00:00:00 Participant

When I said what I was doing this afternoon have all said “oh we need that, that's me, we're in trouble.”

00:00:08 Interviewer

Absolutely, and this is it. And it's great that you know you've got it through say, your email, it got distributed and you found it.

00:00:17 Interviewer

But there's also people out there who don't have email and who don't use it, and those are the people I'm finding very hard to reach at the moment. I have some ideas about how I will do that, but I'm just fascinated with the stories and what everybody is telling me about their experiences so far, <ELIZABETH>. It's really, really wonderful so you know, I'm hoping that it will make a difference for Irish policy and so on in good time. But yeah, so the more people could tell me the better.

00:00:47 Participant

Desperately needed, yes.

00:00:47 Interviewer

Yes it is.

00:00:49 Participant

And you're right, because I do everything for my husband. He's not afraid of doing new things. He's built a boat that he takes out on the water and sails. Well, it’s not a sailing boat, it's a little motorboat that he fishes from and he built it from absolutely scratch, so it isn't as though he's given up on things, but he will not go near the computer or his phone. He does the minimum.

00:01:18 Interviewer

He's not alone. I did a pilot, so I had to pilot this first of all with my cousin and her husband.

So my cousin is like you so and she does it all and the only time he ever had to use text messaging was when they were building their extension. When the extension was done he gave it up and he says he has no interest whatsoever, you know. He has his wife to do whatever he needs. Now she did show him how to look up the RIP website to see who's died everyday <laughs>.

0:01:52 Interviewer

That's it, that's all he wants every day <laughs>.

00:01:57 Interviewer

She is, as you are for Bill, a Warm Expert. So that's the term that we use for non-professionals who help others with their technology requirements.

00:02:15 Participant

I much prefer that to old <laughs>.

The family are coming next week and I shall tell them I’m a Warm Expert <laughs>.

00:02:24 Interviewer

You're a Warm Expert absolutely when it comes to technology.

Now I have your survey responses here and there's a few things that you said there that I'd like to explore and that's what today is about. But before we do that, I do need to go through some consent statements, they'll probably take up to two minutes.

00:02:47 Participant

OK.

00:02:49 Interviewer

Just to make sure that you're OK with them. Obviously you've seen the details of study through the link that I sent, so I won't go through that again.

But because this is an interview and you consented to the survey, I just need to go through these if that's OK?

00:03:03 Interviewer

There are six or seven statements here. I'll just read them out and then at the end I'll ask if you're OK with them. Does that sound OK?

00:03:10 Participant

Yes it does.

00:03:11 Interviewer

Number one. 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. Anonymized 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 presentations without my consent.

Number five. I understand that interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.

Number six. I understand that data will be kept according to university guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study, and finally I agree to take part in the above study. So how does that all sound Mo?

00:04:43 Participant

All sounds perfect. Did you say ten weeks for number two?

00:04:55 Interviewer

Number two was where I said two weeks, but I'm not going to be writing up this stuff until October at the earliest.

00:05:03 Interviewer

So whatever time you need and in that time I need to send you the transcript which could run to 20 pages. They have been and you need to make sure that you’re happy with all of that.

00:05:21 Interviewer

I’ll start my analysis when the interviews are done, so in October, I'll start looking for themes and patterns and that's what I'm looking for. I won't be mentioning names or anything like that, so that's kind of how it works, but there'll be plenty of time, so officially we say two weeks.

00:05:39 Participant

No, everything is fine and I had written two weeks and I thought I'd heard ten.

00:05:45 Interviewer

Because the University will keep the data for ten years. That's what you heard at the end.

00:05:51 Participant

OK, great.

00:05:52 Interviewer

OK, So what I'm going to do now? Just first of all, is just to confirm. Sometimes we can have a little slip of the finger on these surveys, so I'm just going to confirm the personal data that you gave me in this survey. If that's OK, I'll just read them all out <ELIZABETH>, and you'll just say that everything is fine. If something needs to be changed, then that's fine too.

