

# Digital Inclusion and Older People

## APPG Media Literacy

### Portcullis House

Ofcom Consumer  
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## Objectives:

To discuss older people's digital inclusion, focusing in on their lack of on-line connectivity, and arguing that government needs to be involved in helping older people get on-line as they will gain great benefit from accessing on-line services (be it commercial or government services or meeting people – helping to close social isolation)

To review where we are with digital switchover

To promote the importance of targeting and evaluating who and where the socially isolated are

To call for more resources for the Voluntary sector and to focus in on the lack of usable products in the marketplace

## Consumers and the Communications market: 2006

From its annual tracker research the Consumer Panel realised that there was a dramatic drop in peoples connectivity after the age of 65 – **the communications cliff**. After the age of 65 the number of people keeping themselves informed of communications technologies also drops dramatically by 20% across the board

### Take-up figures:

- 28% of people over 65 have internet access at home compared to UK average of 57%
- 56% of people over 65 '**voluntarily exclude**' themselves from having internet access. We unpack this later
  
- 44% of people over 65 have digital television compared to the UK average of 66%
- 19% of people over 65 'voluntarily exclude' themselves from switching to digital television. They see no benefit to switchover (just more channels) – **serious implications to switchover success**
  
- 47% of people over 65 have a mobile phone compared to the UK average of 82%.
- With 42% of people over 65 'voluntarily excluding' themselves. This may have an impact on older people's connectivity in that they will not be able to access services that could become mobile

## Why being connected matters

In today's digital world being connected is becoming central to **a persons social and economic inclusion**. They can shop, use government services and receive news and educational information on-line

By not being connected older people will find they are **unable to access critical services** and **miss out on the best consumer deals** for commercial products

Panel research reveals that once online older people are using online banking, government information sites, and keeping in contact with friends and family.

Being connected is also important to those living in rural areas where banks and post offices are disappearing and transport to local services are difficult.

**Media Literacy** It is important people understand the new media – to chose and use the products effectively and in terms of receiving information, **understand how it is created** and **which sources can and can't be trusted**

The UK has **an ageing population** and requires an older workforce but with so many older people digitally unengaged the skill set needed is not present. A key question to be answered by policy makers is “**What are the implications for an inclusive society or for UK plc as a whole of doing nothing?**”

It is also being taken seriously at EU level and the Government signed up to the **Riga declaration** in July of this year which tasks government with:

*halving the gap in internet usage by 2010 for groups at risk of exclusion, such as older people, people with disabilities, women, and unemployed persons.*

*And ensuring accessibility, affordability and equal participation in the digital economy -  
eAccessibility*

## Panel's attitudinal research: Older People and Communications Technology

Results from the tracker led the Panel to further understand the reasons behind the lack of connectivity of older people. The research revealed that **older people are not a homogenous group. Their connectivity is not about demographics, social or economic background**

attitudinal segmentation: **Absorbers** , **Self Starters**, **Outright rejecters** (hectic lives) and the **Disengaged**

The research reveals the **Digital Disengaged** want to be **Engaged**, they are not voluntary excluded but have **fears and barriers** to overcome:

## The fears and barriers to overcome

**Lack of self-confidence** - I will break it

Perhaps a person's **previous experience of education** was bad

**Language of technology is not inclusive**, i.e. gigabyte, ram, mouse

**Relevance to older people is not made clear**: it is not for me but for young people, i.e. downloading music or 'unsuitable' (adult) content

Heard through the media the **fear of virus', credit card scams**

**The ongoing cost of being online**: the per month cost of broadband and technical support can affect budget constraints

**Lack of usability**. Interfaces are not user-friendly, nor keyboards for people with physical impairments

## But barriers can be overcome

Initially **give relevance and communicate the benefits** to why people should be online – keeping in contact with family and friends. Show the possible wealth of information on hobbies or government services via Directgov or online histories

**Increase self confidence**, Older people need to be educated in a **suitable environment**. Be it one on one, in their home or with other older people

**Targeted programmes are needed**, i.e. start off with how you turn the computer on and explain what a mouse is. And they need funding

Industry must work to improve the **usability of products**, be it hardware or software and change its language to an inclusive one.

**Improve media literacy skills** and life long learning for older people

## Government involvement required

By virtue of being the Government, it can change **the language and tone of the debate** by leading it.

Government will be **consulting on their Riga strategy in Spring 07**. But it is reviewing its own **Digital strategy in 2008**. This review should be brought forward and ensure there are links and synergies between the two workstreams

Take a **co-ordinating role** to help the third sector, industry, and public bodies deliver educational programmes and services that are accessible to older people

**Develop a Portal** that creates a network of information and relationships for all parties that deliver services in the digital inclusion space – helping to maximise efficiency and avoid duplication

Ensure there are **economic resources** that provide scalability and replicability and sustainability for educational programmes targeted to older people.

The government must push industry to **develop usable** equipment

Fund a **national marketing campaign** that promotes the benefits of being on-line. Target the UK population as a whole and draw in older people – utilising the change in the national lexicon with the advertising of the ‘digital’ switchover process

## Digital Switchover

Only 44% of people over 65 have digital television compared to the UK average of 66%

The first region to be switched over in 2008 is the Borders

### **Targeted Help Scheme is not so targeted**

The provision of a set top box and installation will be provided to all 75's and over and those with a severe disability whether or not they have converted

The switchover trials in Bolton and Ferryside revealed that older people need support with the installation and use of the set top box for more than one visit.

Two issues of the scheme are still to be overcome. Who owns oversight of the scheme and its day- to- day management

Not convinced that the resources are being provided by the government to adequately fund targeted help and those outside targeted help

## Government bodies must be aware and involved

The **LGA** do not see switchover a priority. It is **critical** that they are involved.

Local government deliver services to the key constituency that the help scheme is targeted at – their **local knowledge and skills** and ability to mobilise the voluntary sector are essential to a successful switchover

**Voluntary Sector must be engaged effectively.** They have trusted, have links in the community (be it Age Concern or religious groups). But funding is required. Voluntary does not mean free

Utilising the voluntary sector adds to the strength of **consumer protection**, for example by stopping the potential for aerial scams or door-stepping

Importantly the voluntary sector can help identify the **socially isolated** – this group will likely need help because they do not have anyone, i.e. family and friends, to rely on for information

**More work** must be done to help the **identify** the socially isolated

## **Cautionary tale? the Whitehaven Pilot – October 2007**

Whitehaven population 25 000, 11 300 households

It is a test run to work through any technical not social issues – could all go wrong

60-70% of the population have already converted to digital using Sky. The remainder cannot use Freeview until switchover happens

There is a high incidence of older people in the area but the targeted help scheme is unlikely to be in place by time of the switchover date

Voluntary organisations and local government agencies have yet to be mobilised and drawn into the process

**A test run where many questions are still to be answered**

## People must have the ability to choose and use

Clear Information to the public needs to be provided as to what switchover is and when it will happen – switchover success depends on it

The provision of **usable and accessible equipment** needs to be mainstreamed. There seems to have been little movement in this area

The market is not providing for people with accessibility issues, the only set top box that provides audio description has just been discontinued

Public procurement can lead the way but **government is running out of time** to have the required set top boxes in place.