![scie social care institute for excellence]

Using ICT in activities for people with dementia:

A short guide for social care providers

Contents

1. About this guide

This is a short introduction to using information and communication technology (ICT) in activities for people with dementia. It is aimed at managers and staff in the care sector, and providers of activities for people with dementia. It's a plain language guide about using mainstream technologies with people with dementia – you don't need to be technically minded. We hope the guide will be useful for you whether you are new to this topic or already have some experience of using ICTs in dementia support.

What is ICT?

ICT is a broad term. It includes:

- computers – such as desktop computers, smartphones and tablet computers

- the internet – including the world wide web and email

- digital photographic, audio, video and games technologies, and

- broadcast media – including radio and television.

The types of activities described in this guide may take place in a variety of settings – a day care centre or a residential home for example. While some of the practical details may vary in each setting, the principles are the same wherever you are working. The examples of 'ICT in action' are real, with personal details changed for anonymity.

> ### ⓘ Person-centred dementia care
>
> We have assumed that readers are familiar with the main principles of person-centred care as they apply to people with dementia. If you would like to know more about person-centred dementia care in general, SCIE's Dementia Gateway is a good place to start:
> **www.scie.org.uk/publications/dementia**

Assistive technologies

This guide is all about commonly available mainstream technology. We have not covered assistive technologies, which are products designed specifically to enable independence for disabled and older people.

For information on assistive technologies and dementia, including a self-help guide, see **www.atdementia.org.uk**

For general information on assistive technologies see The Disabled Living Foundation's websites:
www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk and **www.allaboutequipment.org.uk**

There are a number of assistive technologies related specifically to ICTs, for example to help people with visual impairments or dexterity problems to use computers. For information about computer assistive technologies, see AbilityNet's 'My computer My way' guide:
www.abilitynet.org.uk/mcmw

2. 'How can ICTs help me support someone with dementia?'

At first glance, ICT and dementia is not an obvious match as:

- dementia involves memory or communication difficulties, which may make many ICTs hard to use

- some people with dementia may also have problems with their sight or hearing, or difficulty using their hands, which can also make using ICTs difficult

- people with dementia are generally older and may be unfamiliar with, or even scared of, some kinds of technology.

Although all these points are true, none of them should stop you using ICTs in activities with people with dementia. Everyone can benefit from ICTs at some level. It all depends on how you do it.

ICT in action: Using the internet to find familiar images

We have a woman at the day centre who is quite confused and has difficulty communicating. We knew she was in the WRAF. We used *Google Images* to find pictures of WRAF uniforms; she recognised the one she used to wear. Then we found airbases where she had worked. We even found a picture of her husband and his RAF crew. When he came in and we showed it to him, he had not even known it existed. You just could not do this kind of thing without access to the internet.

'Everyone can benefit from ICTs at some level. It all depends on how you do it.'

3. The benefits and challenges of using ICTs in dementia support

Benefits

Choice and control

Using ICTs is 'personalisation in action'. There is some form of ICT use to engage everyone. For example, many activities with people with dementia involve music. You could use ICTs in a number of ways to facilitate this – from staff setting up a selection of tracks on an audio player, to the person with dementia being helped to find their favourite lyrics online, to using an 'app' (a computer program) which allows them to play the piano. ICTs can give people more choice and control in their daily activities, whatever their impairment.

More appealing services

More and more people see ICTs as part of their everyday lives, and this includes people with dementia. Offering activities that use technology can encourage people to engage with services. For example, a course on digital film at a day centre can bring in people who otherwise may not come. A residential home or day care centre with good ICT facilities will appeal to families as well as people with dementia. From an organisational perspective, commissioners and inspectors can see that you understand the importance of meaningful activities for people with dementia.

Interactions with people

ICTs are ice breakers. Finding out about someone's life or interests by following connections on the web is a great way to understand and begin to know a person. Using tablets such as iPads in a care home can get kids talking to their grandparents.

ICT in action: An inter-generational ice breaker

One of our residents is an elderly gentleman aged 90. His six-year-old great grandson was showing him how to use an iPad. They began by using the iFishPond app and then moved on to playing with the Talking Tom Cat app, which is a cat that blows raspberries! It caused much laughter and enjoyment for everyone concerned. It was a very special thing to see.

'From an organisational perspective, commissioners and inspectors can see that you understand the importance of meaningful activities for people with dementia.'

ICT in action: YouTube videos spark engagement

One of our residents was usually quite disengaged, but became animated and got really involved in a YouTube clip of vintage cars. Restoring vintage cars had been his hobby and passion. His wife saw this and was amazed, as she hadn't seen him so engaged in a very long time. She even went on to buy a tablet computer for the home.

