The Future of Loneliness

Facing the challenge of loneliness for older people in the UK, 2014 to 2030

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Friends of the Elderly supports older people with a range of care and support services. For so many of our beneficiaries, loneliness is a critical issue and yet one which can be overcome with relatively simple interventions. So why are over one million older people in the United Kingdom often lonely?

With what we know about the changing pace of technology, the significant demographic shift driven by the fact we're all living longer, and societal issues such as poverty; we wanted to understand what loneliness will look like over the next 15 years.

We commissioned this report to present the future of loneliness in easily digestible terms. If we are to change the future of loneliness we need everyone to understand the issues and play their part. The facts are startling. Demographic change alone predicts a 40 per cent increase in the numbers of older people living with the devastating effects of loneliness.

Society needs to continue doing everything it can to reach and support lonely older people – services and activities supporting older people to socialise; building accessible towns and cities, including homes fit for life; providing discounted transport; developing care and support services with appropriate information, advice and guidance; and supporting communities based on local resources and preferences.

But with continued cuts in public spending and limited resources in the third sector, how can we co-produce meaningful support for the predicted numbers of older people who will need us in the future? We know that older people can be stoic. They are unlikely to stand up in a crowd and ask for help. That's why we need to find new, innovative and sustainable ways of identifying and supporting lonely older people if we are to make a real and lasting change.

Friends of the Elderly believes that the opportunity exists to change the future of loneliness by exploring how society may change the way that it behaves. We want everyone to *Be a Friend* and make a difference – whether through a smile to an older person in the street, having a chat with an older neighbour over the garden fence, helping with shopping and everyday tasks, or asking for advice.

These acts may sound simplistic, but if everyone connects with their older neighbours, we can empower young and old to connect better within their communities. We believe that our report provides a starting point from which to redefine the role of the older person as mentor, leader, advisor, facilitator – or whatever they want to be.

To find out more about how we can change the Future of Loneliness together, please visit **www.beafriendtoday.org.uk**

Steve Allen
Chief Executive, Friends of the Elderly

Acknowledgment

Friends of the Elderly would like to thank William Nelson of the Future Foundation for his work on this report and his enthusiasm for the subject matter. We also extend our thanks to the interviewees who took part in the depth interviews to enrich our understanding of living with loneliness.

Executive summary

Focussing on loneliness: With the spread of communications technology, older people are likely to become less isolated and more connected to others; but will this mean less loneliness? This depends upon the *quality* of day-to-day interactions with other people, not just how many there are.

- *We must ensure that we properly understand and measure loneliness.*

- *We must recognise the potential for new ways of having friends and keeping in touch with others.*

Why ageing matters for loneliness: being older (80+) is a very important predictor of loneliness, and the total number of older people in the UK will grow by close to 50% between 2013 and 2030; the older end will see even higher rates of growth. This suggests that demographic change could fuel a sharp increase in loneliness in the UK.

- *If rates of loneliness among older people are not reduced, predicted demographic change alone will drive up the numbers of lonely older people in the UK by 40% by 2030.*

Gender and relationships: The *overall* proportion of 65+s that live alone will rise slightly, however we note that at the older end (80+), many more will actually be staying married, as male life expectancy catches up.

- *By 2030, we need to anticipate more singles in the 60–75 range, and more couples in the 80+ range.*

- *Men will become more prevalent in the older old population; we need to ensure their needs are met.*

Wealth and poverty: In the years to 2030, differences between the wealth levels of richer and poorer older people will grow ever greater. Poverty is a very important predictor of loneliness and poorer old people tend to be disadvantaged in multiple ways i.e. having lower levels of mobility, less access to technology and leisure activity.

- *It is vital that services targeted at reducing loneliness will work for multiply-deprived individuals i.e. accessible, cheap and locally delivered.*

Family life and intergenerational contact: Contact with younger people is an important 'remedy' for loneliness, whether or not they are an older persons' biological children. Today's grandparents have an ever-greater role in the lives of grandchildren, and the average UK adult still lives within a few miles of their parents. Frequency of contact with children (for those that have them) has been stable in recent years.

- *We need to capitalise on these positive trends in family life, but also recognise that many older people are reluctant to lean too heavily on their children for emotional support – even among those who have children, family is only part of the answer.*

The use of technology for social contact: The past half-century has seen successive waves of communications technologies steadily adding to total volumes of contact; face-to-face contact and call minutes continue to grow, while text messaging, email, instant messaging and social networking all just add *more* communication to the mix.

The proportion of 65+ who use the internet at home is set to rise to 71% in 2020 and 85-90% by 2030, as costs fall and increasingly user-friendly devices and software are developed. Many older users already enjoy online social networking and participation will continue to grow rapidly. However, even by 2030, large numbers of older people will still not be using the internet at all.

- *Technology has huge potential to make a positive impact on loneliness (as well as providing more engaging and interactive entertainment and distraction).*

- *However, the insensitive introduction of new technology into older peoples' lives*

can actually harm their ability to cope and communicate. The earlier in life new technologies are adopted, the better.

- *The older people who will remain 'off-line' in 2030 face a serious risk of intensified exclusion from society.*

Trends in social life and organisational membership: There is no good evidence supporting the popular myth of general social fragmentation. Recent trends in organisational membership and social activity show only that the nature of our social connections is *changing,* with groups based around leisure activities and interests gradually replacing more traditional forms of association. Both in-home and out-of-home socialising are far more popular activities than they were half a century ago.

- *We need to adapt to the greater fluidity of modern social and interest group involvement, and work with organisations across an ever-broadening spectrum.*

- *We need to recognise the benefits of long-term active involvement in groups, and help organisations to ensure that people do not drop out as they reach their late 70s or early 80s.*

Housing independence and community connections: A growing proportion of older people are remaining in independent living situations for longer, rather than moving into sheltered housing or residential care. At the same time, the use of monitoring and alerting systems and other 'smart home' technology is spreading.

- *In-home monitoring and alerting technology that connects older people to local care and support networks has great potential to reduce isolation and increase older peoples' sense of security.*

- *These potentials will only be unlocked if a revolution in human support, the creation of new networks of local carers, accompanies the rise of these technologies.*

In Autumn 2013, Friends of the Elderly approached the Future Foundation to pursue an original programme of qualitative research, historic data analysis, and forecasting.

Our aims were to:

- Build upon the existing body of research into loneliness in the UK.

- Identify key dynamics shaping the future of loneliness. Which are the real drivers of change, and which are the myths?

- Identify key challenges and opportunities in reducing older-age loneliness in future: what is going to work, in terms of interventions or preventative measures? What 'gaps' might there be in future provision?

- Provide a source of insight and creative inspiration to practitioners in related fields, helping to 'future-proof' frameworks and approaches.

In recent years, a genuine and positive reassessment of ageing has gone alongside the emergence of a fitter, more active and fulfilling lifestyle in our immediate post-retirement years.[1] For many, 60 is the new 40; grey is being buffed into silver. On average, overall life satisfaction and total asset wealth are higher for people in their sixties than for any other age group.[2] And rates of loneliness are actually lower among people in their 60s than those ten years younger.

Part of our challenge is to acknowledge the broad truth of the 'ageless' revolution among the 'younger old' (roughly late 50s to early 70s), and to better understand its drivers: greater connectedness, growing healthy life expectancy, rising affluence, greater involvement in childcare, and increasingly varied and active leisure time.

But the whole 'age-positive' discourse sits uncomfortably with the fact that older old age *still happens*. Increasing financial hardship, impairment, bereavement, declining life satisfaction, reduced social activity and a rising risk of being lonely may be appearing later in life, but they have not been eliminated from the lives of older people. Sadly, severe loneliness is common among people aged over 75 – 1 in 5 are *often* feeling lonely, more than double the rate found in younger age groups.
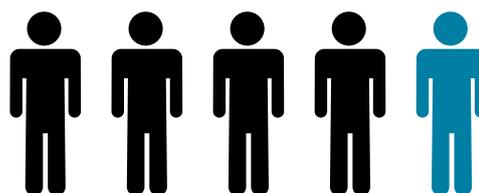
1 in 5
people aged over 75
often feel lonely

In order to avoid a lonelier future as Britain ages, we will need to focus far better on the needs of the 'older old' and strive to bring into being a distinct and positive vision of the later life stage they inhabit. A vision grounded in ongoing usefulness rather than eternal youthfulness, that is more about connection than adventure, less focused on resisting or denying ageing and more about accepting, embracing and enhancing a life changed in various ways by age and time.

Section 1 | Getting to grips with loneliness

1.1.   Loneliness and isolation

Let's begin by drawing an important distinction, between social or physical *isolation* (which is measured by things like numbers of friends, frequency of contact with friends and family, or distance from local amenities) and *loneliness*, which is measured only by asking people how they actually feel.[3] A person can be isolated yet not feel lonely, and conversely, we can still feel lonely in the midst of a crowd. Isolation can sometimes be glorious, but loneliness is never any fun. This said, social isolation is one of the strongest predictors of loneliness that we know.[4]

But do current standard measures of isolation and loneliness really deliver a sufficiently nuanced understanding of either phenomenon? After all, as we move through to 2030, we'll increasingly have to ask questions like:

- What will *having friends* and *taking part* mean, in a society where 'virtual' relationships are increasingly interwoven with 'real-life' relationships?

- Just how many *different* ways to connect and interact will there be in future, and do some modes of contact reach parts that others do not? (Does online social networking really only provide empty calories for the soul?)

- If loneliness is "a neurochemical reaction to a social deficit", could we not just medicate it away? (Could we then be lonely without knowing it, or know we're lonely without feeling it?)

- Artificial intelligence and robotics have barely yet touched the present day lives of older people, but already lead us to ask: what is 'artificial' companionship and what is real? (And does it matter?)

> I do feel lonely at times because I live alone. It's not a nice feeling with no one to talk to. *Marjorie, 89.*

Is a less isolated future a less lonely future?

The reason we focus on loneliness rather than isolation in the remainder of this report, and a key point for the next twenty years is this: isolation, in most of its measurable dimensions e.g. *frequency of contact with others*, seems almost certain to be reduced. We are likely to see a *better connected* older population in future, ever more urban, mobile and sociable, with hugely increased (although still far from universal) access to a variety of mobile and domestic communications platforms. Increasingly we'll be linking not just to other people but things (smart home applications, geo-tagged information outdoors, products in shops) and bodies (biometrics, alerting systems).

However, **whether a less isolated, more 'connected' society is going to be a less *lonely* society is open to question**. A major risk is settling for a high *frequency* of contacts, but neglecting the essential question of the *quality* of those contacts – and the loneliness that even apparently 'highly-connected' people can suffer.

## 1.2. The lonely years: loneliness among older people today

Levels of loneliness and recent trends in loneliness

A range of survey sources (Growing Older, ELSA, Age UK) produce remarkably similar figures on loneliness:

- Around one in ten (c.6–13% of) older people say that they are often or always lonely.
- A further one in three (c.31–34%) say that they sometimes feel lonely.

Let's now look at levels of loneliness among different older age groups. The chart below shows findings from the latest wave of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing.[5]

Chart 1: Percentage who report being often lonely, and sometimes lonely, by age group
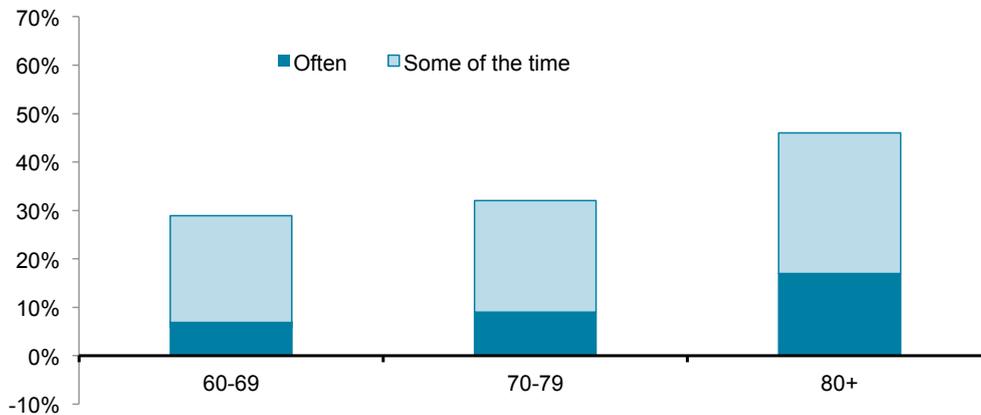
Base: England   Source; Friends of the Elderly/ English Longitudinal Study of Ageing/ the Future Foundation, 2013

As we can see, rates of loneliness vary greatly between people in their 60s and those aged over 80. According to ELSA (2010/11 wave), while 7% of sixty-somethings report often being lonely (and 22% report sometimes being lonely), among the over-eighties this rises to 17% and 29% respectively.