00:06:12 Interviewer

OK, so you've indicated you're in the age range cohort 75 years or over, you're in the age range cohort 75 years or over, your gender is female.

You live in County Kerry, so you're a neighbour of me in West Cork.

You live in a rural area, so I've taken that from the Central Statistics Office and they define 1500 and over as urban and under 1500 people as rural, so village, townlands, that kind of thing. Does that make sense?

00:06:47 Participant

It does but I'm trying to think how many of us, it’s Kenmare.

00:06:53 Interviewer

Are you in the town or outside the town?

00:06:56 Participant

I'm outside the town, actually. I'm just outside the building area. I am in the country. Yes. I’m on the outskirts.

00:07:19 Interviewer

It’s good to clarify so for example, the suburbs of Dublin, some people do think that's rural. Would you believe? <laughs>. So it's good to clarify.

You said you live with your husband, Bill. And he's 85 years or older.

00:07:37 Participant

Sorry, he's 83 coming up to 83.

He's currently 82.

00:07:40 Interviewer

Ok, so I'll just change that.

00:07:45 Interviewer

Lovely, OK, so I'll change that to the 70 to 84, and your highest level of formal education is an ordinary Bachelor degree or National diploma. Is that correct?

00:08:01 Participant

Yes, I'm a teacher, was a teacher, I retired as a head teacher. Yes.

I got checked in just before they changed it to degree entry. I could have stayed on because there were six of us had got distinctions and that allowed us to stay on for a degree. But I needed the money.

00:08:42 Interviewer

OK. So, what I have here now are a few themes, in relation to the research question. So, one of the themes is to talk about informal and non-formal learning exchanges.

So with lifelong learning, when we think about people, we may think of lifelong learning as as different things and certainly <ELIZABETH>, the policy research that I've been doing lately suggests that lifelong learning is to help us skill for the labour market and that isn't something that I subscribe to. I believe lifelong means lifelong.

Participant

Absolutely

00:09:18 Interviewer

So, with that in mind, I always like to ask this question “what does lifelong learning mean to you?”

00:09:27 Participant

That I never stop learning.

It's from the cradle to the grave really. I'm a nursery infant teacher and I think that the early years are very, very underestimated in their value and on the same point, I'm still reading stuff for enjoyment that people might have to do for work, like, you know, behavioural science and that sort of thing. And the time when my brain won't let me do that will be a very sad time for me. I'm just interested in everything. Well, I like to think I am.

Yes, cradle to the grave.

00:10:09 Interviewer

I love that. Definitely using that quote.

OK, so that's good to know, and again I have the next few questions which talk a little bit about technology and how that fits in with your experience of lifelong learning.

So, first of all, can you just tell me a little bit about your experience with technology and digital devices? What you use? How long have you been using it for what purposes? Anything to do with that Mo, would be great.

00:10:45 Participant

I was introduced to gaming via my son who is 55 now and so that would be the first technology that came into the house. It was gaming and then followed by me having to do it for my job as a head teacher. It didn't centre on, or maybe it did. My very first job as a 15 year-old was on a computer, a comptometer. And that was sort of a pre-computer really in 1955, but it wasn't thought of as computers then. So, I first started using it as a head teacher when they were introduced to us by our local authorities in Britain, very badly in our case, and I think one of my most embarrassing moments in life, was that I went with other headteachers to the first lesson. I never actually got past putting my name in because I didn't realise that the dot was the full stop that had to go in and I just couldn't move forward and everybody else was doing things and I was just sitting looking at this empty screen. After that they were introduced into schools and school secretaries and it was a slow process. I didn't take it up. I couldn't because you needed to be able to type to make full use of the computers, what computers offered, you needed to be able to type. I've done that with my daughter when she was 15 and gone to a six-week class in Birmingham, but I'd never been a typist. I'd done other things, but (it) didn't apply to being a head teacher.

