Introductions

Interviewer

So first of all, we're just going to through go through some consent statements if that's OK and I just want to just briefly recap of what the study is about. So, it aims to explore the experiences of older adults and lifelong learning with specific focus on intergenerational exchanges and digital skills. Little is known about the concept of intergenerational. Learning in Ireland outside of formal learning environments and by taking part in this study, your insights will help contribute to our understanding of the contribution intergenerational learning can make to the lifelong learning and digital skills development of older adults.

And it could very well be exactly the opposite and the intergenerational exchange nature as opposed to you know, one cohort helping the other.

So the consent questions, six of them, and I'll just go through these one by one, <JAMES>d, if that's OK.

Participant

Yes, thank you.

Interviewer

Number 1, I confirm that I understand the information about the study that has been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.

Number two, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation within two weeks of the date of the interview without giving any reason, and my data will be removed.

Number three, I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher, but my personal information will not be included and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect my anonymity. When I'm involved in this project, anonymous data will be offered to Lancaster University Archives and will be made available to genuine research for reuse.

Number four, I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles, or presentation without my consent.

Number five, I understand that interviews will be audio recorded video recorded in this case and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure and #6. I understand that data will be kept according to university guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.

So do you agree to take part in this study?

Participant

Yes, you can record that, yes.

Interviewer

Fantastic. thank you so much. OK great, you just have to have that out of the way and get that done.

So, the first few questions <JAMES>d are just to confirm the personal and demographic data that you have given to me in the survey. I will just make reference to the information you've given me. If anything has changed or if anything is different for whatever reason, it's easy to press these buttons as you know, with the survey and you can let me know.

You have indicated that your age range is age 75 years or over.

Participant

Yes, I’ve not gotten any younger <laughs>.

Interviewer

OK, fair enough. Your gender is male. You live in County Clare. You live in an urban area with a population of over 1500 people and you live with one other person. And one more question, you indicated that your highest level of education is a bachelor degree or national diploma. Is that correct?

Participant

That's correct. To decide where it went on, there was a bit odd because you know, going back many, many, many years 60 years ago I dropped out in the second year of an electrical engineering course. That meant I got some nice training in my hobby <laughs> and it was probably another 50 years later before I got certification that said that I was a packaging professional and the. The diploma I got stated as level 7. I think on the scale. At which according to what I read was, it was sort of basic degree. So I thought I can claim at that level.

Interviewer

Absolutely, and this is interesting because I had to take this from the Irish, the Central Statistics Office, but I know that like again, my cousin had her education in the UK, so she was trying to match hers as well. And my neighbour yesterday who was here said, and he's over 75 as well, and he said his formal education finished in 1995, so the same kind of dilemmas. It's very hard to fit this because, you know, it's not like everybody, and that's the whole nature of lifelong learning it doesn't end, and it certainly doesn't end when you leave school or anything like that. So yeah, that's where we're going. So I appreciate that explanation. That's fantastic.

Participant

Like my last examinations by the way, were when I was 63.

Interviewer

Fair play absolutely yeah, like myself, right. Mine have yet to come.

Participant

Yet, because my name was going on the packaging of dangerous goods so I had to be qualified for it and the qualification came at intervals. Nothing to do with IT though.

Interviewer

No, but we will talk about that in in a few moments, One of the themes that I want to chat about today relates to my research question. So one of the research questions talks about informal and non-formal learning exchanges and the contribution of these to lifelong learning. But I think a good place to start rolling is to ask you what lifelong learning means to you.

Participant

Right, and actually it's rather difficult not to learn as you go along if you want to keep up with everybody around yourself. In my case I know as technology advances, it was packaging and I learned how to meet the company's objectives of complying with the regulatory situation, European directives and international standards, and so I had to learn to learn about…

There was always, you know, just part of the day's routine was to keep abreast of the changing regulations. If you did a search on my name, by the way, with something like packaging or blister or glossary, you might find quite, still a few entries on the Internet for me from her, even though I did retire from full time work some years ago. 17 years ago, 18 years ago. But I continued, I learned enough to be able to put myself forward as a consultant until I was 76. And so it's learning part-time. There you'll find that I had learned enough to be on the team of ASTM for packaging of medical devices, you'll find it. Let's see, there's one article of mine that has been translated into Chinese for Camcon, the publisher. After my retirement I did have a couple years of writing short articles for them in response to prompts from their clients and themselves.

