



# Online group social activities

Connecting Older People in the Pandemic and Beyond

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# Commissioned by Open Age

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- Membership organisation for 4000+ older people in West London offering wide range of group activities
- **Pandemic** closed all face-to-face activity
- Set up **100+ hours of participative zoom-based activities each week during lockdown**
- **“A lifesaver” and “a Godsend.”**
- Online offer was **regularly accessed by 1600+ members**
- **‘Hybrid’ offer – planning scale-up**



# About the research

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- **Independent research investigating:**
  - Older people's experiences of using online group activities
  - Experiences of other community organisations
- **In-depth qualitative research capturing voices and experiences**
  - 40+ older people (Open Age and others)
  - 10 community organisations across UK incl. housing



## Why do older people use online group activities?

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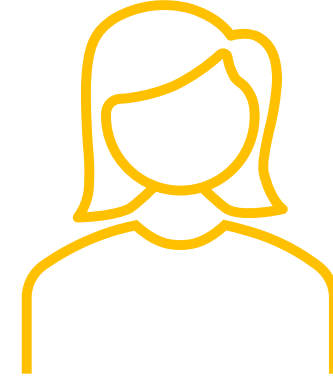
- Reducing loneliness and isolation
- Structure and purpose
- Maintain social continuity
- Increased choice and convenience
  - Transport
  - Able to 'do more'



# Two user personas

## Judy

- In her late 60s, wants to enjoy her retirement. She has a very active social life and throws herself into all kinds of activities. She uses online group activities to allow her to *do more*.



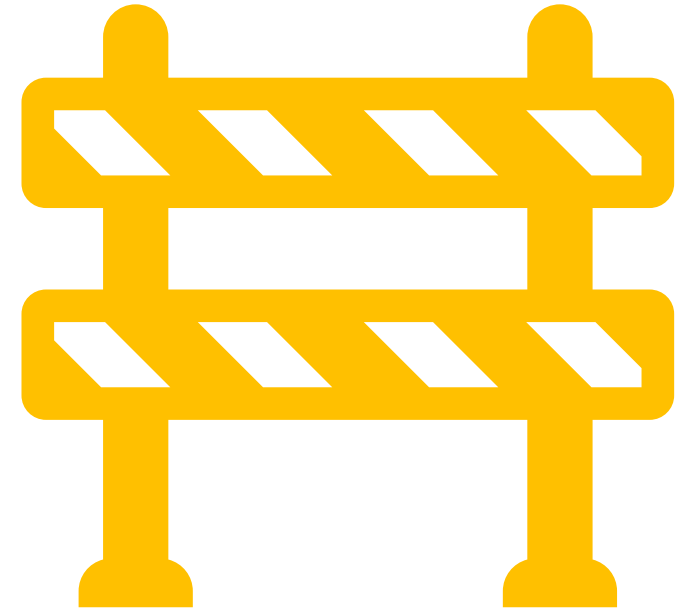
## Geeta

- In her early 70s, has very limited mobility and lives alone. In-person, she can only access one or two activities in person a week at most, usually when a minibus is provided.
- Alongside those, she now attends a variety of online activities.



## Older people's barriers

- **Digital exclusion**
- **Distrust – taking away F2F**
- **Social awkwardness of Zoom**
- Negative opinions change rapidly when the spectre of 'not being mobile' is raised



# Organisational experiences

- **Changed Opinions**
- **Rural opportunities**
- **New inclusions**
- **Hybrid as the new normal – choice and options**



# Conclusions

- **There is an appetite**
  - **Benefits for various VCS/ housing agendas –**
    - Building social capital
    - Reducing loneliness and isolation and increased community
    - Increasing choice and agency
    - Promoting active ageing
    - Improved health and wellbeing
    - Older people being happier, healthier and independent for longer
  - **Not suitable for everyone**
  - **Additionality – no substitutions!**
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## Next steps

- *Get involved:*
  - Open Age is looking for partners to pilot an expanded service in a housing setting
  - Iain Cassidy, Chief Executive at [icassidy@openage.org.uk](mailto:icassidy@openage.org.uk)
- *More about the research:*
  - To be published in early 2023
  - To discuss further, contact Alex Evans at [dralexevans@gmail.com](mailto:dralexevans@gmail.com)

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