And so I found the whole thing rather difficult and really started to use it when I retired here in 1997 and then just played around with it really. I mean, I do all our banking, I do everything online but I am not as efficient or as proficient as my daughter who lives next door or my son, who's in Belfast and all the youngsters in the family and my grandchildren. They're there to help me, but I do try and do what's basic.

00:13:15 Interviewer

Well, that sounds amazing and you've given me the answers to about three questions there about motivation and starting and all that kind of stuff.

Just teasing out that a little bit more and I'm sure it's very useful having family close by to help. What are the kind of things that they help you with or do you need help?

00:13:39 Participant

Oh yes, I need help. No not every day, but quite regularly. For instance, I have various complaint letters, that makes me sound that I'm one of those people complaining all the time. And I'm not, but I can't transfer. My pension is in sterling in in Britain. I bank online with Lloyds and HSBC and here, AIB. I want to put some money through an agency to get a better rate to transfer my pension from England to here. Can I get it out of the English bank? No, I cannot. Not my fault entirely. They've all been over to help me. The sites down. For one thing, there's no chat line to type in a question and have an answer. HSBC haven't replied to my letters and it actually cost me €2000. I missed a slot when the pound was €0.84 and I couldn't get the money transferred. And I still don't know why, I don't know whether it's because I don't do it very often and there’s a security thing at the other end, I just don't know.

Going back to sending a letter, when we got to the when we got to Pembroke Dock recently on our way back from a wedding in England, I downloaded our personal locater form – PLF. I'm tired and printed it off and they wouldn't accept the printed version as we were due to get on the boat. We were the last on the boat with 30 seconds to spare because it had to be a downloaded form and I couldn't see my phone because the sun was shining on it. I got the Wi-Fi through. I knew I had been using it but I couldn't get the form on it. Nobody to help me. It became exceedingly stressful, more for Bill than me because I was running from place to place to try and get it sorted. He was aware he couldn't help me and they said to us they weren't going to let us on the boat so and that made me angry <laughs>.

So there are these letters going to these different places any minute now because I really feel we are being sidelined. We're being abused of our very basic rights and I can't transfer money. Well, they let us on the boat in the end and nobody even looked at the phone at the other end? So there are all sorts of stresses being put upon us at an age when really we don't need them and don't want them. And so I am following up with a letter and that's just two of them.

00:16:35 Interviewer

And that's, I think, most important, because it's too easy just to let something go and say “Oh, look, I'll know better next time” or “it won't happen again”, or “I won't be doing that again.” But it's not right, and one lady said to me last week. She's not online at all and she has no interest in being online. And she said she feels punished for not being online and she's a very independent lady. She wants to be able to go to the bank counter. She wants to be able to go to the motor tax office, the insurance office. But they don't want human beings in there at all. You know, it's all the machinery and going online and all that kind of thing. So, I think that is important that you send those letters.

00:17:28 Participant

We have an Easter here and we've had it for 22 years from when the first baby was arriving and the whole family came together. They're all at university now or working or away.

And I've just sent a cheque to one of them. I want to send him a cheque in a little card saying well done. He's off to university. Why should that way of transferring money to him be denied me?

I just don't see it. Have you heard the term produce capture?

Interviewer

Yes.

00:18:03 Participant

Right, I think it's producer capture.

Because we have no say in it. And how can a government?... they explained to us at Pembroke job that they were obeying the ruling from the Irish government that it had to be online. My husband couldn't have done it now and my son's reaction to that was “has a government the right to insist that its citizens have a smartphone?” What about the costs? The costs that are involved in this office (well, it’s a little room, I call it my office) costs of printer, paper, an Apple, all these things that I am providing and giving custom to. The whole thing, to my mind, is just exploded and gone out of control.

00:18:53 Interviewer

I think it has and the point that I keep making is that there are people who are not and do not want to be online so the approach might be digital first, but it shouldn't be digital only.