When it comes to recent trends, the data is remarkably stable. No source reports any consistent change in the prevalence of loneliness among older people in the UK over the past 10–15 years.[6] For us, this coheres with other evidence that the social fabric of the UK is *not*, as some would have us believe, in a state of terminal deterioration (an argument we expand on later).

That said, the situation has not improved either; and recent years have seen only a glimmer of the massive growth in the 'older old' (70+) population of the UK that is to come, so recent stability in levels of loneliness calls for hope not complacency.

29%
of over 80s report sometimes being lonely.

> "Loneliness is a strange feeling – it's sad, it's day in, day out.
> *Daphne, 90*

Section 2 | The implications of demographic change

## 2.1   Key demographic trends: age and partnership status

We've just seen that people over age 80 (or over 75 in some studies) are more than twice as likely to suffer severe loneliness by comparison with younger age groups, and even by comparison with people in their 60s. For a society that is ageing rapidly during the 2010s and 2020s, the future implications are potentially frightening.

Ageing society: a closer focus

We all know that *we are getting older*. But the UK population as a whole is not ageing in the smoothly continuous manner of an individual person. As the generation of post-war babies moves through into retirement age, the numbers of people in today's older age brackets will be changing in some surprising ways.

The chart below shows how the older UK population of today is forecast to move through to 2020 and 2030. The three lines show the older UK population moving through time, from left to right, as the next 16 years go by.

Chart 2: The age distribution of the UK's older population, 2014, 2020 and 2030
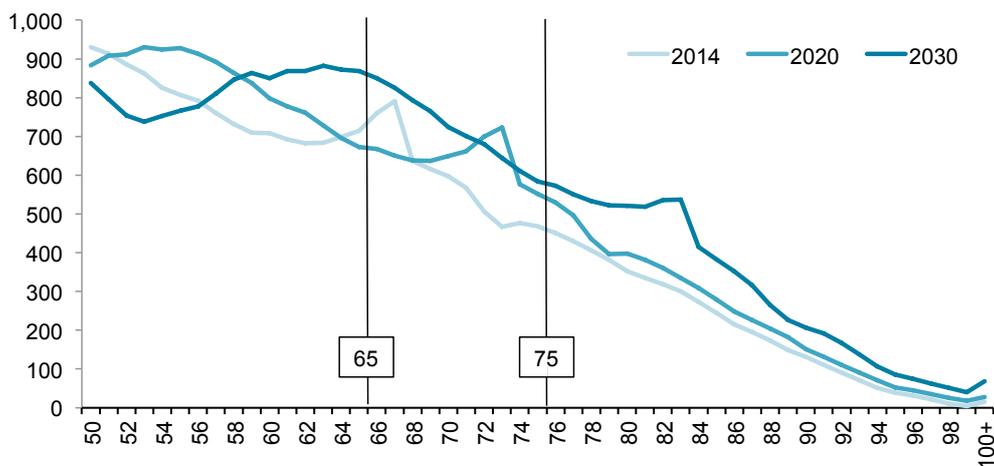

Base: United Kingdom   Source; Friends of the Elderly/ Government Actuaries' Dept./ The Future Foundation, 2013

Note that single-year totals have been interpolated for 90–99 year olds (from published 5 year bands), '100+' is all over 100s.

Today, in 2014, we've just seen the post-war 'mini-baby-boomers' (a 'spike' in births in the years 1946–48) passing age 65. As this 'spike' moves on through into their seventies, the next few years will see a big increase in numbers of people aged between 70 and 75 in the UK population, while, perhaps surprisingly, we'll actually see a *fall* in total numbers of 65–68 year olds in the UK.

Looking ahead further, as we move into the 2020s, we'll see the post-war 'spike' moving into their later 70s and 80s, which, alongside increasing longevity, means that **the 2020s is the decade when the UK will move into a new phase: sustained high rates of growth in numbers of people in their late 70s and older**.[7] Remembering that it is this age group that is especially vulnerable to loneliness, we have just a few years to prepare: from 2017 onwards, the 75+ population really starts to grow quickly.

60+ 🏠 75+ 🏠

Marriage, cohabitation, and single-living

The second major demographic trend that will impact future levels of loneliness is the trend away from marriage and towards cohabitation, divorce, and living alone. Not surprisingly, marital status makes a huge difference to loneliness: While only 4% of 50+s who were married are often lonely (and 19% sometimes so), 22% of widows are often lonely and 41% sometimes lonely. Never married people and divorcees fall in between these two extremes.

At first glance, trends in *marital status* suggest that a storm is coming. The proportion of 60+s that are married is declining fairly rapidly and set to fall further, from today's 60%, to 55% by 2030.[8] Cohabitation will become more common, but the increase is relatively small compared to the decline in marriage: the result is that many *more people aged 60+ will be living alone*. But over the next 15–20 years, this increase in single-living is all going to happen among the 'younger old' – the under 75s.

Gender, life expectancies and widowhood

Changes in marital status between now and 2030 will play out completely differently for the 'older old'. This is because the gap between male and female life expectancy, at around six years in the 1970s, has halved since that time and is expected to fall further.[9] This means that among the very oldest age groups, we'll actually see spectacular *increases* in the proportion that will (still) be married or cohabiting. In 2008, only 1 in 6 (16%) of the over 90s lived with a spouse or partner. In 2014, this has already risen sharply to 21%, and by 2030, this percentage will rise to more than 34%. So, there will be many more men, and more couples in the 75+ population by 2030.

Other relationship trends: the rise of 'non-traditional' older couples

A further trend to consider is an increasing tendency for single adults to be in 'steady relationships' but not actually living together[10] – while still a small minority of over 60s, this is a definite trend to watch. Same-sex relationships and marriage are another trend that could be significant – although also only impacting small numbers of over 60s at present. Both these trends point to a growing need to work with non-traditional relationship situations, and ensure that respect and support is available to *all* older couples.
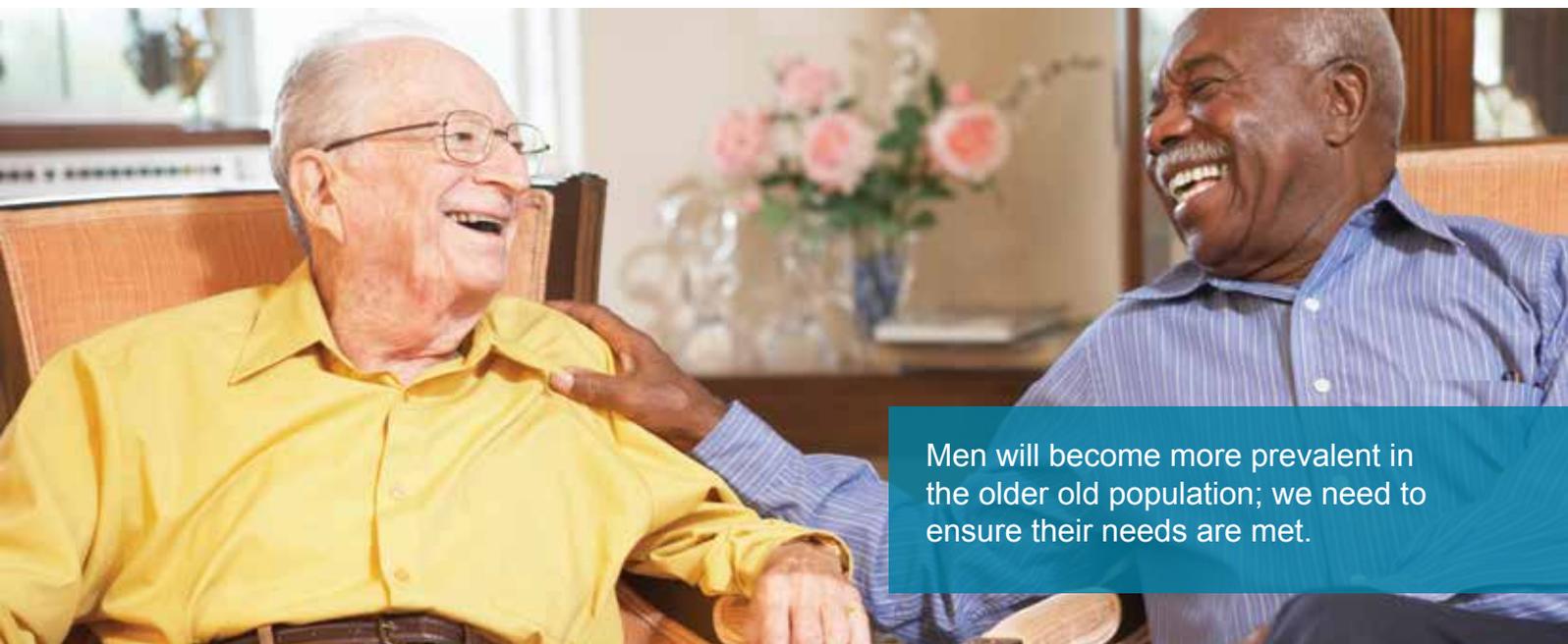
Men will become more prevalent in the older old population; we need to ensure their needs are met.

2.2 The potential implications of an older, more single population for loneliness

If *rates* of loneliness remain the same for people in each age band and partnership situation, what will the shifting size and partnership status of the older UK population do to *numbers* of lonely older people by 2030?

We built a statistical model of future numbers of lonely older people, using data from Government forecasts for changes in the size, age profile and partnership status of the older population in the UK. The chart below shows the results:

Chart 3: Numbers of 60+s suffering loneliness, 2014–2030 (model based upon forecast changes in age and partnership status of UK population)
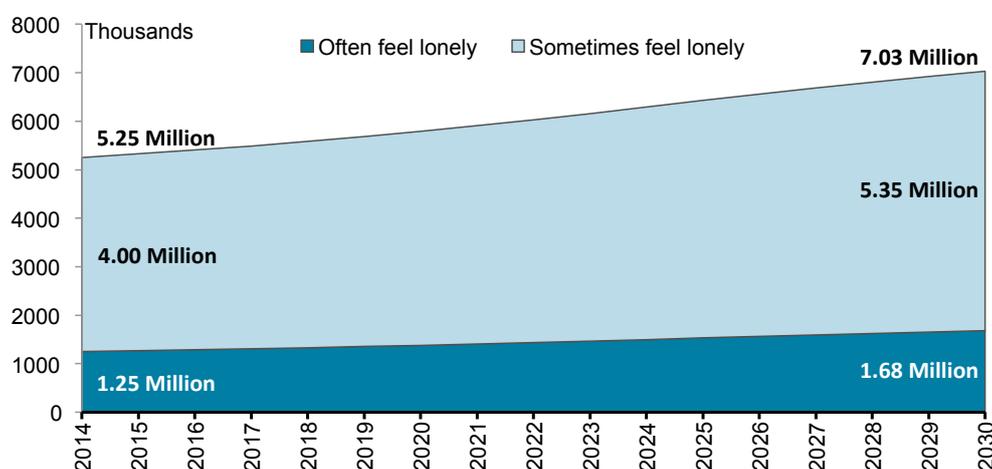
Base: United Kingdom   Source; Friends of the Elderly/ ELSA, GAD/ The Future Foundation, 2013

As we can see, our model implies that:

- We would see the overall number of older people reporting loneliness (at least sometimes) in the UK rise from around 5.25 million today to 7 million by 2030 (an increase of around 40%).