Participation in the world

Being an active citizen depends more and more on using ICTs. Whether it is accessing online news, emailing an MP or councillor, or simply speaking to friends and family who are abroad, people with dementia have the same right to digital access as everyone else.

Keeping intellectually and physically active

ICTs open up avenues for intellectual stimulation for everyone, regardless of their interests and capabilities. The internet puts a world of knowledge at your fingertips. Interactive computer games can improve hand-eye coordination and overall mobility for individuals or groups. Sensory games can engage people whose condition means that other forms of communication are not possible.

Improved skills for staff

Encouraging staff to use ICTs with people with dementia means they will improve their own ICT knowledge and skills. It also means the working day can be made more varied, which improves morale for staff and people with dementia alike.

ICT in action: Google Street View as a group game

We use Google Street View to find where people at the day centre used to live, or a pub they used to go to. Some people understand that if you put your finger on the street in Street View and push it you go down the street, which is really cool and extremely amusing.

Access to free resources

Of course ICT kit is not free, but once you are set up and have an internet connection there is a world of free resources out there to support almost every activity imaginable.

The ability to store, copy and share resources

You can make copies of precious photographs and papers, you can create, save and update text documents, and you can easily share them with others.

Challenges

Staff confidence

You don't need lots of technical knowledge to use ICTs with people with dementia, but staff may not feel they have the right skills. Remember there may be people already in your organisation with IT skills who can train others. There are plenty of free online tutorials – YouTube is a great source for these. Also remember that families and carers may have IT skills – and kit – that they can be encouraged to use with the person with dementia.

Finding the space

Finding room to set up a computer can be hard. If space is limited, consider getting a laptop, which can be moved easily from one place to another. A private room is important if you are doing a one-to-one activity such as life story work, however a dedicated 'computer room' may not be a good thing as you want all ICTs to be integrated into daily activities.

Being patient and not forcing the issue

ICTs will not suit everyone. Not all staff will want to use them, and neither will all the people with dementia you are supporting. It is important that this is not seen as a failure. ICTs are only one way of engaging people in an activity, they are not an activity in themselves. You may also find that people's interest in using ICTs comes and goes. Be patient. As with all person-centred care, the wishes and preferences of the individual are the most important thing.

Challenges of dementia

There are some specific challenges in using ICTs with people with dementia, which we look at in section 5: *Introducing ICTs to people with dementia*.

4. Getting the right kit

The ICT kit you need depends on the activities you want to do. We have listed the main types available in the table below, examples of the activities they are best suited for and the benefits and challenges of using them. The Further resources section has a list of organisations that can give you advice and support on choosing the right ICT kit.

Benefits and challenges of different types of ICT kit

Type of kit	Good for	Pros	
Desktop computer with mouse and keyboard	• Accessing the internet • Word processing (creating and editing text documents – e.g. writing letters) • Making presentations • Viewing and editing photos • Printing • Watching TV or films online • Email • Web-based phone/video calls • Internet games	• Easy to print from • Can be used for group work with a larger screen	
Laptop computer	As desktop computer	• Portable	
Tablet computer	• Apps, including sensory games • Accessing the internet • Viewing and editing photos • Watching TV or films online • Email • Web-based phone/video calls • Internet games • Drawing	• Very portable • Touchscreen technology more intuitive than a keyboard and mouse • Can be used by people with quite severe cognitive and motor impairments	
Games consoles	• Multi-player games and activities • Physical activities	• Enable physical involvement for example Wii, X Box Kinect • Can be used by individuals or groups and can be a spectator sport	

	Cons	One-to-one use	Group use
	• Hard to move around locations • Less intuitive to use than touchscreen technology • Keyboard and mouse require good manual dexterity	Yes	If screen is large enough
	• Smaller screens than desktops • Screens hard to read in bright light • Can have short battery life	Yes	Not unless hooked up to a projector, TV or speakers
	• Hard to print from • Hard to type on (wireless keyboards can help) • Can be heavy (putting a cushion under it can help) • Screens hard to read in bright light	Yes	Not unless hooked up to a projector, TV or speakers
	• Limited functions • Need a large screen TV with some floor space in front of it	Yes	Yes

Getting connected

Some activities need an internet connection and others don't. It is important to have a reliable broadband connection for activities that use the internet. As it can be frustrating for you and the person with dementia if your connection is slow or keeps breaking up. You can get a broadband connection through cables or wireless. Wireless is more flexible but does not always work well in some larger or older buildings. You can also use a 'dongle' which connects an individual computer to the internet as and when you need it. These kinds of solutions don't work so well in areas where mobile phone signals are weak however, and they are usually too slow for downloading videos or films.

