

Hampshire Library Service - Using technology to address Social Isolation

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www.hants.gov.uk/library

Delivering modern, comprehensive and efficient library services



Strategic Aim 1

Support and encourage reading and literacy



Strategic Aim 2

Improve digital services and inclusion



Strategic Aim 3

Contribute to the health and well being of local communities



Strategic Aim 4

Provide access to trusted sources of information



Strategic Aim 5

Facilitate and provide learning

Library Outcomes

Developing and supporting stronger, safer communities for all





TACKLING RURAL SOCIAL ISOLATION IN HAMPSHIRE

Pilot report September 2016

Pilot timeline Mar 16 – Feb 17

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3 small scale pilot studies underway in Hampshire to tackle rural social isolation

Projects aimed primarily at tackling social isolation by using technology to help older isolated people

Aims

- ☐ Reduce levels of isolation through use of technology in rural areas
- ☐ Connect users with each other and relevant services
- ☐ Understand if this reduces demand on H&SC services downstream
 - Two devices have been selected for use. These devices can be used to communicate with friends/family/clinicians, access online materials and social groups. They can also access online shopping and library services.
 - Users are supported by volunteers from the library service and community to use the technology.
 - We are using 38 Breezie tablets and 20 Speakset devices over 1 year.
 - Breezie tablets are limited to specific areas as they are supported by recruited volunteers. Havant/Hayling and Rural Test Valley.
 - Speaksets are available all over Hampshire.
 - Users of Speakset require internet in their home. Breezie tablets have 3G cards built in to allow for internet access.



Breezie Tablets specially modified for use by older people



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

Evaluation and Tracking

Eligibility

- Over 65
- Has no access to own transport
- Live alone
- Is socially isolated (in the opinion of the referrer)

- Some cases have been considered to be genuinely isolated despite being just outside the criteria above. One example is an severely autistic man who is 58, but is very isolated because of his rural location and lack of contact with others. Therefore all cases are considered individually.

Evaluation

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

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

Progress so far: We currently have 14 Speakset and 35 Breezie tablets being used.