- We would see numbers of older people reporting that they are often lonely rising from 1.25 million today to 1.7 million by 2030.

- The rate of growth in the lonely older population will trend upwards over time, moving from growing at around 1.3–1.5% per year in the period 2013 to 2018, to growing at over 2% per year during the early 2020s.[11]

Predicted demographic change alone will drive up the numbers of lonely older people in the UK by 40% in 15 years.

75+ is certainly a more important dividing line than 65+ when it comes to loneliness.

What can we do to prepare for demographic change?

- Everyone needs to anticipate long-term growth in demand for services as the older population grows.

- Anticipate greater diversity within the older population - and increasing redundancy of '60+' or '65+' classifications. 75+ is certainly a more important dividing line than 65+ when it comes to loneliness.

- At the younger end (60–75) older people are more likely to be living alone by 2030, but at the older end, more likely to be married. Service providers need to consider how marital status will shift for their age range (for example, providers of residential care, generally focussing on the older end of the spectrum, need to expect more men, and more couples in their resident population in the years to 2030. Those working with 60–75 year olds, by contrast, should anticipate more singles in their client base).

- Increases in lone parenthood call for better understanding of long-term relationships between single parents and children, especially fathers, in later life.

- Organisations need to shift away from thinking strictly in terms of *marital status* and to working with and supporting older people in a diversity of relationship situations.

Section 3 | Wealth and work

3.1   Wealth inequalities and multiple deprivation among poorer older people

> " I did go down to the church, on a Wednesday, to have a game of bridge. But that folded because frankly it's too expensive to have a taxi, you know, sort of £15 for a game of bridge for an hour... My money was getting a bit too short to pay that out.
> *Arthur*

There is a very important correlation between having low levels of income and being lonely. Poorer older people do a narrower range of leisure activities, and watch more television. Poorer older people suffer lower levels of physical mobility, higher rates of disability and depression, and lower frequency of social contacts and group membership. The sense of multiply deprived segments within the older population is reinforced by considering access to technology. Again, levels of internet access and use are significantly lower among poorer older people.

The accumulation of housing wealth seems likely to widen the gap in the living standards and lifestyles of richer and poorer retirees. And while the state pension has grown greatly in real value terms during the past generation, such increases may well be unsustainable in the years to 2030. These trends point to a conclusion that is in line with the general direction of change ever since the early 1980s: we'll see a growing inequality in the distribution of wealth and income among older people. Does this also imply an increasing inequality in the distribution of *loneliness* in future?

> **What can we do to help the poorest older people avoid loneliness?**
>
> Deprivation is rarely only economic; more often than not it takes multiple forms. Interventions that only work online, that only work for people with good physical mobility, or interventions that are financially costly to the end-user, may exclude the very people who represent the heart of the problem.
>
> ◉ We need to 'stress test' potential initiatives by asking "will they work for someone who has very little money to spend, no means of transport, no modern communications infrastructure, narrow and home-based leisure activities, and some degree of physical impairment?"

3.2 Later retirement and work

A related trend with potential to combat loneliness is later retirement and the emergence of a more flexible, blurred boundary between working and post-working life, which may include part-time or short-hours work and voluntary work.[12] However, many jobs have no social component, and even those that do involve regular contact with co-workers may not provide a supportive social environment – in such cases the trend to later retirement is potentially a negative one for loneliness, as working will certainly compromise relationships outside of work.[13]

On a more plainly positive note, participation in volunteering among the over 55s appears to have been at least stable or possibly slightly rising in recent years,[14] and is consistently related to positive social involvement. We are struck by research showing how often older volunteers will mention their own participation in voluntary work when asked about their sources of social support.[15]

> **What can we do to maximise the social benefits of working longer?**
>
> ◉ Social involvement and being useful are potentially great benefits of work: but employers need to be aware of their responsibilities to older staff in relation to social isolation. These include monitoring staff (especially during the transition to retirement or shorter hours), allowing flexibility if required for social and family contact, and auditing company social activities for inclusiveness in regard to age.
>
> ◉ The sense of 'all being in it together' is important in older people's thinking about work and volunteering. Although caution is required, sometimes effective engagement is not so much about offering an opportunity, as simply saying "you're needed".
>
> ◉ Employers, in the same way as membership organisations, need to take some responsibility for the wellbeing of former staff. At least some company social events should be open to retired ex-employees and inviting back retirees to provide mentoring or training should be encouraged (a low-cost win-win?)

Section 4 | Membership of organisations, leisure and social life

In section four of this report, we think about socialising and leisure - how it is changing, and what this means for older people. Some researchers argue that we are seeing a crisis in group membership (and, by implication, community and sociability), but others find that there is no such trend at all in the UK.[16] At Future Foundation, we think we're seeing a profound *change* in the way we associate with each other, not a disappearance of social life altogether. Let's look more closely at the case for this perspective.

4.1 Organisational and group membership

There is no clear trend in overall rates of membership in organisations in the UK, with different sources (covering different types of organisations) reporting very different trends in recent years.[17]

Organisational membership: ups and downs

- Major mass membership organisations that have seen (long-term) declining membership: churches,[18] trades unions, working men's clubs, political parties

- Organisations that have seen (long-term) rising membership: interest groups and campaigning organisations (e.g. National Trust, green organisations), leisure classes, gyms, online social networks.

The idea that social bonds are simply falling apart in the UK is both disheartening and inaccurate. The true picture is that some types of social/interest groups are on the rise, while some are waning. We're finding common causes and sharing interests in different ways than we used to. Our social bonds are taking on new forms – but society and sociability are very much alive and kicking.

What matters more for loneliness is that active membership of all types of organisations tends to drop off quite steeply after a certain point in life. Again, the need to differentiate between 60 somethings and 70s+ is clear. One recent analysis suggests that organisational membership really only begins to decline significantly for today's 70s+.[19]

'Chequebook membership' vs. active membership

A further issue that some critical commentators have pointed out, is there are many organisations today, both commercial and in the not-for-profit sector, for whom membership is solely expressed via a direct debit instruction (and perhaps an annual newsletter). While a direct debit can represent a very deep commitment on the part of the donor, the critique has some force – clearly, fostering 'active' membership matters, when it comes to combating loneliness.

What can we do to help sustain active membership of organisations?

◉ Service providers need to identify the membership based organisations that are most relevant to their particular service users, and seek out potential for partnerships.

◉ Especially when individuals have been actively involved in, supporting, or volunteering for an organisation for many years, it seems reasonable to ask of any membership based organisation: do you have retention policies specifically targeted at maintaining *active* involvement (rather than merely 'chequebook membership') among older people?

◉ By 2030 we can expect to see many organisations building 'richer' communities of interest around themselves, offering more opportunities to get involved and interact. The online world can play a role here – but as we'll see in the next section, not everyone is going to be arriving at the party by 2030.

4.2 Leisure participation and 'fluid sociability'

Fluid sociability and leisure

There are many kinds of social and interest groups with no formal membership (the *book club* is perhaps the quintessential modern expression of this), but think also of the tighter or looser friendship groups that can coalesce around leisure excursions and live performances, games and hobbies, or the sharing of meals or media events.

Measures of formal group membership, as discussed in the previous section fail to measure these kinds of informal sociable leisure activity,[20] and thus fail to recognise an essential fact: our social and leisure lives are simply far *busier* than they used to be. In the past twenty years, Future Foundation trend research into the *range* of out-of-home leisure activities that people take part in suggests that we are packing in an ever wider range of out-of-home leisure activities. The average number of leisure activities participated in (from a list of 22) rose from 8.7 in 1992 to 11.5 in 2012, and we have seen a similar rate of increase across all age groups, including 55+s.

Places to play

Although online shared activities (shared viewing, online gaming, etc.) will doubtlessly flourish, many such fluid groupings will stay local and will continue to rely, in part, upon physical spaces and places; the school gate and church door, pubs, cafés and clubs, leisure and community centres, the communal areas of sheltered and residential housing.

Such informal and fluid group activities could be particularly important for the next generation of older people, who seem likely to have lower rates of church attendance (although they may have other long-standing affiliations). Participation that involves 'signing up' to a group is always going to present higher barriers than groups that allow occasional or informal participation (at least at first – of course routine matters for ongoing participation, but the point is to try to create and foster social groupings which are *as easy to enter* as possible). At the same time, groups are not for everyone, preferred ways of forming relationships vary from individual to individual.

> 66
>
> I can go to the local day club because transport is provided. It's not easy to travel because the nearest bus stop is a mile away. My neighbours drive me to church in their car. *Pat, 86* 99
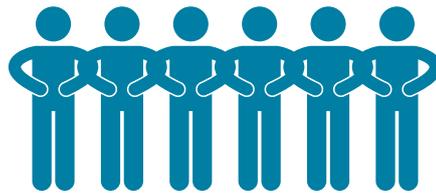
What can we do to help sustain leisure participation?

- Participation in non-membership based 'fluid' leisure activity, for example attending a one-off live performance or going on a day trip, is massively up over the past generation and is becoming an ever more important part of social life. We need to ensure that older people can keep enjoying access to a range of events and activities, both regular and spontaneous.

- The UK's thriving leisure industry has generally widened access to a growing variety of leisure opportunities – but arguably also intensified social exclusion for the poorest. It is increasingly important to understand lack of *leisure* opportunities as a serious aspect of social exclusion and driver of loneliness, and to explore ways that leisure providers can take more responsibility for the over 75s.

- Transport problems and costs are emphasised time and again by our interviewees. Transport providers in the private sector and voluntary schemes have potential to help, while defending accessible local public transport remains vital.

> "I feel lonely when I have nothing to do. Knitting or crossword puzzles help (me) to feel less lonely.
> *Rosemary, 81*"

Section 5 | Family, friends and socialising at home

5.1   Family dynamics

Analysis of ELSA suggests there is a strong connection between low contact with family members and loneliness. Furthermore:

- Contact with children is especially important. This appears to apply to cross-generational contacts in general, i.e. contact with children and young people, as well as contact with one's own grown-up offspring.

- Having children with whom one has a negative relationship is a stronger predictor of loneliness than not having any children at all.

Some of our interviewees clearly felt that there was a level of emotional support that they should not ask their children for:

"I'd be pouring my heart out to Kate [daughter] who, a few times she was in tears, and obviously I'm thinking, I actually said to her 'I've got nobody else I can talk to.' So I tried to find a befriending service… I needed somebody that I could just pour my heart out to." (Jeremy)

The average British adult (excluding those living at home) still lives 14 miles away from their mother, the majority much closer than the 14 mile average.[21] Geographic mobility is broadly stable in the UK. Most families are simply *not* being torn apart by physical distance. And with increased numbers of dual-earning families facing soaring childcare costs, we've seen a massive increase in grandparents' involvement in childcare in recent years.[22]

With the importance of intergenerational contacts in mind, as well as their limitations - what is the future for family life and intergenerational relationships?

The role of older people in family life

Let's dispel a popular myth straight away: relationships within families are not in decline. ELSA trend data suggests that frequency of face-to-face contact between people aged 60+ and their children has, if anything, grown slightly over the past ten years.

As life expectancies grow and family size shrinks, families are becoming gradually more 'vertical' in structure: fewer siblings also means fewer aunts, uncles and cousins, but while there are fewer people in each generation, there are more generations within families. More and more people at retirement age will still have elderly parents.

> " The challenge facing families is lack of mobility. You can't go to them; you have to wait for them to come to you. *Bill, 86.* "

What can we do to help families limit loneliness?

- We need to anticipate an older population with older children supporting them. Among the growing numbers of 'older old', children themselves will be reaching ages where mobility can become more difficult.

