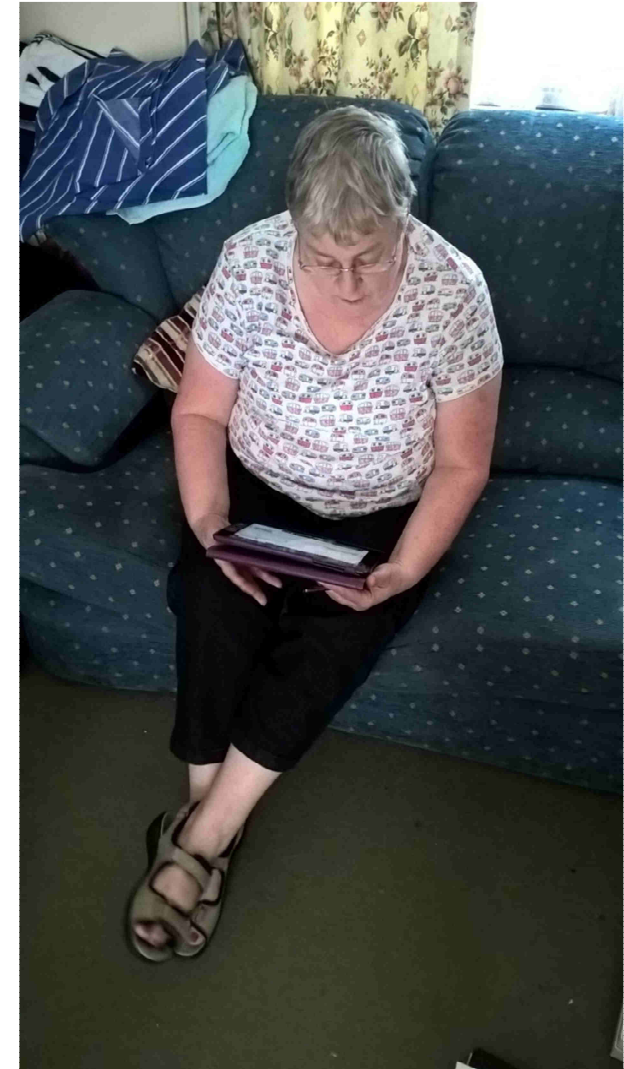
<http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/>

Hampshire JSNA

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/public-health/jsna-2013/LonelinessandisolationinolderpeopleJSNA2013.pdf>

Hampshire Ageing Profile

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/population/AgeingProfile-FinalDraft-March15.pdf>



Mrs R, User of the Breezie Tablet