You can get data from Eurostat, which is the statistics arm of the European Union. And in 2020, in Ireland, the percentage between the ages of 65 and 74 who had never accessed the Internet was 13%. Now some people will be ill, in hospitals and in nursing homes and things like that, but it was 13%. Now that was a big improvement on the year before, and it had come down significantly, but if you look at the size of the population, 13% of a very large 65 to 74 age group is quite significant. And then the Irish Government or any EU national government is not obliged to send data to Eurostat for under 16 or over 75-year olds.

So, you get to 75...

00:20:26 Participant

That's a basic flaw.

00:20:27 Interviewer

It is. I had done a study and I surveyed university students last autumn. As a result of that, I made the recommendation to the Central Statistics Office that they should start sending that data to Eurostat. They were collecting it all right. Not a lot, 44 I think was the number surveyed in the over 75 group, but it was a start and so the people who had never accessed the Internet of that 44 was like 45%. So it was almost half. For me that was a good result. Once you have the data you can do something with it.

I think in many ways COVID and the pandemic probably exacerbated some of this.

A neighbour of mine gets an English pension and she wanted to lodge it in the bank and again like that, it was a cheque, but the banks weren't open so she couldn't and I got the number of the dedicated helpline for older adults to see if they could help her. Was there something that could be done? Anyway, nothing could be done. She had to wait until the bank opened again and like that the exchange rate could have been changing in that period of time.

00:21:55 Participant

All the time.

When you talk about helplines when I tried to ring up the Irish Ferries to check on all this before I actually got on the boat to go over to the wedding. I waited 2 1/2 hours for two days to get through and didn't get through so the next time I tried at...The dock opened at 8:00 o'clock, so I tried at 8:00 o'clock.

The next morning I got through immediately and then I checked because I could teach youngsters who had difficulties with reading to read and analyse what was on it. And I said to the man I spoke to at 8:00 o'clock “why was there such a long queue?” He said they all wanted to know about the PLF form and what the conditions were. It’s all online so I analysed the reading age because I think the last time I checked there was about 23% of Irish people, and I could be way out of date here, who are only just literate and wouldn't have been able to read the information that was there.

When I was coming back I read the English side and this had happened in England years ago and they'd started the plain English society and there was a plain English bill went through parliament. And when I compared the two, the reading age of the English information was much lower than the reading age of the Irish and we could understand why people couldn't understand it. Bill and I were saying, “well, what do they mean by this?” And we can read this stuff. So we are being very much marginalised.

00:23:44 Interviewer

I think so, and you know, just as you're talking about literacy. There's always been a strategy maybe 10 years ago, 2011, and for adult literacy and numeracy in Ireland and there are organisations funded by the government to help with that.

But when I started doing some research in relation to digital skills and digital literacy last autumn, digital literacy was just handed over to Simon Harris's department as if to say, “oh well, you've got responsibility for adult literacy and numeracy, here’s digital literacy as well.” Digital literacy is a totally different kettle of fish, totally different ball game.

Participant

Absolutely.

Interviewer

And the strategy, because I had students at the time and we all put in submissions to the consultation call, what individuals thought about the proposed strategy and the like.

And then a month after the closing date they just put this stuff out, it seemed to me that they didn't even look at the feedback, you know, because they couldn't have done it in that period of time. So I thought that was quite telling, I think, in many ways. You can't just shoehorn something into where it doesn't fit. You know, reading and writing is very different from digital skills. You don't put them in the same category, but when you use the term literacy, you're suggesting that they are more similar than they really are, you know.

00:25:18 Participant

Yes, that's right. I have never looked at the whole connection, but I doubt if there is one except that sometimes it might help dyslexic children, because their spelling is corrected for them or underlined, and they can go straight to a dictionary which they couldn't normally use.