- Older people will have fewer siblings, but more likely to have children and grandchildren around. The role of grandparents (and great-grandparents) as child carers is growing, and important for combating loneliness in future. As service and leisure providers, are we providing suitable grandparenting friendly activities and venues?

5.2   Friendship and socialising

Having a lack of friends is also a crucial predictor of loneliness. What does trend data tell us about the future of friendship in the UK? The evidence is again positive. Since the early 1960s, time-diary studies suggest that time spent socialising out of the home has increased by 47%, from an average of 3.9 hours per week in 1961, to 5.8 hours per week in 2012.[23] In the same period, time spent on *in-home* socialising also grew by a similarly large margin.[24]

This strong trend reminds us that socialising at home only grew to become a widespread norm in the second half of the 20th century. There may be fair numbers of older people today who have actually *never* socialised regularly at home.[25]

For some, a social life lived largely out of the home remains a preference even into later life. However, the generation coming through into the 70+ age range in 2030 will bring the expectation of evermore sociable home lives with them.

Friends on the phone

Significantly, analysis shows that *having* friends is a more important factor in warding off loneliness than frequent contact with these friends. Telephone calls are the bedrock of many elder friendships. In this sense, today's older people are *already* enthusiastic users of electronic communications technology – which takes us nicely on to our next section.

What can we do to help sustain friendships?

- Providers of accommodation need to anticipate and encourage greater levels of in-home socialising (see also part 7).

- People make many friends in the course of life, as friends die, the potential for the internet to re-connect us with *old friends and acquaintances* (as well as new) could be really important.

- Having a low-cost (and preferably flat-rate) telephone service is a social issue: many older people may be paying more than necessary for voice calls and phone bills can become a serious barrier to contact with others. Providers of telephone services should be pressured to ensure no older customer is discouraged from using the phone by costs and those who rely heavily on the telephone should be proactively helped to find competitively priced services.

- Having low-cost, accessible transport is essential. Face-to-face contact might not need to be frequent but it is important, and older people will travel if at all possible.

Telephone calls are the bedrock of many elder friendships.
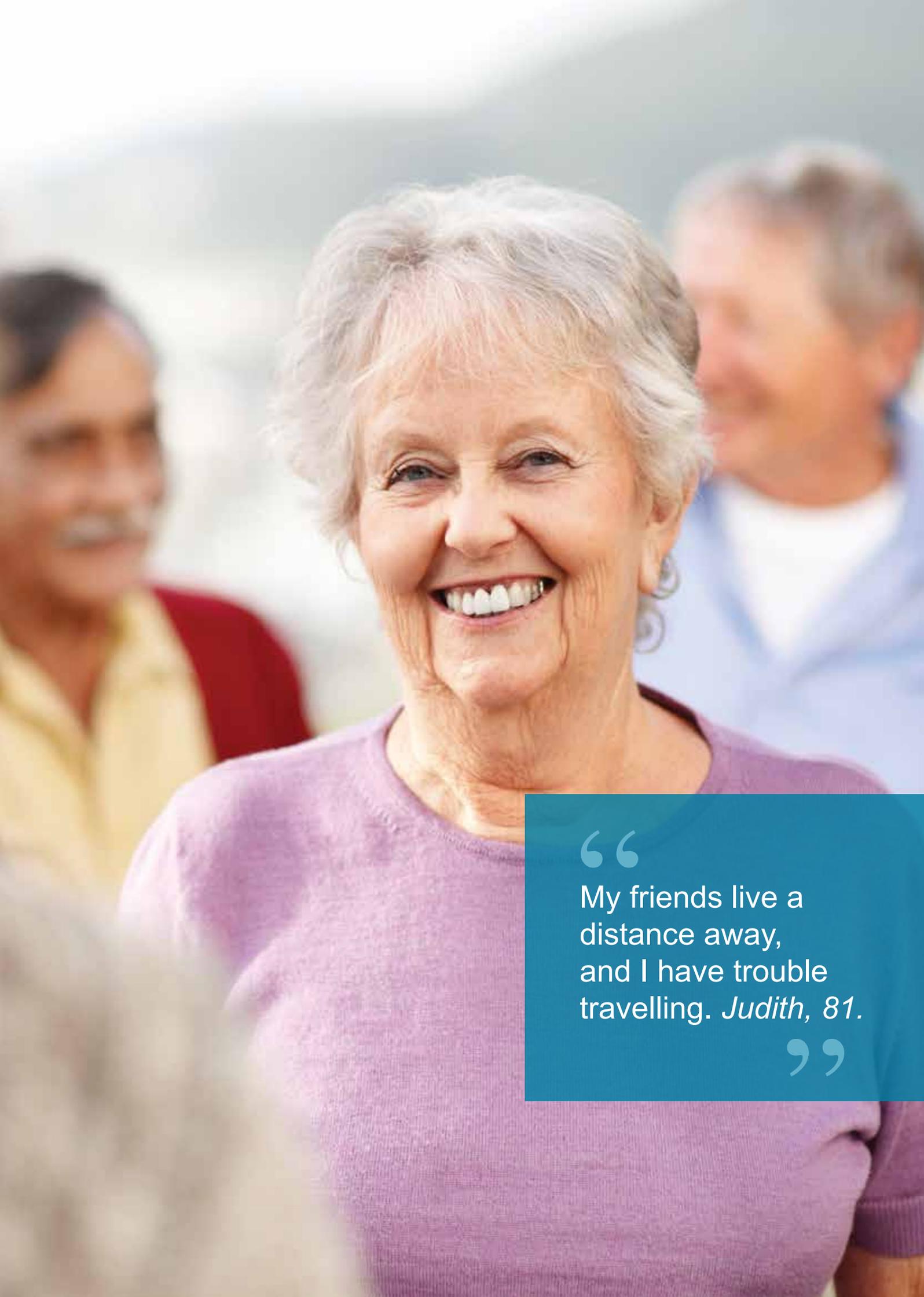
> " My friends live a distance away, and I have trouble travelling. *Judith, 81.* "

Section 6 | Technology for contact and communication

The evolution of communications technology has been a largely *additive* process, not merely the replacement of one form of communication with another. Tweeting and video calls now add to instant messaging, which added to texting, which added to mobile call minutes which added to landline call minutes. And these have all *added* to increasing social 'face time'. The big picture at least, is clear: *new communications technology plus greater mobility plus increasingly sociable habits means that older people are communicating more than ever.*

We are thus bound to hope, and reasonable to expect - that information and communications technology can have a positive role in easing the problem of loneliness in future. But technological dreams have a way of running into hard realities. Let's consider what is really possible by 2030.

6.1 Use of the internet and mobile/ Smartphone technology

Our first question must be about older peoples' actual use of newer communications technology.[26] While there are likely to be benefits for users, as more services (and conversations, family photos, etc) become available online only, the growing dominance of the internet will see digital exclusion, for those excluded - becoming an increasingly severe problem.[27]

Let's consider then, where internet usage is at for the older UK population today, and where it is likely to get to over the next 15–20 years.

Chart 4: Prevalence of internet use among older age groups, 2007 to 2020
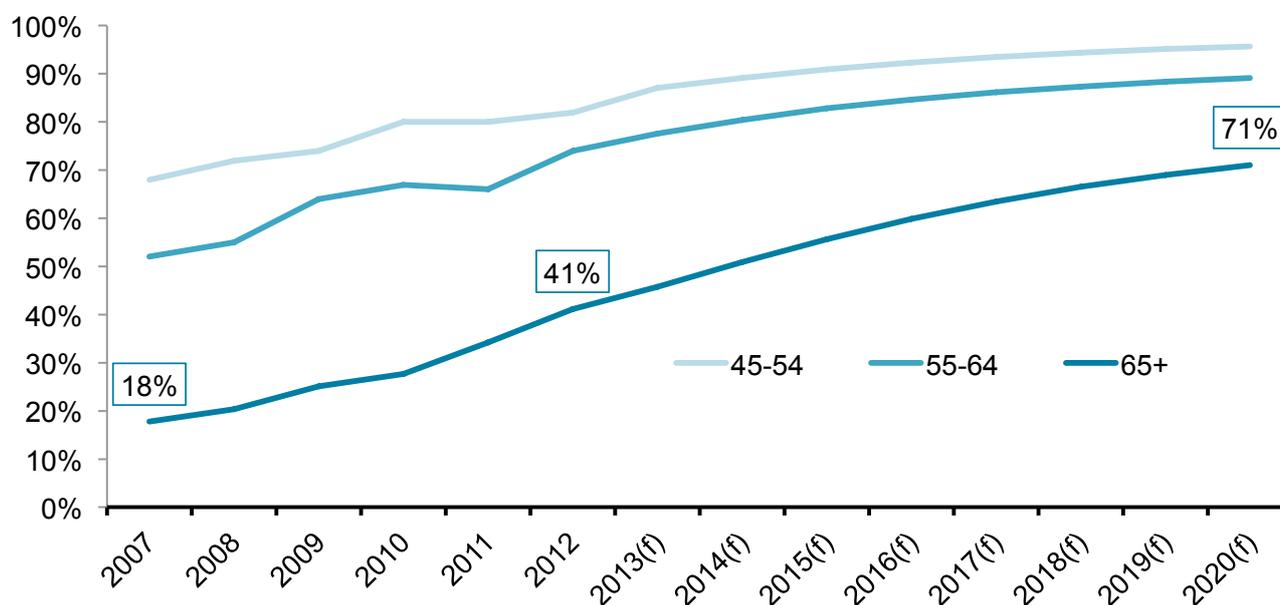
Base: United Kingdom   Source; Friends of the Elderly/ Eurostat Survey of ICT Use / the Future Foundation, 2014

Current uptake rates and forecasts present a picture of new communications technology slowly percolating into older age groups:

- Internet use will feature in the lives of a clear majority (71%) of 65+s by 2020, and the great majority (80–90%) of 65+s by 2030.

- Where older people do use the internet at home, their patterns of use (across most uses) are not dramatically different to those of younger people – similar purposes, just less intensive in terms of frequency.

- For certain (admittedly rare) purposes (e.g. emailing a political representative) older users are in fact the most 'engaged' internet users of all.