I mentioned the regulatory thing as far as dangerous goods. Somebody had to check that the packaging was compliance with regulations. So I had to know what the regulations were. And so I went on the courses to get certification. And I keep forgetting. Actually, she learned quite a lot when I was representing NSAI. the CEN European standards for medical device labeling. Also representing the European Confederation of Medical Device Manufacturers.

Interviewer

Oh my goodness. So that's yeah, so obviously everything in relation to your profession and that's most important as well, because we do, you know, learning on the job, learning on the on the fly? That's all really, really important. So just moving outside of the professional space. Just moving outside of that realm and I know you're interested in amateur radio so outside of work what about like, I'm really fascinated and I do want to hear more about your lifelong learning in relation to your spare time interest that you've kind of shared with me about the amateur radio and that kind of thing.

Participant

Well, first back in would have to be coronation year in England.

Interviewer

1952?

Participant 00:11:10

Yes. I was playing with a crystal set when a guy called Jeff Diggles delivered the television set my parents had bought to be able to watch the coronation on and family was coming around to sit down, sit in rows to watch this black and white 12 inch set. And he saw that I had succeeded in getting a crystal set to be loud enough to listen to with no pack, no power supply of course, in a quiet room for the family and he invited me to go down to his repair shop. I ended up working for him at weekends, actually just Saturdays and when he went, would go, on holiday, I kept the shop open and did repairs for him at that time. And it's also that time when I made my first transistor and I don't mean transistor radio, I mean, I made the transistor itself.

Interviewer

I looked it up, yes, and I had a discussion with my father-in-law. He lives in Ennis actually, just up the road from you and I'm saying to him “talk to me now about this because I don't really understand what this is about” but he was able to tell me and he would be about the same age group as yourself. So yes, I did my little bit of research <JAMES>d.

Participant 00:12:20

Very good, very good.

And then I got great playing with radio since, sort of being on and off for many for many years. It took me until the 1970s before I got my ticket as an amateur radio licensed amateur and sometimes I go for six months and don't touch it to other times as I spend many hours on consecutive days playing at the moment can't play because my aerial fell down <laughs>.

Interviewer

Ok. That's a good reason.

Participant

It's going back up again. It's just a wire that chafed on a pulley. So, the cord holding the wire up chafed on a pulley and that was 40 foot up in the air and so I couldn't reach so I had to had to look a telescopic down a mast that hadn't been down for about 10 years, which was naturally stuck with rust on the way in. I had to free it.

The last bit, the top bit, we didn't want to come down, and I got called in for lunch. And just as I walked away from it, the inside piece dropped down and went right down into the centre and stabbed itself into the ground underneath it. So I had to take everything down. It's on his way back up. It'll be up after a couple of dry days.

Interviewer

I'm sure it will. Absolutely. Oh, that's fantastic. Now it's just good to hear. I was really interested in hearing a little bit more about that. So, that's great.

Participant

You just learn progressively. I learned far better by practical experience than I ever did by attending college.

Interviewer

Yeah, that makes sense. That makes a lot of sense for so many people, you know, which is true. So outside of, you know, outside of work and outside of the radio interest, tell me a little bit more about your experience of technology and the day-to-day things, you know, the devices that we use, the applications that we use because I'm sure you have many many stories to tell. So when did you first start I suppose, getting interested outside of the radio area up into well I suppose what we know today. I mean, I'm just curious as to what else you use and why you use it and what’s your motivation.