Advice on technology issues

The ICT Knowledgebase website, run by technology charity Lasa, is a good source of independent advice on all sorts of computer questions. It is aimed at third sector organisations, so the advice is suitable for most SMEs.
www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk

If you are working with people who need specialist equipment to access ICTs, for example a trackball (a kind of mouse), large keyboards or a 'speaking browser' for people with a visual impairments, you can get information and advice from AbilityNet. They also have factsheets about how to make standard equipment as accessible as possible
www.abilitynet.org.uk

'It is important to have a reliable broadband connection for activities that use the internet. As it can be frustrating for you and the person with dementia if your connection is slow or keeps breaking up.'

5. Introducing ICTs to people with dementia

Getting started

Plan ahead

Make sure that you have the equipment you need for a particular activity. If you need internet access check that you have it in the rooms where you will be working. Make sure the space is right for the kind of equipment you want to use and the activities you plan to do. Do some research ahead of time – for example have a list of useful websites, or apps, or images, already collected together. If you are using equipment with batteries, make sure they are charged!

Focus on the activity not the technology

Start with 'Let's play a game/find some music' not 'Let's use the computer'. It is about what you are trying to achieve, not the fact you are using ICTs to achieve it. Talking to people about their hobbies and interests is often a good way to start – then the ICT is just a tool you use as part of the conversation.

ICT in action: Google searches are 100 per cent personalised

We start from the point of view 'This is your day, what would you like to do?'. For example, one of the people I work with is very fond of dogs, so I googled and found the website of a Labrador breeder in the town near where she lives. It's just part of interacting with the person. Forget about the ICT itself, it's just a great tool for starting up conversations, because you have the world at your fingertips.

Start with a simple activity

Decide beforehand on a straightforward activity to get people involved, for example:

- playing a game such as solitaire (for an individual) or bingo (for a group), or

- finding some music on the web.

If you know someone already understands ICTs, change your plans accordingly.

'*Start with "Let's play a game/find some music" not "Let's use the computer". It is about what you are trying to achieve, not the fact you are using ICTs to achieve it.*'

ICT in action: Choosing, finding and playing favourite music tracks

We ask people at our centre what their favourite music is. So they are involved in the choosing and selecting part of the process. Then we might find it on the web, or ask relatives to bring in CDs. Then we make a compilation and set it to shuffle on the MP3 player. It means that when music is playing it is always someone's favourite. It's a small thing, but it's the comfort factor, the familiarity of hearing music you remember.

Start with 'non-computer-y' technology

Desktop computers may have associations with work or bureaucracy for many people. Consider starting with something more everyday such as a digital camera. Tablets such as iPads can also be useful, as many people do not think of them as 'computers'.

ICT in action: Digital photography for everyday events

We use digital photography a lot. It's so immediate and so cheap. We take pictures of people attending the centre and then we have them on a small display screen in the room. They change every few seconds, and people are fascinated by them. When we are having an event in the garden or something we take pictures and put them on the display screen; people will say 'Oh look there's me'. And we can do print-outs, so carers can have copies.

Think about the person

DO

✅ Focus on the person's abilities, not their impairments.

✅ Remember engagement can be at any level, from sensory stimulation from a video, game or piece of music, to writing emails.

✅ Pay attention to each individual's preferences and capabilities, – for example, some people may be able to touch type, and others will never have used a keyboard. Both past experience and current capacities will affect the person's level of engagement.

✅ Talk out loud about what you are doing as a running commentary keeps people involved. Remember that things that seem obvious to you may not be to people who are unfamiliar with technology.

✅ Make sure carers and family are on board as it is important that those close to the person with dementia are supportive – particularly if the ICTs are going to be used to communicate with others.

DON'T

❌ Don't make prior assumptions about what someone can or can't do.

❌ Don't take over – wherever possible, the person with dementia should lead the activity with the carer's support. This can be a fine line in ICT use, but the key is to match the activity with the person's capacity. Even if people cannot engage directly with the technology, you can still offer them choices about what you are doing and how.

❌ Don't force the issue if the person is not interested. Engagement will vary from person to person, from day to day and at different times of day – be led by the person.

❌ Don't go on too long – it is always good to break activities into small steps. As a rule you should limit activities to 20 minutes or less unless you have a good reason to carry on.

❌ Don't set people up to fail. Don't suggest complicated tasks if people do not have the capacity to engage with them.

