00:00:05 Interviewer

What I can do <WILLIAM> as well if you like. I can take your address and I can post a copy of it so you can have a look yourself and you can make sure that you're OK with it, if you like. It’s totally up to you.

00:00:13 Interviewer

Yerra <*indicates he’s not bothered. In the end <WILLIAM> declines the offer of a transcript copy*>.

00:00:23 Interviewer

Anyway, I’ll tell you about the study. I think this should probably take us about 45 minutes. I don't want to take up all of your day, but about 45 minutes is where they're coming out right now.

00:00:36 Interviewer

So I'll tell you a little bit about the study and then how it works is that I have a number of consent statements, so I need to read those out to you and you could be thinking about them. And if you're OK with them then basically you give me your consent.

00:00:56 Interviewer

Sometimes people are a little bit surprised that I only have about 7 questions that are yes, no answer. Your age, range, gender, county and some of this information I know already anyway. Some people are surprised that I'm not just asking them straightforward questions like these. It's a bit more like a chat. I'd like to talk a little bit about lifelong learning and what that means to you. I'd like to talk about technology in your life, digital skills. Do you use a smart TV? Any of those general things.

And I suppose really about technology, and you know how it impacts your quality of life, both positively and negatively.

<*Applying GT and a memo-note this was feedback I had from the previous participant and helps to set the expectations better for the next participant*>

00:01:51 Interviewer

I’ll go through all those step by step, so don't worry about trying to remember everything at this point. But does it sound OK at a high level?

00:01:59 Participant

Ah yeah. We’ll go with the flow.

00:02:03 Interviewer

We’ll go with the flow <laughs>.

Absolutely. We're Cork people. We always go with the flow.

Were you watching the girls (camogie all-Ireland final) yesterday on the telly? Disappointing. <icebreaker>

00:02:11 Participant

I was. I thought they would win it you know?

00:02:15 Interviewer

Yeah, I did too. It was a bit disappointing alright. Ah, sure, you know, there’s always next year.

00:02:23 Participant

Yeah, that's the way it goes with sport. There’s a winner and a loser.

00:02:28 Interviewer

There is, but in fairness they got to the final, so that means a lot anyway.

00:02:33 Interviewer

OK, so I'll tell you now about the study.

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.

00:03:08 Interviewer

So, there's a bit of language and stuff or whatever in there, but it's really all about how people can help each other. And you know, depending on the age groups or not, as the case may be so, and that's just it at a high level <WILLIAM>.

00:03:20 Participant

OK.

00:03:21 Interviewer

So let me read out these statements. I'll just take my time with these and they'll all be numbered. And if you have any questions, you can just stop me straight away and I'll answer them as best I can.

00:03:31 Interviewer

So number one, I confirm that I understand the information about the study that's been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answers satisfactorily.

Number two, I understand that my participation is voluntary and if I'm involved in interview, I'm 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 (that's me), 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, and on that one <WILLIAM>, that's just the standard text that we use. But I'm not using anybody names. If I use a quote for example or something that you say, I'll give you a different name, you know, and I would just use first name so that's how that works.

Number five, I understand that interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure. So, my highly secure Mac Book Air from Apple that I have here.

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

Number seven, I agree to take part in this study. So how does that sound <WILLIAM>? Do you have any questions?

00:05:31 Participant

No questions whatsoever.

00:05:33 Participant

There's none of them that would bother me now because I won’t be around <laughs>.

00:05:39 Interviewer

Aah would you stop? Of course you will.

00:05:41 Participant

I won't be around then if you’re saying it’ll be kept for 10 years. Jesus, if I live another 10 years I’ll be lucky <laughs>.

00:05:47 Interviewer

Well, that's the data, but I'm hoping to submit my thesis at the end of next year. So you'll be around for that, absolutely.

<laughs>

00:06:00 Interviewer

OK. So I have just seven, six or seven questions now just to go through.

So first of all <WILLIAM>, can you give me your age range? Is it 55 to 64, 65 to 74, or 75 years and older?

00:06:26 Participant

65 to 74.

00:06:28 Interviewer

OK, perfect. You don't sound a day over 40.

00:06:31 Participant

I don't, no. And I feel 19.

00:06:35 Interviewer

There you go.