Participant 00:14:34

Often, motivation to do anything in the household is for me to know it's being done properly and I haven't paid somebody else to do it and being dissatisfied. I've learned how to do all house electrics, and plumbing. This particular house I bought derelict. It was actually arson. It had been standing empty when the previous owner had gone to America and it had been broken into. And a couple of guys were spotted carrying carpets away at about 10 o'clock. 10:30 in the evening. At 3:00 o'clock in the morning the brigade were called. Uh, and all the timber. In fact, with this room when I first saw it had no Windows, no ceiling. I thought there were two doors lying on the floor, but they were actually radiators that had fallen off the wall, rusty, you see they look like and I am trying to look up at the far end of the room in the corner a long time ago. They had these steps on the on the floor, but unfortunately when they climbed up them they went through the floor. And the fire brigade had naturally put the fire out with water, and the floor was flooring chipboard, and they turned it into a sort of Weetabix, just like that. So I was able to then call on all my previous experience, having decided to buy this place and not bother with the bank, ask if the bank would lend the money first because I thought I knew the bank manager well. I signed a contract to buy this and then went to them to fix up the loan and found the man who I knew had retired. I had fun with the <name of> bank organizing it. I replaced every everything myself except the plaster. And I think the window frames after the metal window frames and double glazing. I got the ones that needed them replaced professionally.

Interviewer

And when was that, can I interrupt you? About what year?

Participant 00:16:51

It's about 30 years ago, but it's been redone it several times since.

Interviewer

And how has that process changed over the years like in terms of researching materials and things like that? So, 30 years ago there wouldn't have been much in the way of the Internet to compare prices from building suppliers?

Participant 00:17:20

I used to Exchange & Mart for information and. And the library. The Building Research Council’s library was very useful to get information that way.

Interviewer

And how did you access that, <JAMES>de?

Participant

Well, I was using an abstracting service for part of my work in the previous job and so I still had the access to it for a short while before it ran out. So I could get all the information there about things like damn proof coursing. I got the electrical regulations, it was quite an old copy for the British ones. But all has changed because the things that I was allowed to do then I'm not allowed to do anymore. You have to have certification for the house wiring and that sort of thing, so the only way that I know around that is to make sure you use materials that give the indication that it was done before the deadline <laughs>. And if you're wiring an extension, don’t put an extension directly wired in, put a plug on the end and plug it into an existing socket.

Interviewer

You're very resourceful <laughs>

Participant

That's what I've done for the lead goes to the top of the garden, 100 feet away. It’s an armoured (?) cable on the way up, but it's a bit at the health (?) and there's a flexi lead and a plug.

Interviewer

And it all works and you know how to fix everything?

Participant

Yes, yes.

Interviewer

Which is most important because I certainly got that from you in our email exchange that you are, you know, hugely self-sufficient and probably offer a lot of support to others so family, friends, community, neighbours, so. So tell me a little bit about that because I just want to draw on more of this.

Participant

It’s mainly to the family.

Interviewer

OK, tell me about the family then.

Participant 00:19:24

Oh my wife has just walked in and is looking at a little telephone over there and not either in fact pretending not to hear or not hearing, she'll be listening in Mandarin.

Around the house, well, I set up the distribution of the Wi-Fi and all that stuff around us.

My son became enthusiastic about communication via wireless seven years ago. My oldest son, and he now his partner in the Internet distribution company. So there's an exchange of information both ways there. Some of the early trials when they were developing means of distributing the Wi-Fi. Well, actually no, he tested, he'd send the signal and we checked how it worked for a while. And now his knowledge is way ahead of mine, and occasionally, I will ask his advice, which he gives freely. And of course, my Internet service is free too. But it just helps. We've tested it, television, we had had 2000 channels at one time as we experimented with the TV on the Internet. And his own location was poorly served until recently with the Internet and so we had to set up a wireless connection between my tree (tree is down now, about two years ago) and an aerial 40 foot above his own house. Connected the Internet via wireless between the two. Oddly enough he flies light aircraft, but I go on his roof to do the repairs because he's frightened of heights<laughs>.

Interviewer

It works both ways and that’s what intergenerational exchange is all about <JAMES>de. Tell me a little bit, you mentioned there about TV on the Internet and I think that's something because some of the strategies and policies I'm looking at her to do with the broadband policy, a digital strategy and various things in this country. And so, for example, there's a package for pensioners, I don't know what the age is, and I think a free TV licence or something. You know the money that goes to RTE.

Participant

Oh we get a free TV licence? Yes we do. It’s one of the parts of the something package from the government.