'Talk out loud about what you are doing as a running commentary keeps people involved. Remember that things that seem obvious to you may not be to people who are unfamiliar with technology.'

Think about your environment and the equipment

☑ Pay attention to health and safety issues – secure any trailing cables, make sure people have comfortable sitting positions, use a cushion with tablet computers as they can be heavy to hold or have in your lap and take lots of breaks from screens.

☑ Minimise visual clutter on screens – for example avoid lots of icons on the computer home screen.

☑ Make sure lighting is good – in particular avoid screen glare that affects visibility and legibility.

☑ Make the text on screen clear – make sure it is large enough to read and the colour contrast is strong.

☑ You can print 'screenshots' (an image of the screen as you see it) so people have a visual reminder of what the screen should look like at any given point.

☑ If you are using a keyboard you might want to put sticky labels on the 'space' bar and the 'return' key, to remind people what they are for. You could also consider covering up any parts of the keyboard you don't need.

☒ Don't use jargon or inconsistent language. Even some of the main ICT terms and ideas can be confusing when they are unfamiliar. Choose an everyday term wherever possible, and stick to using it all the time. Some examples might include:

- cursor: use 'pointer'

- return key: use 'enter'

- monitor or VDU: use 'screen'

- click: some people understand 'press' or 'tap' better

- menu: some people understand 'list' better.

6. ICTs in reminiscence and life story activities

Reminiscence is a common activity with people with dementia. It involves the discussion of past activities, events and experiences, often using photographs and music as prompts. It can be done individually or in groups. In either case, ICTs are an invaluable resource as you can search for and access virtually all types of media instantly. Life story work involves getting to know someone's past, present and future wishes, often to create a permanent record or lifebook. Once again, ICTs open up a world of possibilities for creating life books.

ICTs in group reminiscence

Being able to access the internet during a group reminiscence session means you can:

- ensure the sessions are tailored to the people you are working with

- get a great variety of prompts immediately: images, video, audio and music. Research suggests that music in particular is a powerful reminiscence prompt

- allow the people reminiscing to guide the session by having the flexibility to go off on tangents. You don't have to stick to pre-prepared materials or objects.

ICT in action: YouTube serves up music from many cultures

Sergio, who is from Chile, found it difficult to join in with the general reminiscence discussions at the day centre. Staff found it hard to get him to talk about his background. One day, a member of staff was searching the internet to find music for people to sing. She asked Sergio if he had any requests and he mentioned a name she did not recognise. A search in YouTube revealed a famous Spanish opera singer. Other people at the day centre enjoyed the music, and Sergio began to talk a little about his past.

Basic kit for reminiscence activities

- Access to the internet to search for photos or other resources

- A laptop or tablet computer is OK for one-to-one sessions

- For small group sessions, use a desktop computer and a large screen

- For larger groups, you need to connect the computer to a projector or to a large screen TV for comfortable viewing

- For group sessions, consider using plug-in speakers, so that the sound quality is better

- Consider printing some material in advance – it gives you somewhere to start and means everyone is not constantly focused on the screen.

- When you are searching the web, choose your search terms carefully; remember the web is full of all kinds of material, some of which you will not want to retrieve!

- Text heavy websites may not be very stimulating for people. Try searching Google Images or YouTube first. If you are looking for music, try putting 'lyrics' after your search term.

Hints and tips for group reminiscence activities

- Find a good space with access to the internet and enough room for people to sit comfortably and see the screen or projector image.

- Some preparatory work will help – have some standby materials already downloaded in a folder on the computer or some website addresses saved.

ICTs for individual life story work

Life story work is increasingly recognised as an important part of person-centred dementia care. It's a tool to get to know someone, and the better you know someone, the better their relationships with staff, family and carers can be. On a practical level, a record of experiences, likes and dislikes is very useful when someone is moving between environments such as respite, day or residential care. The advantage of a digital record is that it can be amended and copies of text and images can be printed whenever needed.

ICTs can contribute to the process of creating life stories at many levels:

• People with more capacity and interest will be able to plan and structure their own life story books and create them with varying degrees of support.

• Others may engage by making simple choices between images or colour schemes as you create the life story book with them.

Uncovering someone's life story will take a number of one-to-one sessions and you will almost certainly involve their family in giving information and providing materials such as photographs.

Basic kit for individual life story work

• A desktop computer, laptop or tablet

• Access to the internet to search for photos or other resources

• A scanner if you want to scan in photos or documents

• A digital camera if you want to take new photos to include

• A printer

• You can use word processing software (e.g. Microsoft Word) for life story books with an emphasis on text. Presentation software (e.g. Microsoft Powerpoint) is better if you want to use a lot of images or music and video. Free versions of these types of software are available from Libre Office: **www.libreoffice.org**

• There are some commercial life story templates available – they can be useful but they are not a necessity. It is always worth trying the software you already have on your machine before buying a specialised application.