00:06:36 Interviewer

All right. Don't laugh now with this one, but when I asked a lady this the other day, she said, “I'm female last time I checked.”

00:06:47 Interviewer

I have to be careful. Obviously I have to be politically correct about this. So is your gender male, female, other or prefer not to say?

00:06:54 Participant

Male.

00:06:57 Interviewer

Perfect. And do you live in an urban or rural area? So taking the CSO guidelines Gurranabraher is definitely urban.

00:07:14 Interviewer

Do you live alone, with one other person or with more than one other person?

00:07:19 Participant

More than one other person.

00:07:22 Interviewer

OK, and can you give me their age ranges?

00:07:27 Participant

What age groups do you want them?

00:07:31 Interviewer

These are long. So I've got 16 to 24...

00:07:35 Participant

Ah well, probably forget about that. My son is 37 and my wife is 70. Makes it easier, nice and short.

00:07:41 Interviewer

OK that's great. Now I'm looking for your highest level of formal education so when you would have left school or college, your formal schooling, as opposed to going back and doing any courses. So the options that I have are primary, lower secondary (Inter cert), upper secondary (Leaving cert)...

00:08:14 Participant

I left school at the age of 14.

00:08:18 Interviewer

OK, right, and did you have Inter cert at that stage or Group cert?

00:08:24 Participant

Primary cert.

00:08:25 Interviewer

Primary cert. OK brilliant. So they are the checkbox questions out of the way now.

00:08:37 Interviewer

And so the next questions are just kind of themes really. They will kind of help me understand your experience of lifelong learning. Now it's interesting because the European Union describes lifelong learning as “investing in people's knowledge, skills, competencies throughout their lives”. If you look at the Irish Government and I've been researching their policies they seem to take a different interpretation of lifelong learning, and they seem to think it's to reskill you to do something else to get work or to go into the labour market.

00:09:17 Interviewer

Different people have different perspectives on that, so I'd like to start by asking <WILLIAM>, what does lifelong learning mean to you?

00:09:30 Participant

Lifelong learning to me, at 69 years of age, where would I be going? What am I going to gain out of lifelong learning now? I’m nearly 70.

00:09:46 Interviewer

OK, so let me explain this now, just a little bit further.

00:09:50 Interviewer

So some of the definitions then about lifelong learning. First, you've got the formal learning that I talked about there. Then you've got non-formal learning so that could be going to, you know, a night class and this is at any stage, so I'm not talking about your life right now. I’m talking about the lifecourse, maybe being involved in some organisations, some community groups, something like that where you know they might get people in to give a talk that you might be interested in or something like that. Then you've got informal learning, which is where we learn from each other so from our family, from our friends, through our community, our peers, that kind of thing. So does that give a little bit more clarity about the question?

00:10:43 Participant

Well, you learn from your kids anyway number one, you learn from your family. I'm involved in a lot in the community and I learn an awful lot in the community.

00:10:48 Interviewer

Brilliant.

00:10:54 Participant

I’m involved in Cork City Partnership as a volunteer and I run a lot of functions. I’m the chairman now of a woman’s club, it’s now a ladies’ club. There’s a Friday morning drop-in but all the men have passed away, and there’s 33 women.

00:11:12 Interviewer

Good for you.

00:11:14 Participant

So I'm the chairman of that group now, which as I said, it was half and half before.

00:11:16 Interviewer

OK.

00:11:20 Participant

But all the men have passed away and we have no men now and the only man is myself. And we run a lot of functions here, tea dances and everything and anything like that for the community. We do Christmas markets as volunteers, you know?

00:11:40 Interviewer

Yeah, brilliant.

00:11:45 Participant

I was involved in Age Action Ireland and I deliver ‘meals on wheels’ and everything like that. I'm out seven days a week volunteering. And IK’m on the committee of the Age Friendly Cities.

00:12:01 Interviewer

Yes, tell me a little bit about that. That's quite interesting.

00:12:10 Participant

In the Age Friendly City there's four reps, four of us. I represent the north side.

00:12:16 Interviewer

Oh yes, Cork city, of course. I'm thinking Cork County, gotcha.