Interviewer

I know the one you're talking about. This is why I'd be curious to hear from you about. That (licence) is based on people having a traditional type of TV, but you just mentioned there about, you know watching TV on the Internet and I'd like to explore a little bit more about your experiences because I suspect a lot of people, myself included, like my husband, when my eyesight was getting worse. So instead of getting new glasses, my husband bought a bigger TV and I wouldn't even know personally how to go about it. I mean, I could look up YouTube, but to connect it and all that kind of thing. I have a traditional TV until I figure out or somebody helps me figure out a cheaper way of doing that. And by having a TV you have to give the government the TV licence money that goes to RTE. If you don't have a TV, the way things are at the moment, although Richard Bruton tried to change this a few years ago and didn't bring it about, so some type of a license fee on digital devices as opposed to the TV. But I'd like to hear about your experience of watching TV on the Internet. Do you have a traditional TV? How does that work in your household?

Participant 00:23:42

OK, we have traditional TV's, one over there and watch TV on the Internet. Well actually, I've done it with both, with the accessories that go with the television over there. And with a dongle that plugs into the side of the screen you're looking at, I thought I had it here, but I was going to show it to you. But there is a little unit you can plug into the into the television, or the computer I should say, which allows you to use it as a television and, wait, let's see, there's the aerial which comes with it <shows the aerial>.

Those individual little adapters only cost about €20. And before they changed the regulations on importing you could get them from China for about €12. But now you have to pay the VAT on everything, even though it's less than €22.

Interviewer

Sure, but once you have it, and once you have Wi-Fi or broadband connectivity, you can just make it work by the sound of it?

Participant 00:25:08

Well that little one is receiving off Eir of course, so I can make it two ways. I mean you can get this computer that I'm using here, I can plug in a little adapter into the USB socket, and an aerial on it and use the software to, just (like the computer does) like the television does to watch local TV channels with that little aerial stuck here on standing on the printer, just not arms length away, I can touch it. And I can get the terrestrial stations.

Interviewer

I'm sorry to interrupt but like how did you figure all this? How did you learn all this? I'm really curious. You're certainly inquisitive and you have a natural flair for all of this stuff.

Participant 00:26:05

Just wondering. They were mentioned in one of my radio magazines. Of course they adapt very conveniently to be able to use them on the amateur bands. Actually getting it to the television was by mistake because Windows is geared to install the software it wants to install, not the software you want to install. So when you plug that little device in, it automatically sets it up as a television. And I wanted to make a radio so I had to remove the software that had been installed off it, offline, and put the software in that I wanted, and block it so it didn't mess up my use of it for amateur radio. I just like technology, I was playing with it to see you know, just to see what you can get. My main equipment is much more powerful and that little unit would only give me a decent signal on VHF, because after all, there's only little aerial you know, one would need 100 foot or so to get a good reception on the HF bands.

Interviewer 00:27:21

And what would your advice to be to anybody, regardless of generation, who has been used to traditional TV but wants to just experiment more and have a wider range of options on the Internet?

Participant

Well, the first thing is you actually to have a look at television that’s online. Go into Google and put “TV online” in. Or t“Free TV” and those sorts of words, they bring up all sorts of information. Thousands of entries will be, I'll rephrase that, millions of entries. Are you believe us and you just pare it down to the words so the words that you. It must be part of your search. If you put extra words in, it brings up everything else as well. Don't make me put in the word and in.

Interviewer

Yes. I could appreciate that. I know family members and if they have to buy a new TV and it's you know typically it's a smart TV these days. I don't have smart TV's and again, you know, just really don't know how to get the best out of it. And you know I look at the back of the TV and if the signal goes off I'm kind of going “what button do I switch on and off” you know?

Participant 00:28:45

Actually, I'm partly misleading because that television which I use to browse the Internet is actually not a smart TV. It’s a smart box, but it's got a satellite receiver, which is just a smart satellite receiver that allows me to not just to watch get satellites through it, but it allows me to browse the Internet. It is a bit tedious doing it on there. It’s much easier to do it on the computer. I mean I’ve only looked at three or four times just to see what it will do. What I really want is the satellite receiver.