> " 'I'd better have a go' I thought. But actually I'm not at all technically minded and I thought I won't like it. But I got into it. … I get the news very often in the morning, on the computer, because I don't have a paper. *Martha* "
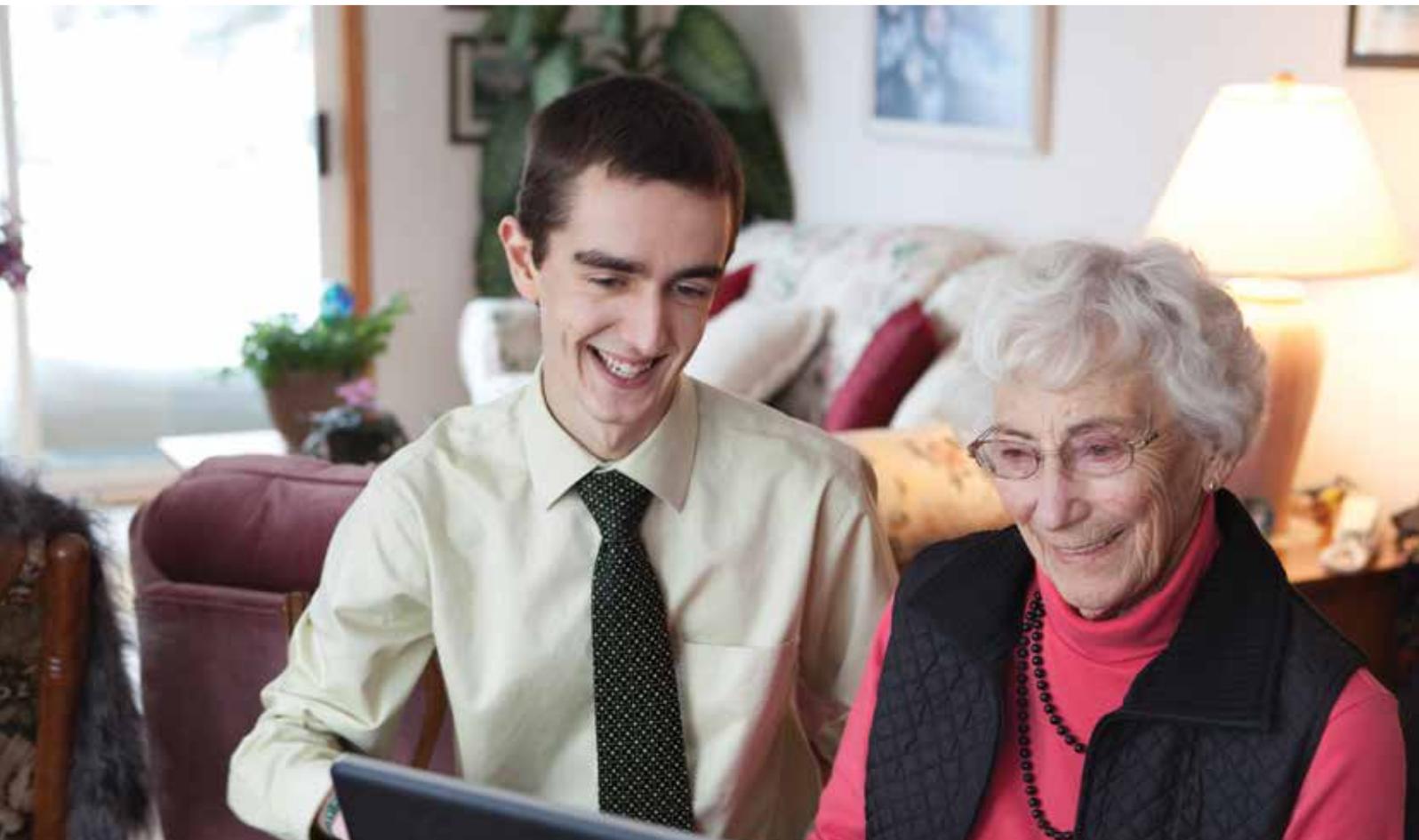
Mobile phone and smartphone ownership

According to Ofcom, mobile phone ownership is now rising fast among 65+s. In 2014, 86% of UK 65–74s use a mobile phone, and 61% of 75+s. We expect these figures to rise to 91% of 65–74s and 76% of 75+s by 2020.

By 2030

100% of 65+   90% of 75+

By 2030, mobile phone usage up to age 75 will be near-universal, and around 90% among 75+s.[28]

However, use of the internet through mobile and portable devices (smartphone and tablet) is currently at a low level among older people in the UK (only 4% are regular (daily or near-daily) users in 2013), and will remain relatively unusual through to 2020 (although one in three will be regular users by 2020).

But moving through to 2030, smartphones (or future versions of them) could be really important as a route into internet access and online social connections, especially among older people who see no need for, or cannot afford access via an in-home system. By 2030, all mobile phones are likely to be internet-enabled by default. Internet access via 'smart TV' could also be important by 2030 – but not something we expect to dramatically alter the picture among the older population by 2020.

6.2   The potentials of social media

In 2013, 27% of UK 65+s had engaged in online social networking during the past six months – making it one of older internet users' most popular activities. By 2020, we forecast this figure to reach 52% of 65+s, continuing to climb slowly thereafter.

A futures gaze on social media looks beyond contemporary phenomenon like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, or *Instagram*, and brings into focus the more general question of *the kind of communication we are talking about*. Caricature is certainly a risk here, but the limitations and conventions of the form mean that in practice, much social media activity is short and light. This is psychologically nourishing, at least on some level;[29] but most of us just seem to need *more*. Short-form contact via SMS or social media has been characterised as 'junk food for the soul' – something enjoyable, even potentially addictive, but ultimately, if the *only* source of sustenance, potentially dangerous.[30]

Our own view is that the ways in which people use the internet are too various - and evolving too quickly - to allow for any simple overarching notions about what social media *does* to our relationships - and focus on the question, what *can* social media do for older people at risk of loneliness, given the right circumstances?

- ◉ Face-to-face contact matters, of course, but we saw in part 5 that 'face-time' with friends is not as important to warding off loneliness as simply 'having friends'. In this sense, online social networking looks a potentially very good fit for older peoples' friendship needs.

- ◉ By opening up a variety of modes of communication (video, text, pictures, voice), and being more adaptable (for example being able to magnify what's on a screen) online communication has great potential to help people suffering changing levels of impairment to sight or hearing.

How can we get the most out of online social networking?

In itself, social media poses no great danger to older people in future – in fact it represents a tremendous opportunity for fun, connection, involvement, creativity and sharing. The most obvious danger it presents is over-reliance – something that *will* happen to some individuals, and could happen to institutions and society as a whole. We repeat: we mustn't 'settle' for older people simply having *many contacts*. What is the content and quality of the interaction? How does it fit into day-to-day life? Does it mesh with and support 'real-world' relationships?

- We need to distinguish online relationships that are fleeting, shallow and 'virtual' only, from those that form a sustaining virtual substrate to 'real' (physical/ deeper/ more complex/ longer-standing) relationships.

- Many kinds of online interaction will have a place in combating loneliness; but 'shallow' online interactions *alone* are certainly not enough.

- Getting older people using mainstream platforms to connect with a broad circle of family and friends is probably more valuable than developing bespoke networking services for older people.

6.3   Adapting to new technology

Bridging parts 6 and 7 of this report is the general issue of helping older people adapt to new technologies.

Elder-friendly technology and the challenge of introducing change

For a significant minority of the 'older old' population of 2030, touch screen interfaces, windows-based operating systems or navigating the internet will be long established 'second nature'. But still *only a minority*. Most of the 80+ population of 2030 will be relatively novice later-life adopters, or completely unfamiliar with these kinds of technologies.

Against this background, we have to acknowledge that older people, especially those with dementia, are different – the ability to learn and adapt to new things is progressively reduced. A related issue is that older people become more vulnerable to change. Older people may have very effective long-term memory and practical 'know-how', but sometimes can find it very difficult or impossible to adapt to changes in home technology. There is consequently a need to allow long 'lead-times' to acclimatise to new systems, if at all possible. By the time acute need is apparent, it may to too late for a person to adapt to new technologies for living or communicating.

The importance of inclusive technology

On this logic, it may be as important to develop simple, popular, solutions that have broad appeal, which people will carry with them, and adapt their use as they move into later life, as it is to try to design solutions solely targeted at older people.

The evolution of devices, apps, and interfaces that are designed for older people or simply meet needs better (e.g. by being more 'intuitive', more easily adapted, or lower cost) could bring more older people online than expected. A special analysis for this report[31] showed that older users of tablet-type devices (such as the iPad) take part in a wider range of online activities across the board, by comparison with older users of PCs or laptops.

Do you speak tech?

An important insight from our qualitative research is about *language*: here is one of our respondents, an 80 year old woman living in residential care, who has recently begun using the internet on a regular basis for gaming and getting news:

"I think the person who teaches me, Chloe, she knows the easiest way, because recently somebody else put something else on the computer, and in so doing altered the setup and I couldn't do anything, so. [laughter] I've got to see her tomorrow because she has made us about five different sections which I can dial". *Valerie.*

Now, "Valerie" had previously worked as a switchboard operator. Note how she describes the internet as having 'sections' which she can 'dial'. As trainers, the ability to make the internet comprehensible to older people means *listening to* and developing their understanding, sometimes using *their* individual language and life experience. After all, few of us really know how it all works. User understanding is always going to be driven by metaphors; in the case of Valerie, the net as a 'switchboard' has clearly been an effective metaphor to build on.

The importance of ensuring that interfaces are *simple* and *stable* for novice users also comes through in what Valerie says.

How can we help older people adapt to technology change?

- Service providers seeking to exploit the potential of online social networking to combat loneliness must 'reality check' the speed with which the older population will adopt the internet and online social networking. Even by 2030, a large minority will not be taking part at all. These are, we strongly suspect, likely to be those most at risk of isolation (older, poorer). Technology is no panacea here.

- Focus on *pre-emptive adaptation* – getting people used to new technology as early as possible in life is important. Introducing the internet to 60 somethings today will have greater impact on their future usage levels than introducing it to 80 somethings in the 2030s (not that we shouldn't try to do this too).

- Recognise the vital importance of gaining a basic familiarity with mass consumer technologies (especially the smartphone), which may become platforms for contact and care applications of the future.[32] In future, technophobia could be as limiting to life as agoraphobia.

- Social networking applications have some great and *immediate* potential for carers. See, for example, Cura. Launched in 2012, a free online platform which describes itself as a way to "bring family, friends and communities together to care for the people around them".

- A key potential of new technology is to identify and target, more quickly, and preferably in advance of 'crises,' vulnerable individuals. 'Joined up' multi-agency approaches will become easier.
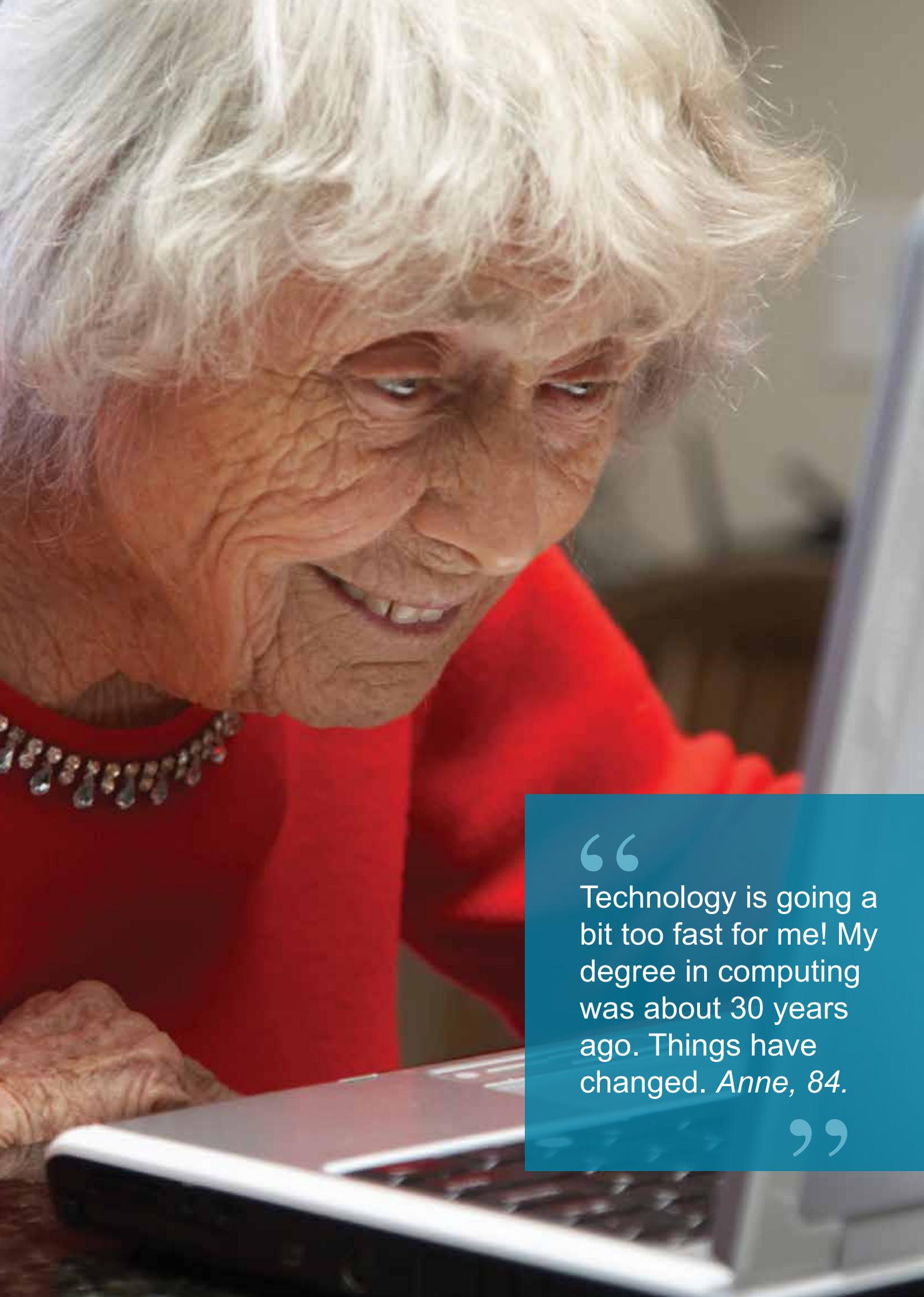
> " Technology is going a bit too fast for me! My degree in computing was about 30 years ago. Things have changed. *Anne, 84.* "

Case study: Barclays Digital Eagles

16 June 2014

Using the internet to enhance our everyday lives is something most of us take for granted, yet many of the older people we support view the web as a daunting place. According to the Office of National Statistics, three out of every 10 people aged over 65 have never used the internet and for those over 75, the figure leaps to seven in 10. Here at Friends of the Elderly, we have begun working with Barclays Digital Eagles to bridge this digital divide and introduce technology into the lives of the staff, volunteers and older people in our care homes and community services.