Hints and tips for individual life story work

- Remember a life story book does not need to be a major production. Use the software you are most comfortable with and which best suits the person with dementia.

- It's the process that matters – don't get over-focused on the life story book as a 'finished product'.

- Divide the work up into short sessions, maybe focusing on a particular interest.

- Save work frequently to avoid losing it.

- Remember issues of text size and colour contrast.

- You can create a 'public' and 'private' version of a life story – one for use with care staff and one for personal use or use only with close family.

- Pay attention to copyright issues if you use photos or music from the web (or any other published source) in a life story book. Online material is not all free to use as many people assume. For a basic introduction to copyright online, see **www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/ guides/internet-law**

'It's the process that matters – don't get over-focused on the life story book as a "finished product".'

7. ICTs in creative and entertainment activities

Basic kit for creative and entertainment activities

- A desktop computer, laptop or tablet for screen-based games and for making things
- A games console for games involving physical interaction
- Access to the internet to search for photos or other resources
- A scanner if you want to use existing photos or documents
- A digital camera for taking new photos or short videos
- A printer

Creative and entertainment activities can vary greatly according to the setting and the individual or group involved. For some activities, the ICT is a support used by staff, and in others, the person with dementia can interact directly with the ICT.

Games

ICT in action: Games on touchscreen tablets

We begin by using simple games on the tablets. Things like iFishPond, where you can touch the screen and make the water splash and you can go fishing as well, or Raindrops, which plays musical notes, or Fireworks that explode in colour. Things like this help introduce people to the touchscreen approach. We don't look for things that are specifically to do with memory or dementia or anything. We find it's much better to find out what people's interests are and follow that lead.

Puzzles, board games, sensory games

Games can be a good way to introduce computers, as well as being an entertainment in themselves. They can be more intuitive if done on a tablet, but a desktop computer with mouse and keyboard can work too. You can search for websites that offer free versions of 'traditional' games such as:

• jigsaws (e.g.**www.jigzone.com**)

• sudoku (e.g. the Alzheimer's Society of Canada post a new sudoku on their website every day **www.alzheimer.ca/en/Living-with-dementia/ BrainBooster/Sudoku**), and

• crosswords (e.g. the Crossword Network at **www.dowedo.net**).

There are also millions of digital games (often called 'apps', 'gadgets' or 'widgets') – many of which are highly sensory and tactile and can engage even people who have little cognitive capacity. Many computers come preloaded with various games. You can also search online app or gadget 'stores' or a search engine such as Google, for games related to a person's interests. Many

are free to access or download (though they may contain advertising) and most paid-for ones are low-cost.

Hints and tips for games activities

• Try to avoid using websites that ask you to register personal details such as email addresses unless you trust them – your address might be passed on to third parties and then you may receive loads of unwanted emails.

• You can read some useful reviews of mainstream apps that work well for people with dementia at **www.memoryappsfordementia.org.uk**

• In general, don't choose activities where there is a long delay between the user doing something and the outcome, or where the rules are very unfamiliar or complex.

Games consoles

ICTs can also support physical as well as mental exercise. Games consoles (such as the Nintendo Wii or the Xbox Kinect) are attached to TVs (large screens are best). Individuals or groups can engage in all kinds of sports and physical recreation by interacting with the screen. These kinds of games can encourage people to move, focus and interact in ways that are not always easy to provide in care settings.

Hints and tips for interactive games consoles

- If you are using competitive games, make sure you do not set people up to be beaten all the time!

- Sometimes games with a stationary object (e.g. golf) are easier for people with dementia than games with a constantly moving object (e.g. tennis).

- Games that offer the option to adjust the skill level are usually easier to introduce.

Arts and crafts

Drawing

ICT in action: Painting together using a computer

We have a resident – Annie – who thought computers were 'not for her'. She has some trouble with her hands and would have found an ordinary mouse too fiddly. But we got a trackball mouse, and then we opened up the Paint programme that came with our desktop computer and asked Annie to choose a colour. Using the trackball we helped her to draw an outline, change the colour, and fill in the circle. Annie was amazed at how quickly she created something on the screen. Plus she loved the 'undo' button.