Interviewer

My brother set up my TV with I think, a Chromecast, something to do with Google and I don't know how to use it but he says it kind of you know. I mean, having worked for Apple I know what an Apple TV is. I don't have one, but it kind of, you know. Back in the day it converted your TV to you know to a computer whichever of those sorts. But yeah, I do think and I certainly think when you know, the government is offering these courses on digital skills for citizens and things like how to use an iPad or a tablet. I think there are other skills that are probably more beneficial and that could save people money because, like a phone or well, I have an Internet connection and the Vodafone TV and it's it's quite. It's like 70 euros a month and I know I don't need to be paying for it, but I need good broadband for my work and for my studies and stuff but I just don't know how to go about us and that's part of, you know, some of the information that I'm finding from the government policies is that they're very restricted, and when they're looking at things like digital skills and digital literacy, they think they can just add that onto the adult numeracy and literacy strategy. And it just works. And of course, it doesn't. And yeah, This is why this research is important and interesting in my opinion.

Participant 00:30:45

As you were going through that it made me stop and think about how I actually came to be able to do this without thinking about it. When I first saw television there was only one channel. BBC One. Later you got a set top box that allowed us to get not just band one, but band three, which included independent television stations on ITV, Yorkshire TV etc in the UK. Later again, you get television sets where it actually could tune, designed to be tuned to different frequencies. And then advance forward another few decades you come to the stage where you got satellite television. So what do I expect to do? I've got a television. It works. I want a little converter box to put there in front, between that and my aerial. And that’s what I did, was to with analog television, which was free. The first reception I had from a satellite television was when I put a satellite dish in the room just here, not realizing that the glass absorbed a lot of signal and was a bit disappointed about the really grainy black and white picture I got on my little Samsung 12-inch on Christmas Day, having just bought the dish for Christmas, but then then I discovered if I put the dish outside the window, I could get colour television and put it on onto the main set. Later it went up to the chimney and latest deal is moved from analog to digital, but it's been progressive learning as the situation has changed.

Interviewer

I'm learning so much from you. So, the next thing, and I’m conscious that I don't want to be taking any more of your time than that I need to. And you know, perhaps we could schedule a follow up another time if necessary. It's very clear that from your self-assessment of your digital skills and confidence, and from talking to you, that there's you know absolutely no issues you know in relation to that and obviously you figure everything out for yourself and I'm also looking at the theme that talks about quality of life and the negative and the positive impacts because that is quite a big area. So, I'm just looking at your choices on the scale and that's all very positive and you know the fact that you have the interests outside you've got volunteering activity and so on going. So, I suppose there's a couple of questions that I kind of wanted to look at in relation to those so and, and I think in terms of the social connections aspect. If you wouldn't mind <JAMES>de, and what has the impact of technology been on your connections with others, you know family, friends, family overseas, that kind of thing.

Participant 00:33:58

Ah yes, I haven’t thought about it in that context, realize, as you said it, that I've re-established contact with my cousin in Australia. Every now and again, yes, we have a video chat between us. It's usually Skype. I mean, I'd last seen my cousin when he was not much more than a toddler. Now I was nine years old and he was younger than me and he went with his family to Australia. Something prompted me to think about “can I locate him through the Internet?” Which is what we've done. He visited England once in about 1980, but my parents had died after that and I couldn't ask them for any information about where he was. But through that I've also been playing about with checking the family history. I can find one direct ancestor, the earliest one I can find is 1202, 22 generations back, but that's the only one I found out. When you go back to divide your family, all the branches, there are an awful lot of them back at that time. Quite a number going back to the 1500s, but 1202 is a is surprise on the list.

Interviewer 00:35:20

And when did you, just in terms of the time frame, reconnect with your cousin in Australia? What kind of decade was that? I think you mentioned 1980s, so I think was after that.

Participant

Oh that's right. Yeah, it's after that. Well, we visited him about 10 years ago. And found I actually had two cousins in Australia that actually. We stayed with the other, she'd gone out there as a baby, and I hadn't any knowledge of what she would be like until we got there.

Interviewer

And I think technology as well, it's not that long ago went to ring family, to phone Australia cost a fortune and you know, we just didn't do it, whereas that's all changed now obviously.