The Digital Eagles offer a free service aimed at helping people make the most of being online and stay up to date with technology. Tablets such as the iPad are helping an increasing number of older people access the internet, with their intuitive design making it much easier for an older person with limited computer knowledge to navigate more easily.

In the face of a future where the incidence of loneliness is set to rise by 40% by 2030, tablet technology will play a key part in enabling older people to stay connected and combat the growing trend of isolated older people.

Last year, Friends of the Elderly undertook a pilot study which showed that the use of tablet computers can have incredible benefits for older people, especially those with dementia. It is the advent of tablet technology that is really moving things along for older people. Traditional desktop or laptop computers require a great deal

of precision and are often in a fixed position or heavy to move around. For someone who has poor eyesight, poor mobility or perhaps arthritis, the portability, lightness and ease of use of touch-screen devices are much more user-friendly.

In the first instance we need to focus on training our staff and volunteers, because they themselves are often digitally excluded, and we already have residents and service users showing an interest too.

The first service to benefit from this programme is Among Friends, Wallington, a day centre for people over 60, many with varying levels of dementia. Within two weeks of meeting their Barclays Digital Eagle, Amanda Brinn, the Deputy Manager, and the staff at Wallington said their new-found confidence with technology had transformed the day centre's activity programme.

"We use the tablets daily. We love the immediacy – whatever one of our clients wants to know, we can find the answer. We get musical requests and by linking the tablets to the TV we can instantly bring those performances to life."

Reminiscence is a powerful therapy for those with dementia and Amanda says tablets are an invaluable tool when it comes to this type of activity.

"One gentleman here comes from Tipperary, but hasn't been back there for many years. We were able to go on to Google Earth and walk him through the streets of his home town."

Another visitor, Geoff, 86, says:

"Our Digital Eagle has been showing us film footage of dance halls during the Fifties. It brings back how smartly dressed we were. Such happy days."

The centre holds regular quiz sessions and now the questions are projected on to the TV screen with animated text and images. "It's so much
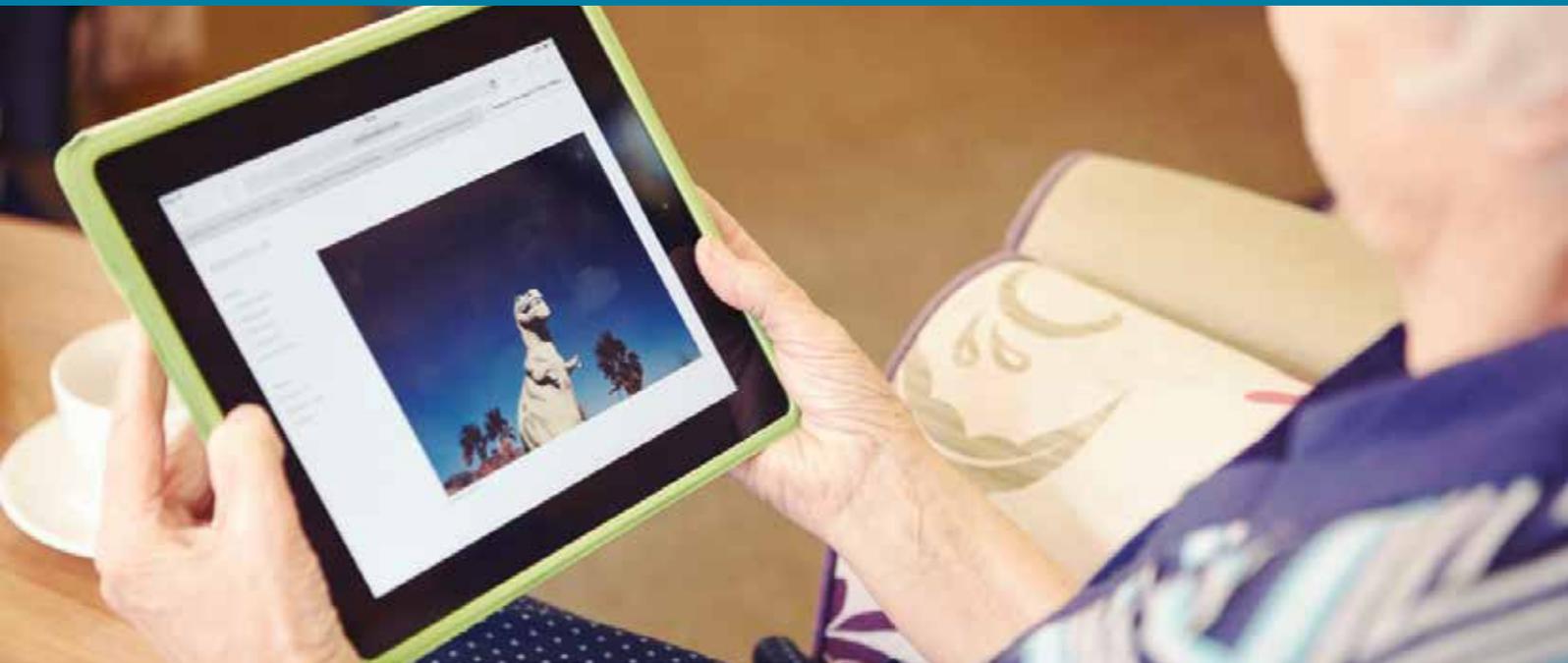
more engaging than reading out the questions from a book," says Amanda.

Jo O'Boyle, Director of Fundraising and Public Affairs at Friends of the Elderly says:

"What we needed in the first instance was for our staff and volunteers to be trained, because they themselves are often digitally excluded. Our volunteers in particular fall into the older age group as many of them are newly retired. Rather than go straight in and train our service users directly, we believe that, by taking a step back and training staff and volunteers, we will be in a much stronger position to ensure that those skills are transferred and reinforced."

The Digital Eagles will be able to show people how to do things like use video calls and email to stay in touch with their families and friends, and how being able to visit virtual stores and places of interest can help reduce the impact that impaired mobility brings. We are also working with Barclays Digital Eagles to identify the particular apps and websites that really resonate with older people. At the same time, we are able to enrich the quality of the care that we offer – because digital technology offers a new dimension to so many of our activities.

Reg Hawkins, 85, is responsible for taking lunch orders from the people attending the day centre. "I show photos of the dishes on each day's menu and make a note of everyone's choices. It used to be a very fiddly business, because I had to shuffle loads of sheets of paper around, but now the pictures are loaded on to the tablet and I can show everyone what's available just by flicking through them."

Reg had never used a computer before and now says he is amazed how easily he took to it. "I'm even thinking of buying one for myself."

Barclays has committed their support to rolling out the programme across all our services. Our vision is about providing older people with the means to lead fulfilled lives and by using tablets with our staff, volunteers and older people, we hope to combat the devastating effects of loneliness and bring the benefits of technology into their everyday lives.

Section 7 | Independence and connectedness at home

Finally, let's think about housing and emerging domestic technologies for vulnerable older people. Understanding the importance of housing, domestic technology and community connections to reduce loneliness is an increasingly important issue for the future.

7.1   Staying independent at home

Trends in the number of people living in residential care homes and sheltered housing

During the early 2000s there was a downward trend in the proportion of older people living in residential care homes,[33] but this since stabilised and numbers have been growing again since the mid-2000s, with a residential care population currently around 430,000.[34] Another half-a-million households (almost all older households) live in sheltered housing[35] although the sector as a whole is not currently growing.[36] Recent years have, however seen a rise in extra-care sheltered housing, in which additional healthcare and support services are provided to residents living in separate homes, sometimes within retirement communities.

The overall picture, then, is that the residential care sector will continue to grow, especially from the 2020s onwards, when the 'older old' population will really begin to grow fast. Nonetheless, a growing number of older people will also be choosing and able to stay in their own homes, albeit with a widening range of care and support services.[37] This means a vitally important part of the future challenge is helping older people to stay connected and stay social at home.

7.2   Better connected at home?

Inclusive design and the 'lifetime homes' movement

Recent years have seen a stronger focus in both housing policy[38] and interior design upon 'lifetime homes'. These are homes that people find easy and attractive to live in when younger and in older age (for example, making bathrooms safe for people with a range of disabilities, without compromising on style), and they are also more inclusive homes for guests of all ages. The UK's housing stock evolves painfully slowly of course – but this is just one way in which thoughtful interior design can make a real long-term difference to social life at home.

Connected homes and community support

In the long term, we are becoming ever better connected at home.[39] By 2030, in-home video communication will not only be easy to use and fairly widespread in the older population, but also *cheap*. Home-monitoring and bio-metric alert and alarm systems will certainly be more widely used by 2030.[40] Innovation is abundant in technologies for carers. But these technologies can only provide an infrastructure; the key challenge will be to build the human contact around the emerging technologies.