And an upside for people of my age has been, if we could just go back one step, has been using Zoom. I've never used zoom had we not had COVID, and now I do an exercise class four days a week that I started as one day and I've done writing and I do the Guardian, master classes and things like that if it takes my fancy, and that's been a real bonus, and that's why it was getting to you today.

So that's a bonus.

00:26:09 Interviewer

It is and so there are definitely some bonuses.

It's all about having the choice, you know, and that's what I'm hearing as well. There are some people, especially people who live on their own. They prefer to go out to a class and it's all about learning something new or developing their skills, and that's all fine, then there are others who like to meet people or they like to get out of the house. Of course COVID took that choice away from so many.

00:26:47 Interviewer

OK, so your digital skills and confidence are all strong.

And you might remember the other set of statements as well for example I enjoy the things that I do, Being in the company of others and so on.

It's a scale that assesses quality of life in later years. So if you've heard of, in England, it's Elsa, in Ireland it’s TILDA, the longitudinal study on ageing, and they use these scales.

00:27:29 Participant

I’ve not heard of either. That's good yes, go on.

00:27:32 Interviewer

I'll send you some TILDA links. They're based out of Trinity College and they have some good reports. There's been a recent study about how people felt during COVID, so it's because it's a longitudinal study they're taking the same group of people over several years.

00:27:53 Participant

Yeah, that would be great. I’d love that. Thank you.

00:27:55 Interviewer

Yeah, and I attended last month, the British Society of Gerontology, their annual conference, because it was hosted at Lancaster and I was helping out with it. A few people there were talking about ELSA and had some interesting findings as well.

While mine isn't a comparative study, there are things that the UK is streets ahead of in, and there are some that are quite similar, so in terms of what I want to get out of this, it's really the social research angle and hoping that policies, strategies will change in Ireland, as a result, but who knows? I think we'll just have to do the research first and then see where it all lands.

00:28:47 Interviewer

OK, so digital skills and confidence is all great.

Just on the technology I do want to just ask this because in Ireland there is an EU programme and it's called Digital Skills for Citizens, so you have a lot of these charities and NGO's and they get grant funding for offering 10 hours of training to adults who want it. And I was just wondering had you come across any of those, or did you ever go to any class to upskill on technology or devices or anything like that?

00:29:24 Participant

I did, I was disgusted.

And mainly because I've worked at the VEC. I was asked. I volunteered to teach English as a second language when the first immigrants came to Kenmare, which I did for about 18 months.

00:29:39 Interviewer

When was that?

00:29:44 Participant

That was in 2000. And they came back three years ago. And I did a bit of work again with them, but I wasn't needed. People had got their act together since then and they were very welcome.

00:29:58 Participant

On foot of that I was offered a job at the VEC teaching returners to work, which I did for two years and they got their exams at the end of it and that was fine.

So I went to our local VEC and took, I think it was the beginners class. But I expected someone who is taking the same money home as me, €40.00 an hour, to be a professional, and I didn't expect her to take personal calls on a mobile and answer them outside the door while we waited for her to finish her conversation to come and see to her class. So I was not impressed.

00:30:42 Interviewer

No, with good reason.

00:30:45 Participant

So, I really haven't got a view on it because I didn't learn much and neither did anybody else and I was not happy.

00:31:04 Interviewer

A couple of people have told me about their experiences at VEC/ETB classes and both people said that the things that they wanted to learn weren't covered in the classes.

00:31:36 Interviewer

And about some of those, especially those class and environments are not really conducive to different things that we want to learn. We all might have different needs, so in that regard, then you'd have the likes of Age Action where you would be paired up with somebody one on one. And they would bring along their device, you'd meet at their office or it might be the library or somewhere like that for you know two hours a week for five or six weeks. And that's how that would work. And to me that is a much better expereince. It's more conducive to learning and you don't feel silly for asking questions that everybody else might know, and all of these things that kind of come with classes you know.