Participant

Yep, oh, when I first came to Ireland, the telephone in the house I rented was actually a coin box and at 10:00 o'clock at night was a time when the operators go shift. So I learned that I should make my phone call to my parents just just before 10:00 o'clock and with any luck for my 3 minutes I would get half an hour.

Interviewer

Excellent, yeah, it was probably the A and the B slots?

Participant

Yes, now that works for 9 times out of 10, we’d get half an hour for three minutes. Also some of the out villages outside Limerick had wind the handle telephones. They didn't tell you they had to wind the handle before the operator answered, before we picked the phone handset up. But I learned that after a couple of occasions when I couldn't get through to the operator and wondered why. You wind the handle it, then pick the handset up.

Interviewer

Yeah absolutely. Oh my goodness, that's yeah, that's just so interesting. So OK. So overall do you think your use of technology has had a a positive or negative effect on your quality of life generally.

Participant

Oh, it had a positive one generally. Even if technology was… when I when I was working part time as a consultant it paid for my first computer and then I didn't have to pay someone to do the typing. And so that gave me my first computer, which I kept. I changed the content inside the case many times over until eventually I had to had to replace the case as well. because I wanted a bigger power supply. But in those days, the memory on hard drive was 40 megabytes. Now my hard, my solid state drive because I changed the hard drive for a solid state drive to give yourself more speed is one terabyte.

Interviewer

OK, great. What about so? Is there anything like with your extensive experience over the years? Is there anything, or have you had any, negative experiences of using technology in any way? Now it could be, you know, we hear the stories these days and there's a lot of you know fraudsters and scammers. And all this kind of thing going on but do you have any experiences you might like to share <JAMES>d?

Participant

Well, there’s a number of people have tried to scam me <laughs>

Interviewer

OK, tell me about those. I’m sure they didn't get away with it.

Participant

I mean, we aware of the early ones so people would ring up and say that “your computer is causing a problem to other people” and all this kind of stuff and they’d say they were from Windows. I said it lacks the Windows technology. It's no surprise that. So I said, oh, that's great and my windows are dirty. I could do with the being cleaned and will you bring your own hot water.

Interviewer

They’re still playing that one. My cousin got a call like that just a couple of weeks ago and she uses an iPad and nothing to do with Windows. And yeah, so that that scam is still going around.

Participant

Yeah, and then I spoke to all the folks who want to you to invest in their shares and how special they are. I didn't realize it would happening to people generally initially. I wouldn't automatically not accept. I would tell them that if what they had offering to offer was worse, anything I would be beating a path to their door. They wouldn't have to try and try and convince me that it was good.

Interviewer

Yeah, and <JAMES>de, do these calls come in on the traditional landline or on the mobile? Or how do you get them?

Participant

Well, they used to. They can't come in the traditional landline anymore because I had it taken out. Saves money. However, I do get them coming through Skype because I've got a line set up for my youngest son in America where I have an American telephone number on Skype that is prepaid. It allows him to dial a local number to call me because he doesn't use Skype in the normal sense, just dial telephone and every now and again will get somebody trying to trying to sell me something when they think that I live in Florida. They don't actually believe me or initially when I say I’m in Ireland <laughs>.

Interviewer

Well that's a scenario of your own making <JAMES>d <laughs>.

Participant

I’m just thinking about other things so it's only the fraud calls now. They’re routine now, you expect to have several a week.

Interviewer

Yeah, and they're more nuisance, I think, than anything else. I just wonder whem they just would give up? And so I have one more question, I'm conscious of the time and I don't want to be delaying you any longer than we had agreed, but I would like just to chat about the whole COVID situation. You know before and after, and I think in relation to technology, because for some people, and you had picked up on this, and it was from my study with the university students, roughly half of them who did help their older family members with the communications, who had nothing. The data from Eurostat will tell us, that there are still quite a number of people who are just not connected online. And until I put the recommendation into the CSO after that study, they weren't publishing any data whatsoever from the over 75 year olds so for me that was a win because it was just kind of, you know, just ignore them. Under 16 and over 75 they didn't seem to care about collecting data from, so I think that that is important, right?