Smarter homes and biometric monitoring systems have potential to improve security and connectedness in the lives of older people in the UK. This potential will only be realised if it is accompanied by the development of a broad based and local level approach to the provision of greater human 'ground support' for older people. Working together, we believe that technology and people really could help to connect and deliver in-home services to far more people by 2030.[41]
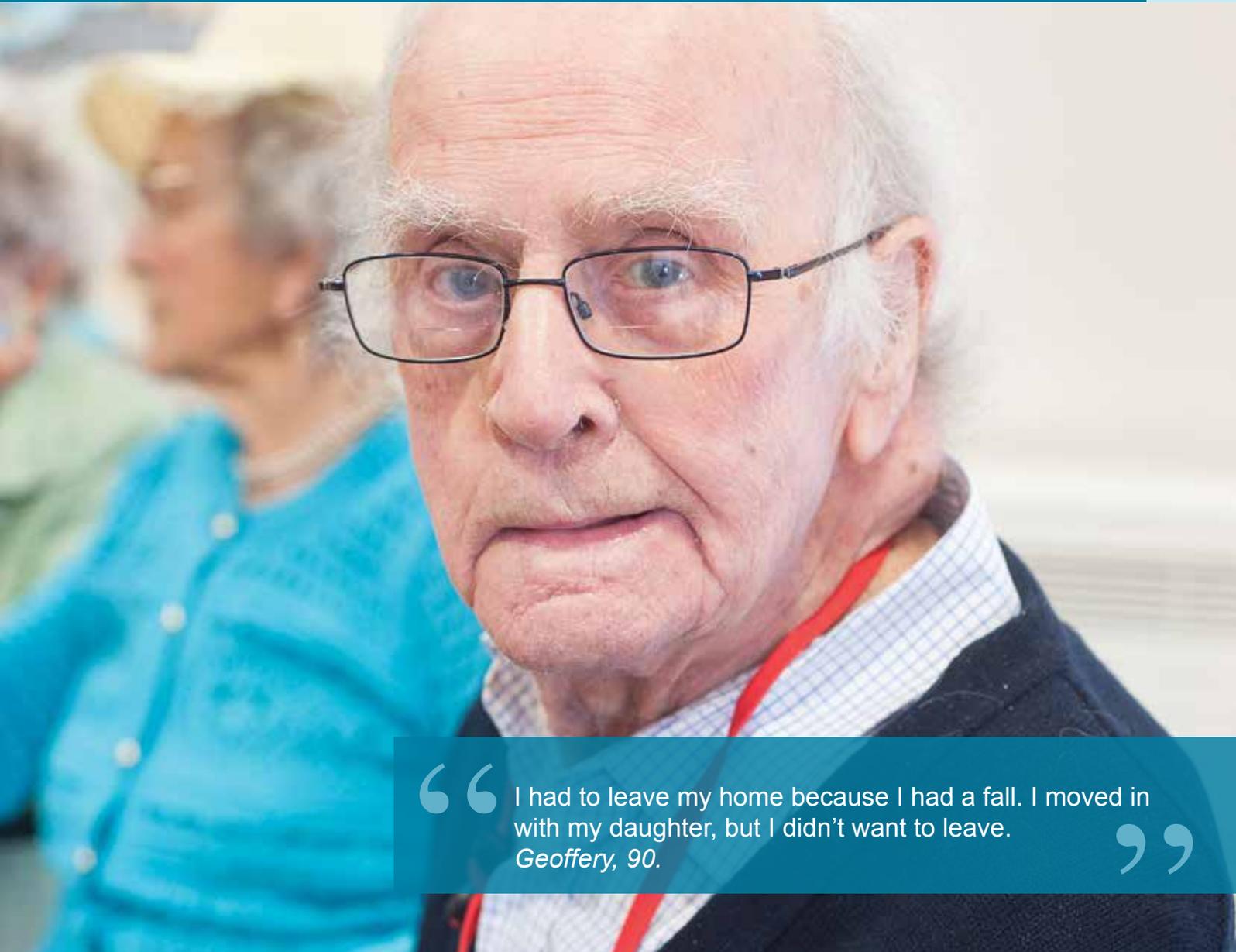
> " I had to leave my home because I had a fall. I moved in with my daughter, but I didn't want to leave. *Geoffery, 90.* "

What can we do to exploit smarter home technology and other home innovation?

- We're likely to see a continuing evolution of residential care homes, sheltered housing and extra-care propositions and retirement communities. This means ever greater diversity – people will need more help in making the right choices. Policy should try to ensure that choice is present at local-community level – staying local is hugely important in terms of loneliness and each mile matters.

- In private homes, 'connected home' technologies will be most effective when introduced with sensitivity to the needs of older people and carers and adopted in advance of when they become really needed.

- Technology must work alongside *social* innovation in care and support for older people, geared towards building reliable networks of local volunteers, friends and carers.[42]

Conclusion: diverse interventions for a more diverse older population

At one extreme, some older people face a dystopian future of complete disconnection from an evermore digitised social world, and interactions with others, *be they many or few*, that are cold, cursory, uninvited, even automated. At the other extreme, some will be enmeshed in sustained, purposive, vital, warm relationships with multiple networks of family, friends and interest-sharers, in both virtual and physical spaces. The elderly of the UK in 2030 will live all the way along this continuum, and age, partnership status and wealth will doubtless remain enormous predictors of where we will fall.

Diversity is also a central message when it comes to interventions and services. No single strategy for reducing loneliness could possibly work for everyone, and no current strategies or schemes have yet emerged as eminently superior to others. Part of the challenge will be quickly identifying the needs and preferences of individuals and successfully matching them to appropriate services, activities or people. That said, individual trial and error must be encouraged – all our interviewees who had developed new relationships or interests *surprised themselves* to some extent. Accessibility and encouragement are crucial.

Diversity of approach is particularly critical in terms of hi-tech/ low-tech interventions and strategies. Information technology, as a virtual support for a richly layered social life, has potentials beyond even our current imagining. But technology alone is a solution for nobody and not everyone will be using the technology. It is the inclusive co-evolution and successful interaction of technology and *people* networks that can make a big difference.

To prevent our ageing society from becoming lonelier will be a challenge. But we hope our research will help to meet it, and we believe that there are good reasons for optimism. There are a host of helpful social trends to build upon and plenty of potential for a new generation to find a better-connected older life.

No single strategy for reducing loneliness could possibly work for everyone.

Section 8 | Appendices

Appendix 1: The Research Programme

We used a two-pronged approach to research this project; first, an audit and collation of existing quantitative research resources, including government, academic, NGO and proprietary Future Foundation data and forecasts, and second, six individual depth interviews with older respondents who lived alone.

Use of data from ELSA, Government Actuaries' Dept., and other resources

In order to construct our two quantified scenarios for the future of loneliness in the UK, we drew upon two key existing sources of data, the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing and latest Government Actuaries' Department forecasts for the age, marital status and partnership status.

We also drew upon many other sources of quantitative evidence, an overview of which is given in appendix 2.

Original qualitative research

In our qualitative research, we conducted six depth interviews with elderly respondents living alone. We interviewed two men and four women. Five respondents lived in urban or suburban areas, one in a more physically isolated rural location. Two respondents lived in residential care, two in supported housing and two independently. All of our respondents lived alone and were unmarried or widowed.

Interviews were carried out face to face, using respondents recruited by Friends of the Elderly during September 2013. Interviews took the form of open-ended and informal discussions, lasting between one and two hours. Interviewing and analysis was carried out by The Future Foundation. Although only a handful of illustrative quotations are used in this report, interview transcripts will be used as an ongoing insight resource by Friends of the Elderly.

Appendix 2: Sources of information and research

Below, we provide a brief summary of some of our key research resources on loneliness and isolation.

Useful meta-analyses / data audits:

Age UK, *Loneliness and Isolation Evidence Review*. Available at: http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/evidence_review_loneliness_and_isolation.pdf?dtrk=true

Social Care Institute for Excellence, **Preventing Loneliness and Social Isolation: Interventions and Outcomes**. Available at: http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing39/

Key data sources:

The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), for more information see: http://www.ifs.org.uk/ELSA

The UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS, now known as *Understanding Society*), for more information see: https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/

The Growing Older Research Programme (ended in 2004, but still plenty of valuable research and info): for more information see: http://www.growingolder.group.shef.ac.uk/Contents.htm

Appendix 3: 'Age planner' table

The table below shows how the numerical size of each single-year age band will change as we go through the years to 2030. Larger increases are marked in pink, declines are marked in blue. Note the general c.1–4% increase for other ages/ years.

Table A1: Year-on-year percentage changes in size of each single-year age band, UK, 2014-2030

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
60	1%	-1%	2%	3%	4%	1%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	1%	-1%	0%	-2%	-1%	-3%
61	1%	1%	-1%	2%	3%	4%	1%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	1%	-1%	0%	-2%	-1%
62	-1%	1%	1%	-1%	2%	3%	4%	1%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	1%	-1%	0%	-2%
63	-3%	-1%	1%	1%	-1%	2%	3%	4%	1%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	-1%	0%
64	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	3%	4%	1%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	-1%
65	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	4%	4%	1%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%
66	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	4%	4%	1%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%
67	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%	3%	4%	4%	1%	2%	4%	3%	3%
68	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%	3%	4%	4%	1%	2%	4%	3%
69	1%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%	3%	4%	4%	1%	2%	4%
70	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%	3%	4%	4%	1%	2%
71	10%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%	3%	4%	4%	2%
72	6%	10%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%	3%	4%	4%
73	-4%	6%	10%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%	3%	4%
74	-1%	-4%	6%	10%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%	3%
75	1%	0%	-4%	6%	10%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%	0%
76	2%	1%	0%	-4%	6%	10%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%	2%
77	2%	2%	1%	0%	-4%	6%	10%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%	1%
78	3%	2%	2%	1%	0%	-4%	6%	10%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%	-1%
79	4%	3%	2%	2%	1%	0%	-4%	7%	11%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%	-3%
80	0%	4%	3%	2%	2%	1%	0%	-4%	7%	11%	4%	2%	2%	23%	-5%	-7%	-3%
81	0%	1%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	0%	-4%	7%	11%	4%	2%	3%	23%	-5%	-7%
82	0%	0%	1%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	0%	-4%	7%	11%	4%	2%	3%	23%	-5%
83	2%	0%	0%	1%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	0%	-4%	7%	11%	4%	2%	3%	23%
84	4%	3%	0%	0%	1%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	0%	-4%	7%	11%	4%	2%	3%
85	4%	4%	3%	0%	0%	1%	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%	0%	-3%	7%	11%	4%	2%
86	0%	5%	4%	3%	1%	1%	1%	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%	0%	-3%	7%	11%	4%
87	1%	0%	5%	4%	4%	1%	1%	2%	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	-3%	7%	11%
88	3%	2%	1%	5%	5%	4%	1%	1%	2%	5%	4%	4%	3%	2%	1%	-3%	7%
89	2%	3%	2%	1%	5%	5%	4%	2%	1%	2%	6%	4%	4%	3%	2%	1%	-3%
90-94	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	3%
95-99	5%	12%	14%	9%	6%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%	6%	7%	8%	7%	6%	6%	6%
100+	9%	8%	6%	4%	4%	10%	18%	17%	11%	8%	7%	7%	8%	8%	8%	10%	11%

Source: Friends of the Elderly/ the Future Foundation/ Government Actuaries' Department, 2013

As we can see, the post-war 'spike' (a 23% year-on-year uptick, followed by five years of falling numbers) will mean a big rise in 67 year-olds in 2014; and so on. We also see an earlier, shallower 'wave' coming through into their seventies this year, with a 10% increase in 71-year olds expected in 2014.

For organisations with highly *age-specific* clientele, the impact of these 'age waves' could be significant, leading to 'boom and bust' cycles of demand for particular services. The broader the age range an organisation caters to, the more such population bumps will be 'smoothed out', leading to a steadier overall growth in demand for services.

Section 9 | Endnotes

1   See, for example recent titles such as *You're Looking Very Well: The Surprising Nature of Getting Old* by Lewis Wolpert, or *Never Say Die: The Myth and Marketing of the New Old Age* by Susan Jacoby.

2   A consistent finding from a number of sources, most notably perhaps the British Household Panel Study / UKHLS.

3   For a good methodology discussion see for e.g. Hughes, M.E., Waite, L.J., Hawkley, L.C. and Cacioppo, J.T. (2004), '*A short scale for measuring loneliness in large surveys: results from two population-based studies*', Research on Aging, vol. 26, no. 6, pp. 655-672.

4   At least, in most studies - some analyses suggest only a relatively minor correlation, emphasising the possibility of 'being lonely in a crowd'. This reminds us how sensitive this entire arena is to the way in which research measures are constructed - framing, nuances of wording, question response mechanisms and the selection of components of 'compound' measures or scores can make all the difference (indeed understanding such 'research effects' is currently evolving into a whole new branch of social science). Isolation, a more complex construct with a greater variety of interpretations, thus not surprisingly presents us with less consistent findings than loneliness, where most recent sources are actually remarkably coherent. Nonetheless, to readers who feel an instinctive sense of suspicion about 'headline' findings of the form "X% are lonely", we would say: quite right. Quantifying loneliness in this way is really for tracking change, measuring correlation with other lifestyle factors, or identifying 'hotspots' both socio-economic and geographic. What such data *doesn't* do is what it most obviously seems to do: deliver a definitive measure of the overall scale of the problem.