'*These kinds of games can encourage people to move, focus and interact in ways that are not always easy to provide in care settings.*'

Drawing can be another good way to introduce people to computers that support activities. It can help people understand how touchscreens work, or the relationship between a mouse and the screen. It is also a good way to find out if someone needs a special mouse or the accessibility settings on a computer changed. There is usually drawing software such as Microsoft Paint on desktop computers and laptops, and there are lots of drawing apps on touchscreen tablets. There are also apps and gadgets for other kinds of arts and crafts, such as pottery. Search online app or gadget 'stores' or a search engine such as Google for arts and crafts related to a person's interests.

Making things

ICT can be used to make a range of items that you can print such as cards, calendars or presentations, as well as practical items for local use such as signs, menus, maps and newsletters. Using a computer has some advantages over traditional craft methods:

- ideas and images that work can be saved and re-used

- multiple copies can be made cheaply and easily

- digital versions can be emailed to distant family and friends.

TV, radio and films online

ICT in action: Showing films using a projector

We use a projector screen to show old movies that our residents are interested in. We hand out popcorn and then we have a group discussion after the movie. It's a good group experience and it stimulates people to talk and share ideas.

You can schedule broadcast radio and television programmes around an individual's preferences, or for a group session. All the major broadcasters now have a version of the BBC's online iPlayer, which lets you watch TV programmes or listen to radio shows online at a time that suits you. Most programmes are available for 7–28 days after they are broadcast. Many newer TVs can also connect directly to online players.

There are also websites offering free movies. Here are just a few examples, but there are plenty of others:

www.classiccinemaonline.com
www.openculture.com/freemoviesonline
www.blinkbox.com/Movies/Catalogue/Free

It is best to search for these kinds of services in advance of any planned activity – and remember the internet can turn up things you don't expect!

> ### Further information: Licences for showing films
>
> If you are showing films in a communal area and the films are covered by copyright (which most are), you will probably need a Public Video Screening Licence. Filmbank have further information on these licences, including ones specifically for care homes
>
> **www.filmbank.co.uk/licences/public_ video_screening.asp**

Photography and film-making

Photography can be a great activity for people with dementia, and digital technologies give you lots of options. For example, use a digital camera to help someone take pictures of friends and family to make a digital photo album. This is an activity everyone can engage in, from taking and editing photos and providing

ideas or information for captions, to choosing layouts or colour schemes. Free software that comes with many digital cameras allows you to add a voice-over to a photobook.

As well as being a creative activity in themselves, photobooks can be beneficial in the longer term, as they are reminders to the person with dementia of who people are and their relationship to them.

If you want to engage in longer-term activities you can make short videos using digital cameras or digital video recorders like flipcams. The technicalities of film-making may not appeal to many people with dementia, but being in the film, helping with research or providing a voice-over are all creative ways of engaging with the process.

Hints and tips for photography and film-making

- To take pictures or make films, you need to make sure you have the consent of everyone who appears in them, as well as family and carers.

- Don't be over-ambitious with films – aim for about five minutes running time. The time limit for YouTube is 10 minutes.

- Try finding a gifted volunteer or work with a friendly professional film-maker. The Media Trust runs a scheme matching volunteer film-makers (and other types of media professionals) with charities: **www.mediatrust.org/get-support/one-to-one-support/media-matching/**

Further information: Making slideshows and films

Digital Unite has a useful guide on how to make a photographic slideshow:

www.digitalunite.com/guides/digital-photography/how-make-slideshow

For a guide on film-making with people with dementia, see Innovations in Dementia: **www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/films**

For an introduction on the technicalities of making short life story films using interviews to camera, see IRISS: **www.iriss.org.uk/resources/digital-storytelling-video**

8. ICTs for keeping in touch

ICT in action: Using the internet to call friends and family

Our residents were wary of technology. If you don't make a big deal out of it though, people get used to it. We had one resident who was scared of the computer when we first brought it out, and would not use it. But we introduced it slowly, and within a couple of weeks she was using Skype on her own.

There are two main ways you can use the internet to support communication for people with dementia:

• email

• internet phone services.

Why use email with people with dementia?

There are specific advantages to helping people with dementia use email:

• Copies of all emails are automatically stored so that each can be re-read every time an email is sent or received, which can help with recall.

• Emails can be drafted and then easily amended. They don't have to be sent immediately.

• Most email systems have an address book function, so that people do not need to remember addresses.

• Photographs are easily sent as attachments or as links to online picture galleries.

• Emails can be sent anywhere in the world at no cost.

Basic kit for emailing

• A desktop computer, laptop or tablet

• Access to the internet

• Web-based email such as Yahoo or Hotmail

Hints and tips for using email

- Make sure the friends or family the person wants to communicate with are willing and able to reply and that you have correct email addresses. Receiving no reply to emails can upset people.