Learning/Challenges so far



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

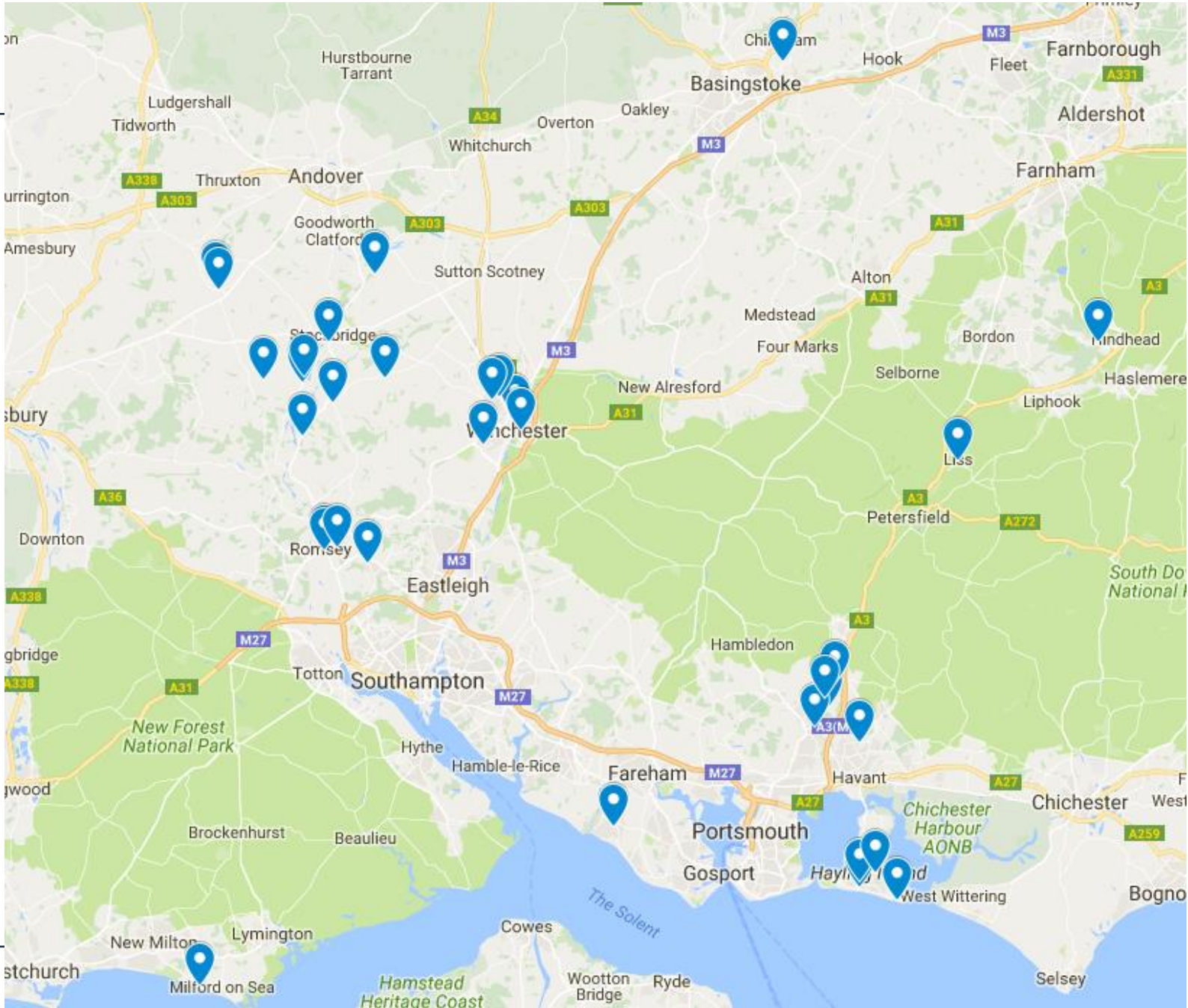


Mr William Parry, 86 year old user of Speakset to communicate with son's in Canada and the US.

- Very hard to identify those that are genuinely isolated. Our referrals have come through social workers, GPs, care agencies and the voluntary sector. Each case is unique.
- Almost none of the users so far identify themselves as 'socially isolated'.
- Mobile internet coverage in rural areas has caused very slow connections and total lack of coverage in some areas, leading to issues with connectivity.
- Very difficult to get clinical support for the technology at present due to workloads and capacity.
- Definitions of social isolation have caused us to consider our eligibility – as a result we have listened to local professionals and accepted some genuinely socially isolated people that fall just outside our eligibility.
- Sensory impairment and other forms of physical disability have caused us to find innovative ways of helping users to use the technology. The sensory team within Adult Services are now using Speakset to run consultations using British Sign Language with service users. This has proved successful in removing the need to always do face to face consultations.

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

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Weekly Online Social Chats

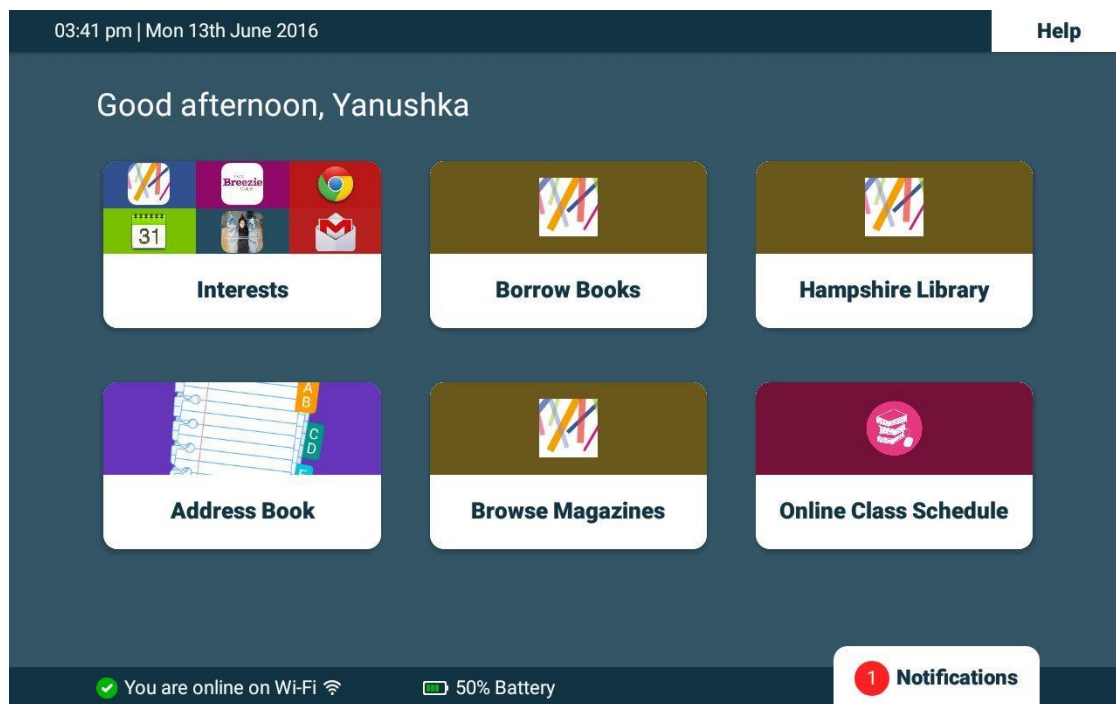
The project experimented with having a weekly online group chat for one month in June 2016. Participants were invited to join in through their tablets.

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

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



Using library resources



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

Volunteers are visiting users to support them to use these resources.

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

I can do my own shopping again

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

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

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

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





I'm lonely and want to connect

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

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

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

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



Gardening Alone

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

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

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

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