00:12:22 Participant

Yeah. It’s Chris Dorgan in the City Hall. He organises the meetings and all the organisations then come in, the Gardaí, banks, credit unions, we get them all in and put our problems to them.

00:12:44 Interviewer

And how is that? I mean, it sounds like if you've got people involved in it, is it successful?

00:13:00 Interviewer

I'm losing audio now a small bit <WILLIAM>.

<*<WILLIAM> explained that the phone signal drops when a bus passes by. So, it’s not just problems with broadband that some people in Ireland have, it’s the mobile phone as well*>

00:13:04 Participant

The CEO of the City Council chairs the meeting, then you’ve all the Business Association, you know?

00:13:12 Interviewer

Brilliant and what kind of things have come out of it?

00:13:17 Participant

We have launched the dictionary there for the four provinces with the fingerposts, you know? A dictionary for the elderly people with all the services on it.

00:13:31 Interviewer

Is that the logo with the lovely, it looks like leaves or a flower with all different colours, is it?

00:13:37 Participant

Yeah, the red, blue, yellow, orange for the Age Friendly City.

00:13:43 Interviewer

Yes, that's it, because I don't know what they (the leaves) all mean, but I'm sure you do?

00:13:50 Participant

I don't know what all the leaves mean to tell you the truth, but what we're trying to achieve is better services for the elderly people in the city. You know, buses, trains, communications. You know, say you want to ring Eircom you’ll get this press 1 press 2 press 3 all that thing. We want to get where we can get a person to speak to an elderly person.

It's the same as if you go into a bank. Elderly people can't use machines and they want to talk to a person over there face-to-face.

00:14:33 Interviewer

Yeah, and how is that working now? Because you know, with so many branches closing down and reducing their services. How is that affecting your Members <WILLIAM>?

00:14:43 Participant

Well, it affects them greatly, you see, because as I say, the elderly people haven't online banking now. I don’t have online banking myself because I’m not up-to-date with that.

Do you know what's going on? We don't have any bank robberies. Now we have individual people being robbed online, with scams and all this, you know?

00:15:00 Interviewer

We do.

<*00:15:07 to 00:15:40 Sandra spoke of her recent experience with a scam call supposedly from Amazon Prime*>

00:15:47 Participant

I got one prior about 12 o'clock. It was from, saying it was from the Internet services saying my internet service will be cut within the next 24 hours. Please press 1 to sort this problem out. We know what they want to do but lucky enough, I don't have any online banking so it doesn’t affect me. I just hang up. But there’s an awful lot of people think they’re genuine calls and that’s why they’re being scammed. They think they're doing the right thing or they get one from the Gardaí, or the credit unions or the banks and all these scam calls are coming through now. There was one there not so long ago, “this is your local Gardaí, we want to check €50 notes to see if they’re genuine”. Then they’ll call to you and they’ll give you a dud one and you’ll give them a real one, you know?

00:16:40 Interviewer

Oh my gosh, and that's why community organisations are so important to just keep spreading that word. I was helping this gentleman lives near me, I helped him with the grant application for a stairlift a few years ago. Anyway I got a phone call from a mobile number not in my contacts list, and because of this study people might be trying to reach me to arrange an interview. It turned out to be a genuine called because the man's stairlift was causing problems and they had my number as a contact from when it was installed.

00:17:25 Interviewer

So they were trying to get through to him and they couldn't because he is nervous about answering numbers that he doesn't know. So he wasn't answering the call and it was genuine.

00:17:36 Interviewer

think it's because you don't know what these scenarios are these days, the type of call keeps changing and it just gets worse, you know.

00:17:46 Participant

Exactly, exactly.

If you go along with them then they keep haunting until they get you to crack, you know these calls.

00:17:57 Interviewer

They will, and I think as well, somebody had told me that when you answer, they know then that it's a genuine phone number and then they'll sell that number on to another criminal gang who will keep at you once they have the number you know.

00:18:05 Participant

Exactly, exactly, exactly.

00:18:10 Interviewer

And I saw something on the news the other evening but it didn't seem like the phone companies were able to do much. They said they'd have to block all international numbers.

00:18:21 Participant

No, they can't, they can't.

I mean, it's amazing, but they can take your money, the phone companies can take your money when they want to.