- If you need to assist people with setting up or sending emails, make it clear to them that this means their emails are not completely confidential.

- Each individual should have their own email address so that correspondence can be kept private.

- It is easier to administrate emails for several people using a web-based service such as Yahoo than using an email programme like Outlook.

- You need a system for keeping email usernames and passwords safe and private.

- Check email addresses regularly to remove spam (unwanted mail such as adverts) before it reaches the person.

- Digital Unite has a useful guide to setting up emails: **www.digitalunite.com/guides/email-skype**

- Don't forget you can also use ICTs to create printed materials for keeping in touch, such as letters or cards.

Why use internet phone services with people with dementia?

There are a number of services that allow people to talk to each other over the internet. These are called voice over internet protocol, usually shortened to VOIP. The best known is Skype, but there are others such as Googletalk. The software is free and if the people you are calling also have the software, the call is free, anywhere in the world.
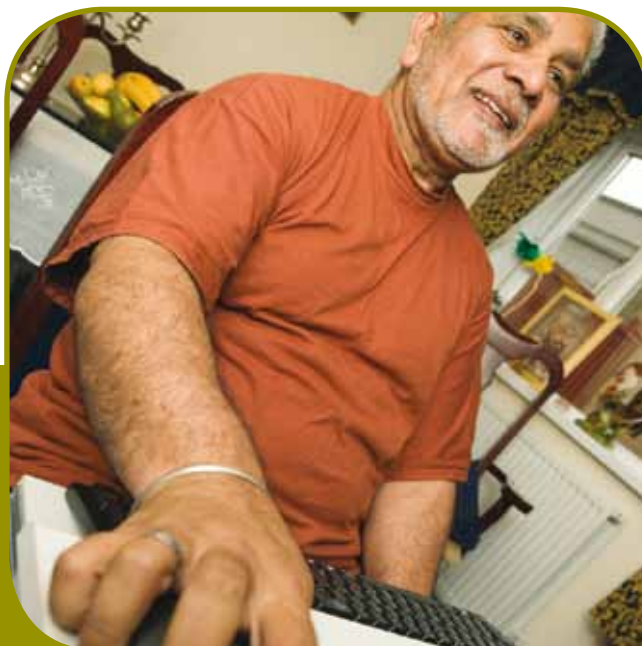
Apart from cost, the main advantage to helping people with dementia use internet phone services is that you can use a webcam, so that you can see the other person as well as hear their voice. This can be great for communication with friends or family who are geographically far away. People who use sign language can communicate at a distance on video calls, often for the first time. However, be aware that for some people with dementia video calls can be confusing or even disturbing, as they look like TV images and people do not expect to interact with the TV.

⏻ Basic kit for internet phone calls

- A laptop, tablet or desktop computer

- Access to the internet

- VOIP software, such as Skype or Googletalk

- The computer may have an inbuilt microphone and speakers. If not, you may need to get a headphone and microphone to plug in to the computer. These are not too expensive and they are more private

- If you want to do video calls, you need a webcam. These are not too expensive either and they can be attached to desktop computers. Many laptops and tablets have them built in

- You can also use some mobile phones (smart phones) to make VOIP calls, though many find that the small screens is not ideal

Hints and tips for internet phone calls

- VOIP services can be fiddly to set up. Get everything ready to go before the person is ready to call and use the test functions in the software to check it all works. You need to keep the time between the person wishing to make a call and actually calling as short as possible.

- You have to coordinate with the other parties to make sure they are online at the agreed time.

- If you don't have a good internet connection, the quality of the call can be bad, particularly on video calls.

- People with hearing problems may find it harder to hear web-based calls than phone calls.

- Make sure you get the privacy settings right – on Skype for example, the default setting means other Skype users know when you are online, meaning you might get unwanted calls.

- Digital Unite has a useful beginners' guide to using Skype: **www.digitalunite.com/guides/email-skype**

(i) Further information: Social media

Social media such as Facebook offer a different approach to keeping in touch online. For many people with dementia, social media interfaces may be too complex. You also need to be mindful about privacy and safety issues when using these services, as they are designed to be very public. But if you are working with people who do want to use social media, Digital Unite has useful introductory guides to social networking and to internet privacy and security at **www.digitalunite.com/guides**

9. Further resources

Person centred dementia care

SCIE Dementia gateway
Offers many resources, including elearning, focused on dementia and dementia care.
www.scie.org.uk/publications/dementia

General ICT skills

BBC First Click
Offers help for people not confident with computers, including a beginners' guide to the internet and a helpline to locate free IT courses near you.
www.bbc.co.uk/connect/campaigns/ first_click.shtml