Participant

The CSO you're referring to, to me is the Central Support Office?

Interviewer

No. It's the Central Statistics office, so it should be the equivalent to the UK ONS, the Office of National Statistics. So they capture the census information for example, which they'll be doing now next year.

Participant

Now everything makes more sense.

Interviewer

Sorry, I should have clarified that. So in relation to that and the numbers, and there are more and more people online. And I think the data now for 2020 has, you know, improved significantly so the over 65s who are online compared with 2019 is a much higher percentage than had been and that's great. But it's still not everybody.

So maybe you have some experience of you know pre-COVID, then, especially in the spring last year where everybody had to stay at home and all that kind of thing. So, was it business as usual for you with your community activities, your volunteering even though a lot of that would probably be online anyway, so I think I may be answering my own question, but I'd like to hear it from you, <JAMES>d?

Participant

It's all being killed off. Like I should say, largely killed off. I mean for the Shannon Bowls club. for instance, we haven't met for 18 months. Active Retirement Shannon. Well then the news came through about the COVID shutdown as a group was returning from Northern Ireland. They were on the coach when we got the message that we're into lockdown and we haven't met as a group since. When I tried to meet with the committee, to persuade a committee meeting to be called on Google, I’m sorry on Zoom, they said “but nobody here knows how to use it.”

Interviewer

Yes, with my Tidy Towns group I volunteer locally and no you couldn't like we haven't had an AGM. I want to retire as the Secretary because I have a lot of work going on and I can't do that because there's no AGM and they're just not open to Zoom at all. That's why I know that there is a lot more that we don't know about.

And how has that, in that period of time. I mean, has anything changed? I know they're hoping that the groups will be able to get back together from September, but that's a long time, you know?

Participant

The local Midwest Committee for Active Retirement has actually met once, it was just a week physically in that period and it was about 10 days ago because I was there and we met in a church hall. As a prerequisite for my attendance I said that the place has to be well ventilated and so all the windows were open wide floor to ceiling and we were spaced correctly to at least 2 meters apart. And then when I got there and we sat down for a few minutes and a couple of people readjusted, moved away even further from the window because they couldn't stand the draught. Which was funny because I was just about take my coat off, I was too hot <laughs>. But otherwise we've actually learned to meet on Zoom. And so the committee has been able to stay in touch with each other through Zoom or not through Zoom, sorry… Anyway we meet on the Internet as a group. It’s not WeChat, that’s the one my wife uses I can't think of its name.

Interviewer

It’s interesting that you say that because you know it was the community, the Active Retirement and similar community groups that I contacted first day and I've had a very very low response. And as you know, you were one of the first and this survey has been out there since you know the middle of July. So it's quite disappointing because I know that there are people, even if they just completed the survey, that gives me good (data) because I can correlate a lot of the information. In there I don't need everybody to interview with me, so if there's any way that you can suggest and, I can send you the shortcut now I have a short URL. I know how to do that now and maybe they might just fill that in. I think that would be helpful because I think the more that we hear from you know this group of people and what's changed for them and how you know those connections hopefully will be better because not everybody is like you <JAMES>de, that's for sure.

Participant

I had a feeling that was the right situation. Yes, actually. At the moment Vodafone is working with amongst others, Active Retirement to prepare a course to help the elderly. And I’ve been highly critical of it.

Interviewer

Yeah. I volunteer with Cork City Partnership Age Friendly programme, so I call somebody every day on the traditional telephone and you know, she's not online at all and I'm dying to talk to her about her experience. And Age Action’s Getting Started programme, so they set me up as a volunteer with them. But I will only volunteer to help somebody on an iPad or Mac because I'm an Apple person. And then they sent me this information that says you should really have an Android phone. Well, I don't have an Android phone and you know, I can't. Also why would you have somebody using Apple set up a Gmail email account? You just wouldn't do that, you know. So there are things like this that are quite strange, so I would be, like you, would be quite critical in terms of how that works, whereas I do think, you know, peer support within groups and that's why I think intergenerational support that works both ways. I think it can have a place, but I don't know what that's about, but that's why I'm doing this research.