5   You can find out all about the ELSA study at: http://www.ifs.org.uk/ELSA/about

6   Age UK tracking research actually reported a decline in the period 2001 to 2009. However the larger-sample ELSA study registered no significant *overall* change in a similar time-frame, while seeing significant *longitudinal* increases in levels of loneliness across all age cohorts between 2005 and 2009 (i.e. every age group became lonelier over the course of the 4-year period studied).See Demakakos, McMunn & Steptoe, *Well-being in older Age - A multi-dimensional perspective*, IFS, 2010. p.115-177. Available at**:** http://www.ifs.org.uk/elsa/report10/ch4.pdf

7   Appendix 3 provides a table showing how this population 'spike' moves through individual single-year ages as we move through the next 17 years.

8   Government Actuary's Department, 2012.

9   The faster rise in male life expectancy is reckoned to be due to lifestyle factors, especially the equalisation of rates of smoking. See Mayhew, L. D' Smith (2012) Gender convergence in human survival and the postponement of death. Cass Actuarial Research Paper No. 200. Available at: http://www.cass.city.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/136243/200ARP.pdf

10   (a further not-entirely-single proportion describe themselves as 'dating, but not in a steady relationship'). This has been tracked by the BHPS 1996-8 and UKHLS 2010/11 (publication of results forthcoming).

11   We also found that the different trends in marital status we see for 60-75s (which tend to increase loneliness) and 75+s (which tend to decrease it) cancel each other out when looking at 60+s as a whole, and thus the big increase in loneliness predicted by our model results almost entirely from ageing alone.

12   A trend explored in 2010 by Saga and FDS International, in the report Work and Retirement and Work in Later Life report, which found that the "partirees", a growing segment who are part-retired and have both paid and unpaid work - generally have the highest job-related satisfaction scores, and report the lowest number of problems at work. Among post-retirement-age workers, job satisfaction is highest amongst those that work in environments with a lot of human contact, such as teaching and nursing, and this is far more important to this demographic than high salaries.

13   Through the simple loss of leisure and social opportunities inherent in working - see *Nobody to Play with: The Implications of Leisure Coordination,* Stephen P. Jenkins & Lars Osberg, IZA Discussion Paper 850, 2003].

14   Individual voluntary participation in the United Kingdom: an overview of survey information; Dr Laura Staetsky and Prof. John Mohan (TSRC, May 2011) http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick. aspx?fileticket=t669BvVwjis%3D&tabid=520.

15   Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network (England & Wales), Isolation and Loneliness Survey 2013. See pages 12-13 for discussion of the blurred line between voluntary work and service use.

16   Ever since Putnam's *Bowling Alone (2000)* took the United States by storm, membership of social groups has been a lively issue, and several researchers have attempted to demonstrate the existence of a similar trend in the UK, with very mixed results.

17   There have been three major sources of trend data on social and interest group membership in recent decades: BHPS / UKHLS, and the World Values Survey. Because they measure membership or active involvement in various different kinds of organisation, analysis of the results has drawn differing 'global' conclusions about social capital in the UK. WVS indicates that the UK has seen a significant decline in social capital between 1987 and 2003. However, BHPS suggested that social and interest group membership was stable between 1992 and 2004.

18   Although churchgoing in the UK has been in decline for decades, it remains a hugely important part of the lives of the elderly and especially the older-old in the UK. Recent sources suggest that it is unclear whether there is any life-stage effect accounting for the elderly profile of UK churchgoers. If there is - i.e. if people are becoming more likely to join churches after retirement age, then the role of the Church could remain strong [Churchgoing In the UK, Tearfund, 2007, p.8 (unclear whether life stage effects are present). See also p.29 for data on permanently lapsed vs. potentially-returning churchgoers)]. Overall, the 15% of UK adults who are regular churchgoers are matched by numbers of occasional, 'fringe', and 'lapsed but could return' churchgoers)

19   A longitudinal analysis of the BHPS suggests that Over a 9-year period there was only a marginal decline in membership among those aged 60-74, but significant (and fairly constant) year-on-year declines in membership among those aged 75+. See Social capital for health: Investigating the links between social capital and health using the British Household Panel Survey; David J. Pevalin and David Rose, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex) http://www.nice.org. uk/nicemedia/documents/socialcapital_BHP_survey. pdf for rates of active membership in organisations by age, see p.48)

20   'Neighbourliness' is noted as important component by some commentators on social capital, but no UK source provides concrete trend data and it tends to be excluded from analyses of (measureable) social capital in the UK. 'Participation without membership' (attendance at live events etc) and newer forms of association (social networking etc) also tend to be given a lesser status in the literature or are lacking from the evidence base altogether in analyses of social capital.

21   British Social Attitudes, 14th edition, 1997.

22   See Michael Wilmott & William Nelson, *Complicated Lives*, Wiley, 2004, or Jonathon Gershuny, *Changing Times*, OUP, 2003.

23   Although separate long-term trend data for older people are not available (as 65+s are not available for separate analysis in earlier studies), there is no reason to think older people would not have seen a similarly large increase in out-of-home socialising (this includes visits to pubs or restaurants in addition to going to others' houses for social visits, but excludes other shared out-of-home leisure activities).

24   Increases in socialising take place against a general (but much smaller) increase in leisure time (i.e. time not spent engaging in paid work or domestic work). The dynamics for men and women have been very different - but both sexes share in the big increase in social activity. See Gimenez-Nadal and Sevilla-Sanz, Trends in time allocation:

A cross-country analysis, Oxford Economics Discussion Paper, 2011].

25   A certain level of discomfort with having guests round seemed evident for some of our qualitative research interviewees, and some reported having little or no in-home social life for at least a long time before they reached older age (e.g. ever since having children, or getting married).

26   As are debates about whether access at the local library, or a shared terminal in a communal area of a residential building, 'really' means having access - in some sense, we all have access to the internet already - but if it is not used, it is not used. This is why we focus on use rather than access. This said, for providers of residential care, the impact of in-room vs. shared terminals upon usage rates should be considered - and in any case, a rapid and continuing rise in demand (and increasingly it will be demand) - for in-room internet access should be anticipated - something potentially achievable at relatively low cost thanks to steadily increasing ownership of portable wireless devices (laptops, tablets, (games consoles, phablets, smart TVs?)) on the part of residents themselves. The care home of 2030 may however require rather specialised IT support - supporting multiple personal platforms (around something like a 'bring your own device' architecture), providing ongoing support for devices and operating systems with a wide range of ages, and providing assistance and training to residents with a ever-broader spectrum of abilities.

27   Putting down the fibre was the easy bit: the future shape of digital exclusion will be determined by 'human' issues surrounding attitude, aptitude, cost, quality of access and dis/ability; problems that could make installing the nationwide infrastructure look comparatively simple.

28   Ofcom trend data and Future Foundation forecast, 2013.

29   As Micheal Hulme Director of CSMTC has said, much online social networking can be seen as akin to 'bat bleeps' - sending short bursts of 'noise' out into our social environment and awaiting reassurance and orientation from the returning 'echoes'.

30   There is a complex relationship between internet use and social isolation that has confounded researchers since around the turn of the millennium. While some heavy users of social media are simply highly social, some - including many of the earliest adopters and heaviest users in any age cohort, are, by any other measures, socially isolated. This correlation between social isolation and heavy internet use lead some early researchers in this domain to conclude that internet use is socially isolating. More recent studies have rejected this broad conclusion - but disentangling cause and effect, determining whether online life tends to sustain or erode 'real-world' relationships - remains controversial.

31   nVision 2013 data (including 399 owners of I-pads or other tablet computers aged 55+).

32   The essential thing here is perhaps gaining familiarity with windows-based operating systems as such. We cannot hope for user interfaces to remain unchanged as time goes by (and we all know how hard it is for anyone to switch to a new mobile phone or new version of Microsoft Office) - but there are some 'basics' that we can expect not to change radically for many years: using windows and menus, creating and saving files, managing and accessing a list of contacts, etc. For sixty-somethings to be familiar with these basic kinds of systems and activities before they reach 'the lonely years' will be the most effective way to encourage the older old of 2030 to use the technology of 2030 to the full.

33   This is a remarkably unclear trend given the steadily rising numbers of older and very-old people in the UK during this time. Published trend series data showed a steady decline of numbers living in residential care homes from a peak of 520,000 in 1997 to 420,000 by 2004 (Office of Fair Trading, Care homes for older people in the UK, A market study, May 2005) while a more recent estimate from a Friends of the Elderly proprietary industry source suggests recovery from a low of 400,000, putting current numbers at around 430,000, and forecasting further growth in future.

34   Friends of the Elderly, 2013.

35   Sheltered housing is a swiftly moving and in practice tricky-to-define sector, with multiple agencies providing many different forms and levels of support. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, "There is no single model of HWC [Housing with Care]. Schemes vary enormously in size and scale, location, services and cost; they are run by private companies and not-for-profit housing associations and charities; and there are significant variations in levels of care". Some authoritative recent figures suggest around 500,000 households in total (Housing our Ageing Population, Panel for Innovation, Homes and Communities Agency (2009))

36   There have been at least two boom periods in sheltered housing in the UK since the 1960s, but there is no concrete evidence on the direction of change in the size of the sector today, or in recent years (if anything, not-strictly-comparable sources suggest that the percentage of older people living in sheltered housing may be somewhat lower than a decade ago, although overall actual numbers may be similar).

37   We saw in section one that at the older end of the scale, numbers of couples will actually grow as more and more couples (both) survive beyond 80 and 90 - which could mean further impetus towards independent residence (and greater demand for in-home care services).

38   As emphasised in the recent *Living Well at Home* all party Parliamentary report on housing and care for older people (2011).

39   The sociologist Raymond Williams long ago highlighted how important successive waves of media and communications technologies have been in 'opening up' the home to the outside world during the 20th century - a key long-term process that will continue and deepen.

40   The technologies that are developing to remotely monitor (and control) home security and energy use, or monitor health and exercise levels, can be turned to new purposes when a person becomes more vulnerable. Reasonably unobtrusive monitoring of activity through energy use becomes possible (have appliances been turned on in the morning?) or motion-sensitive security systems can be turned to alerting systems by 'going off' if there is

not movement in a home. Recent Future Foundation research suggests that such alert and alarm systems for monitoring health and security are seen as having the primary potential to enable older people to live more independently. Although robotic technologies are emerging in the elder-care space (for example, the Japanese Palro & Paro robots - see http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/19/national/robot-niche-expands-in-senior-care/#.UtaiRrTvies). We do not expect artificial intelligence or robotics to make a significant impact on loneliness among the UK older population before 2030. For those interested in longer-term speculation, we'd like to draw attention to the 2012 film *Robot and Frank* here - a fine example of an increasingly nuanced cultural discussion about the human / robot relationship.

41   We note that building sufficiently robust services around monitoring technology and taking the responsibility of ensuring and guaranteeing that those services and the technology will be 100% reliable is a major challenge. Organisations have to have the services in place that can support the technology. Companies in this space have call centres that are manned 24 hours a day, dealing with human beings, not automating everything. They have only a few products that do only a few things, which they do very well. They often employ bespoke installs of technology to make sure that it works for each individual.

42   The internet and the smart-phone have great potential to help connect and co-ordinate networks of individual carers, and to help different agencies and individual volunteers co-ordinate activities (again, see the *Cura* application for a recent example).

About Friends of the Elderly

Friends of the Elderly is a national charity which provides support for all older people, particularly those in need due to mental or physical frailty, isolation or poverty. Our vision is a society where all older people are treated with respect and have the opportunity to lead fulfilled lives.

In order to achieve our vision, we provide a number of quality services to enhance the lives of older people. These include: care homes, day clubs, home support, befriending and grants.

The whole person is at the centre of everything we do and our work is informed by listening to the older people we come into contact with. As experts in our field, we know that loneliness is a growing issue and have seen the devastating impact it has on the older population. We also know that the issue of loneliness cannot be solved by us alone, which is why we're asking everyone to Be a Friend and help change the future of loneliness.

To find out more about Friends of the Elderly, please visit our website: www.fote.org.uk.

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