00:32:34 Participant

Well, doing it the way you are doing it one-to-one you can have differentiated learning. You can suit your student and I've done that as a just pro bono work with dyslexic people, boys and girls, and I was pleased when Dylan Thomas got his award, the biggest award you can get for literature because that was how I taught one particular student that poetry because he couldn't get poetry, but he loved Dylan Thomas so we did his songs.

And that's what you can do one-to-one but I do understand that sometimes you need a prescription for a class, but on the other hand you can you can make it more personal than it was, and you certainly shouldn't be standing outside the door taking a phone call.

00:34:05 Participant

You have the Collison boys at Limerick, don’t you?

One is part of a team that's introduced a new way of teaching coding. I believe I'm following them.

00:34:23 Interviewer

They’re absolutely great, they've done so well.

00:34:43 Interviewer

Just a little bit then about your participation in the community and that kind of thing, because what I'm finding, and I think it's really interesting <ELIZABETH>, to hear people’s stories about always meeting in person and then obviously when the whole lockdown stuff happened last year and then so much had to go online. But I was just wondering about the community groups that you're involved in and how was the period for you?

00:35:13 Participant

You gave us a prompt for me and my husband. I've trailed around after him, he just never stops doing things. We made this list of what we've done since we retired. We couldn't believe it. We just have another life here from, 57 me when I retired, 54 when he came here to build and here we are now and things are still going on, so yes, so currently, let me think.

Well, I belong to an indoor Bowling Club so Bill built an outside bowling thing because we couldn't go and bowl (indoors). So we've been keeping it up just in case we get back in competitions.

We set up a group WhatsApp thing. So we've been speaking to one another and sending one another messages for the whole of COVID, which has been very good at keeping in touch. Mainly the women, I have to say it’s mainly the women, but nevertheless it's kept the group alive

Women’s group the same. There's been the odd email going out and we've kept in touch... As soon as we were able to get in touch, even at a distance. We've done that with very small groups or a coffee or something like that.

Writer’s group, we meet in the back of the Church of Ireland now, but we've been meeting online and having some input and the opposite. We've been putting our stories online, so that's the three things.

00:36:49 Interviewer

Wow, so tell me a little bit about that now because I haven't met anybody involved in a writers group previously, so that must have been, well, was it different? I mean, when you're writing, you'll be writing on your laptop?

00:37:03 Participant

I went there when I first retired, so it's been longstanding and I'm a very bad person, a very bad member because I often don't do any writing. I just go and listen and talk. But I also do write and my friend and I have been to Bantry for years to the West Cork Festival yeah, and we've taken classes there.

We just talked and zoomed and put up our work online just so that we could talk about it and as soon as we could we meet in the Church of Ireland because there's plenty of room and space and then we read and we gently give feedback, so we've still kept writing.

00:37:50 Interviewer

Isn't that fantastic?

00:37:52 Participant

And I'd only done sort of technical writing and reports and governors reports and all that stuff when I was in school. Never done anything creatively and I found it a cathartic experience. I think it's wonderful. I'll never be published or anything like that. It's a little scribble for me.

00:38:52 Interviewer

For my studies at Edinburgh in 2017 I started keeping a blog and just writing my learnings and then that became my learning portfolio and it just became so useful then because that's the platform now where you'd go to for the link for the survey and it's got my history. I try to write one a month, but at first it was entirely private and then gradually I opened it up a little bit and then I set it to go through to Twitter because I have a small academic community on Twitter and I think you get braver and you get a little bit of feedback, don't you?

00:39:28 Participant

Yes, you do get braver and I found it very difficult to read sometimes and I have triggers I can write and then when I read it out loud it can have a huge impact emotionally. I once wrote about a baby I'd lost. I lost two babies before I had the two, my son and daughter, and it was 40 years later that I wrote this and I was down in a class in town, and I when I read it back I just went to pieces. Absolutely went to pieces completely, and all the sadness that I'd just stored away really, it came out, and I find I've gotten better at reading out and not allowing that to happen. But at first I couldn't. The trigger hit me. So that's been useful.