BBC Webwise
The BBC's online introduction to computers covers using the internet, using email and safety and privacy issues. **www.bbc.co.uk/webwise**

Digital Unite
A company that specialises in accessible technology and runs programmes like Silver Surfers day, and offers a range of free guides on topics such as email, Skype, internet security, social media.
www.digitalunite.com/guides

YouTube
A good source of video tutorials on many aspects of ICTs, often aimed at the non-expert.
www.youtube.com

Support and advice on equipment and software

ICT Knowledgebase
Run by technology charity Lasa, this is a good source of independent advice on computer hardware and software questions, as well as policy and good practice.
www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk

PC Advisor

A commercial website, companion to the high street magazine of the same name, offering free reviews and technical advice across a range of issues.
www.pcadvisor.co.uk/how-to

IT4Communities

A charity that helps other charities and community groups find volunteers to help with their IT needs.
www.it4communities.org.uk

Charity Technology Exchange (CTX)

CTX matches requests for IT equipment from charities with donations from IT suppliers.
www.ctxchange.org

Media Trust

Runs a scheme matching media professionals such as film-makers and photographers with charities wanting help with projects and services.
www.mediatrust.org

Assistive technologies

ATDementia

Provides information on assistive technologies (AT) that can help people with dementia live more independently. It also offers a self-help guide to AT, designed to help individuals work out what products might be of assistance.
www.atdementia.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation

These websites offer a range of information about all kinds of AT, including AT for computers.
www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk and
www.allaboutequipment.org.uk

AbilityNet

Specialises in AT for computers, as well as offering help in using mainstream computers in the most accessible way possible. Their *My computer my way* guide is a useful non-technical introduction to AT for computers.
www.abilitynet.org.uk/mcmw

Useful websites to support activities with people with dementia

Games

- Jigsaws – free online jigsaws: **www.jigzone.com**

- Sudoku – the Alzheimer's Society of Canada post a new sudoku every day: **www.alzheimer.ca/en/ Living-with-dementia/BrainBooster/Sudoku**

- Crosswords – free from the Crossword Network: **www.dowedo.net**

- Apps – Memory Apps for Dementia includes reviews of games apps that are particularly suitable for people with dementia: **www.memoryappsfordementia.org.uk**

Movies

Free movies can be found on a number of websites, including:

www.classiccinemaonline.com
www.openculture.com/freemoviesonline
www.blinkbox.com/Movies/Catalogue/Free

Photography and film-making

- Digital Unite has a guide on how to make a slideshow: **www.digitalunite.com/guides/digital-photography/how-make-slideshow**

- Innovations in Dementia has a guide on film-making with people with dementia: **www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/film**

- IRISS has produced an introduction to making short life story films: **www.iriss.org.uk/resources/digital-storytelling-video**

Word processing and slide presentations

You will probably have common office software for word processing or creating presentations and slideshows on your computers. But if you do not, Libre Office is a free alternative: **www.libreoffice.org**

General research

YouTube

A great source of all kinds of video clips for getting conversations going. **www.youtube.com**

Google Maps and Street View

maps.google.co.uk
maps.google.co.uk/intl/en/help/maps/streetview

BBC Archive

Has themed collections of radio, TV, documents and photos going back to the 1930s.
www.bbc.co.uk/archive

British Library Sound Archive

Includes music drama, literature and oral history.
www.bl.uk/soundarchive

Specialist guidance and training

Alive!

A charity based in South West England that offers activity sessions using ICTs. It also runs training courses for staff and carers.
www.aliveactivities.org/services.asp

Innovations in Dementia

A community interest company that offers training to care organisations in using computers for activities with people with dementia.
www.innovationsindementia.org.uk

National Association for the Providers of Activities for older people

A membership organisation for anyone interested in increasing activity opportunities for older people in care settings (not specific to the use of ICTs).
www.napa-activities.co.uk

Savitch, N. and Stokes, V. (2011). *We can do IT too: using computers in activity programmes for people with dementia*. London: Speechmark

A practical book with detailed advice on using computers for recording people's lives, making things, communicating with friends and family and personal planning. It can be purchased from:
www.speechmark.net

Using ICT in activities for people with dementia: A short guide for social care providers

This is a short introduction to using information and communication technology (ICT) in activities for people with dementia. It is aimed at managers and staff in the care sector, and those who organise activities for people with dementia. It's a plain language guide about using mainstream technologies – you don't need to be technically minded. We hope it will be useful for you whether you are new to this topic or already have some experience of using ICTs in dementia support.

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