Participant

The way I became involved with Active Retirement is because I first became involved with Age Action. Age Action were looking for people to teach locally, computers and telephones and I did that for a year or so and then they ran out of money and they pulled out, they made the coordinator redundant and closed the office saying whatever they had in it in Ennis. And since then they haven't shown any interest. So come forward 10 years to when they're doing it all over again and they were inviting me to take, to join the course. Not to be a trainer but to be trained. I thought, I said there's something wrong here, I had previously taught and they weren't interested <*laughs*>. They weren't interested in me joining at all. They seem to be wanting much younger people, whereas I found that when I was doing it, teaching here, my best success was a man who definitely had fat fingers… much bigger than mine and he had great difficulty in hitting one key at a time on the keyboard. But by going straight down or using his little finger rather than whole hand he could manage. After four or five lessons, he went out and bought his own computer. He’d never touched a typewriter before that even so I was really delighted. He was very very happy that once he discovered what he could d on the computer and of course he set up his own email and he was often buying tickets and so on.

Interview

Yeah, I totally agree with you and I think sometimes you know some of the solutions with for example, you know transition year students and you know they just feel they're just checking off a box and they're helping someone. And I just think it's very, I think there's a lot of stereotypical, you know attitudes and ageism that is just totally wrong. And I do think even though my study isn't to do with mentoring and peer support or peer networking. But I do think that's very powerful. So maybe post PhD. I will have to try and get the PhD first <JAMES>de and so yeah, busy until the end of next year.

Participant

Vodafone for instance are saying in their course, certain things. For further information seek your grandchild or other family member.

But that's what I was criticizing, don't do that.

Interviewer

Yeah, with good reason. <JAMES>de, I've taken up so much of your time and I really appreciate it and I feel this is only the start of our conversation and so you know hopefully we will be able to keep in touch and you know if I do have more questions then maybe we can connect then.

Participant

We can set up another chat.

Interviewer

Absolutely. We know it works now and all of that would be fantastic. OK, so for today what I'll do is I will send you the link to the recording. Now from a security perspective I won't email it to you because I don't want Mr Google to have anything he shouldn’t but you can still access it and then over the coming days I will write up the transcript in a Word format and I will obviously send you the link to that so you can make sure that it represents what we’ve chatted about.

In that time, you can do a little bit of homework for me and kind of think oh was there something now that I know what Sandra is looking for and you know, is there any additional information? And I do think there's a lot that can be done, as I said, with any of these active retirement groups, and I think you're certainly doing the right thing there with them. And yeah, if there's any way that you could, you know, share the link to the survey or send them in that direction. I would like to hear from more people because if we don't hear from the people that we want to talk to and we want to help, and I say help in inverted quotes because in many ways it just works out and the diversity of the people that I want to speak to is really important and you're absolutely representative of that which is which is fantastic so thank you for everything.

Participant

You’re welcome, and yes, if you send me that link. I can pass the link to other people haven't responded.

Well, yes, I don't know if they’ve responded or not, so I'm assuming it.

Interviewer

Well I don't. Most of them have come through Facebook or Twitter, nothing directly from the email and it was the Active Retirement administrator told me she sent it out. She emailed it out so but there hasn't been anything coming through. That’s all I know. It's anonymous thing. I don't know where it comes from.

Participant

Well, I can tell you how they send things out. They send out to the regional officers who in turn send them to the secretary in each aura(?), of which there are some 500. More than that in fact, you know. There are about 50 members to each aura(?) on the 25. Yeah, 500 would be so and in turn it's going out with a lot of other correspondence and getting buried. Yeah, it's reached the stage where of the information that's coming out that coming that way. I'm only opening about 40%

Interviewer

I'm the same. I have the Age Friendly administrator sending a piece out on Friday in their weekly newsletter, and that's quite good because you can see it all on the one page but the Wheel for example, It's going to get buried there, they'll send it out tomorrow, but it's going to get buried and nobody is going to see it, so I'm trying to take a snowball approach so you know, if you could get two or three people, that would just make such a difference and so on. So I will do that during the course of the of the day, <JAMES>de. So once again I do want to thank you, I'm going to stop the recording at this stage.

Participant

OK stop!

Interviewer

End transcription, yeah.