That was a learning curve. I didn't know it would happen. It's the speaking of it that hurts.

00:40:31 Participant

So I'm glad your blog worked for you and you have all that history. That's great.

You've got a background.

00:41:22 Interviewer

So I'm conscious of the time and don't want to take up too much more of your time.

I could keep listening to you forever <ELIZABETH> for sure, but I do want to ask you generally about, you're a very positive person. You have really good digital skills and confidence, what are your thoughts on technology and your quality of life. Has technology overall been more positive or negative or have you had any particular experiences that might be worth chatting about?

00:42:04 Participant

I haven’t thought about this very deeply, so let me think.

I think it's probably been beneficial to us both because one of us, we have no choice. We have no choice in this actually. It's being foisted upon us, so you have to take it on board with the stress that all new learning and change brings with it, and especially if it comes because we're not used to reading icons and three dots that we can just press with the cursor and it will give us an answer with and then I said to gorgeous granddaughter of 17. What about so and so and so and so? And she said “you two, just read what's on the screen.” It's there, and that's a 17-year old’s attitude to it. But we miss things and don't know what it is we're missing.

Children in my school in the nursery seemed to me to come pre-programmed to accepting technology and if you didn't have it at an optimum time, a bit like a kitten who, if it had it, it didn't open its eyes in so many weeks would remain blind for the rest of its life. So it struck me that somehow if you can give the little ones, the technology early enough they will take it on board and we've lost that slot because for me it hasn't been easy, but I've had to overcome it because Bill wouldn't and so there have been benefits because I'm now coping with running the house and other things. We did B&B because we thought we might need the money because of various things and that was online and if I thought I'd made a mistake and double booked. Honestly, my blood pressure must have been through the roof. It was really stressful and we just gave it up because Bill said “I don't want to see you like this.” So in that sense it actually isn't good for us because we're exceedingly healthy and exceedingly fit. But I've got high blood pressure and cholesterol. You don't need it frankly. We don't need it. We've worked for our lives. We really don't need this.

So, in some respects it's not good for us at all, and in other respects it's opened up another world and that is good for us. And it does make us keep being inquisitive and having our curiosity satisfied by having answers at the touch of a button.

So I don't think I know at the moment. I don't think it's easy app for people of a certain age, and I think we're being marginalised and left out and denied our basic rights like at Pembroke Dock. I had a ticket, we were the last people on and we'd allowed an hour and 3/4 to get through. We weren't there at the last minute and I had everything I needed I felt and I'd made a silly choice. I'd reread something or I haven't realised it had to be on a phone and I'd chosen to have the paperwork because in Barcelona I'd had my phone stolen. It was awful and the staff there had no support either. There was nobody to send me to. They were having to deal with me while they had a queue of people to get on a boat. So there are things to be corrected.

The other thing is that the words, the words that they use. I remember a couple of years ago saying to a girl on a helpline “I'm not sure how to do this. Can you help me?” She said “You just download the app” and I said “What’s an app?” And she couldn't explain it to me and she said, “well, it's an app” and I said “yes, you said that but what is an app?” and she couldn't give me application, and if she'd given me application, would I have known and I think I might have chosen another word. I don't know what I'd have chosen, but it certainly didn't make sense at the time.

00:46:24 Interviewer

It's an important point as well Mo, because you know we talked about, you know the children being pre-programmed and that kind of thing. But are they always pre programmed in a good way? So remember when mobile phones came out first and it was all this text like it wasn't, you know the word ‘are’ was ‘r’ and all this kind of thing so then people couldn't spell, so if they had to write a letter they couldn't spell properly. So. I don't think that was a good thing. Whether that's been overcome or not, I don't know.

00:46:55 Participant

I'm glad you said that because I actually think there's a terrible danger out there, and the danger is that children are given a substitute parent, a surrogate parent in the form of a phone or a game or something, and it's all silent. You don't speak to a phone. When you're on a game you're not speaking. I don't know how their language development will work for them. I don't know how they will develop a full vocabulary because nobody, and I mean nobody, but most parents are not speaking to their children. They’re even faced the other way in a pram, they face looking out while a parent is pushing them and on their phone. In the past was right, but this was a benefit to a child because of expression. You looked at your child in the pram or the pushchair. You spoke to them so they saw expression. They knew the word had an expression that matched it. Anger or sadness, or happiness or laughter. They could. There were associating two different areas of communication.

And now I I think they're being very deprived. Actually, I won't be around to see where this is taking them, but I saw my grandson that was born with a very great social skill and it's died because he was allowed to have a phone at 11. And he's now on his phone and texting and that outward interest in other people doesn't seem to be there.

00:48:36 Interviewer

And even as a younger age like I've seen that with my sister-in-law and they gave the child an iPad just to keep him quiet in the back of the car and stuff like that. And you know there has to be, down the road, implications for that, whether it be social skills or anything else.

Yeah, children are always on their phones or their tablets or their mobiles. It just seems to be the way and in twenty years time it'll be a different problem, so it'll be the young people who don't understand privacy, security, they don't have sense how to keep itself safe online. None of that. So it's going to be a whole different set of problems that the online world has basically caused.

00:49:36 Interviewer

Before we go is there anything else you thought of that you want to tell me?

00:49:38 Participant

Not really. You did us a favour, you really did because we've been so angry. Just recently, the things that have gone on that were really not very fair. And I’ve still got to unravel them and it's brought it to the fore that really, we've paid our taxes all our lives. We've worked all our lives. We’ve contributed to the community. We brought up a family and all of a sudden we're marginalised, less me than my husband.

00:50:12 Interviewer

And he's very fortunate to have you. If he were on his own and they're the people I want to be able to talk to as well, because, you know, it's just so difficult for them.

00:50:23 Participant

Yes, you wouldn't want to talk to him?

00:50:27 Interviewer

Well, he has you, you see, his Warm Expert.

00:50:29 Participant

Ah, you want to talk to those who have no one?

00:50:32 Interviewer

Yes.

So I'm going to talk to the programme manager of the Friendly Call I volunteer with. It's Cork City Partnership and there might be people who might be interested to talk to me, who are on their own, it's totally different for them, they are without a doubt marginalised.

00:51:00 Interviewer

But if Bill does want to talk to me, you know, by all means that would be great.

00:51:07 Participant

And then the thing I'll say before we go then is this. I left school at 15 with no qualifications at all because my mother paid for me to go to a convent school and couldn't afford it.

And I was afraid that if I didn't get my GCSE's - at that time, if you didn't get them, all seven subjects, you didn't get them at all.

And I went to work and put half my money on the table from the age of 15.

But I always felt that I was inferior and that started with age 11 when you didn't pass your grammar school exam in Britain. So it’s a horrible place to be and I really feel people now not knowing technology will be in the same place that I was as an unqualified person until I was 36. It's not a healthy place to be, to be made to feel that you’re worthless or your self esteem is undermined because of not matching up to things. So it bothers me a bit.

00:52:23 Interviewer

I would say as well because it just feels like everybody is being forced to go online and being punished for not being online. And there are very valid, genuine reasons why people might not want to be.

You know, being digitally connected is a good thing, but it's not the only thing and we have to be able to support the traditional means of communication, dealing with public services, dealing with the government, the banks, the insurance companies, all of those as well. But you know you've given me a huge amount of food for thought, Mo.

It’s going to take me a while to transcribe it all but I will send you a copy for review and approval.

00:53:12 Participant

My pleasure, I must say thank you very much for the conversation. It's been lovely. Really enjoyed it. Thank you.

00:53:18 Interviewer

Well, I will let you go. Thank you so much for your time and I'll be in touch over email shortly.

00:53:23 Participant

I guess I should say Slán.

00:53:33 Interviewer

Take care now.