00:18:37 Interviewer

I've got no no time for them whatsoever, but I do feel bad about that, and I do think it's up to those of us involved in the community and with Age Friendly and trying to just keep raising that awareness and keep saying the message because this same gentleman and I had to ring the stairlift company for. Anyway, he had to pay to courier cost of sending the replacement part to him and give them his debit card to pay. And he said to me he said he was getting these calls and I said they're scam calls and don't be entertaining them. But he insisted he wanted to get on to the bank to get a new card and I said if it made him feel better, then to do that. I knew AIB had a dedicated phone line for the over 65s so I got that for him and I said “look if you want to, just ring them up, but they'll tell you the same thing that I'm telling you. If you haven't given your card details out, you know, to anyone that you shouldn't have, then it's really not a problem”, but he was so worried, it’s terrible, you know.

00:19:37 Participant

He would be. Yeah yeah yeah.

00:19:41 Interviewer

He doesn't have family around him, he relies on his neighbours and we're lucky to be in a nice community in a nice town and you know, we all help each other out and that kind of thing.

00:19:55 Participant

On the other side you have, you have families ripping their parents off as well and their grandparents and using their card, you know?

00:20:05 Interviewer

Oh, I know.

<*<WILLIAM> talked about the case where an individual had been collecting his dead mother and father’s pension for 33 years*>

00:20:48 Participant

How did how did they catch him in the end is the way that I looked at it, that his parents must have reached 100 so that means they would be sending out a cheque from the President.

00:21:06 Participant

Thirty-three years is a long time.

I was taking care of an elderly man down there. Now he was all alone and I had to collect his pension and pay all his bills for him. When the man passed away, I sent a copy of his death cert straight to the social welfare department and closed the accounts straight away.

But how do they know that person is dead unless you send on the information telling them the person passed away?

00:21:37 Interviewer

You know, you're quite right because any of the services, they're not interconnected at all. You know they're all separate and they don't talk to each other and it's just awful, like the onus is on you.

00:21:52 Participant

So the sons and daughter and sisters and brothers collected pensions for people. But I know that if the pension is not collected within three months in the post office I think it's closed and sent back.

00:22:25 Participant

So if it was being paid into a bank, they just go to the bank every week and collect it.

00:22:35 Interviewer

Or they don't even have to go to the bank because they have the card and the PIN number.

00:22:41 Participant

That’s it. So it must be a minefield out there when that can of worms was opened up.

00:22:47 Interviewer

I'd say without a shadow of a doubt, there's no question at all about that.

Yeah well, keep up the good work is all I can say. I think it's just so important to be, you know involved in helping out in the community and even just the little things.

00:23:14 Interviewer

And thinking back to my situation with my neighbour. If I hadn't answered that call and he had had the electrician in. And I said “who has your credit card?” And he said “nobody sure, I don't use it”, but well, it wasn't a credit card, it was a debit card which is probably worse, again because there would be some insurance on a credit card whereas a debit card is just coming straight out of his bank account and he has no online banking, you know?

00:23:49 Participant

So, that’s what Age Friendly is all about. Fraud and things like that to get sorted out, driving licence for over-70s. People can't drive before dawn and after dusk you know? They’re taking away all their freedom.

00:24:10 Interviewer

These arbitrary ages, you know. I mean 70. I know some very sprightly 85-year-olds still driving as you do, you know.

00:24:19 Participant

But you see, the 70-year-old was probably taking three or four more people to a community centre. Playing indoor bowls or playing cards, or playing rings and then they lose out because the 70-year-old is penalised because he cannot drive after dark, you know?

<*I haven’t found evidence of this online yet – will keep looking*>

00:24:37 Interviewer

Yeah, there's a knock-on effect.

00:24:39 Participant

It’s a knock-on effect and It’s all elderly people who go indoor bowling.

I founded the bowling club up here so I know it's very hard to get insurance for over 70s on account of COVID and it’s all over 70s play indoor bowls.

00:25:01 Participant

Well, I always say bowls is from the cradle to the grave. There's no age limit up here where I set it up. If you're 10, 11, 12 you can start young, then you’re professional by the time you’re...

You’re not trying to learn when you’re 60.

00:25:18 Interviewer

Do you have young people there as well, <WILLIAM>?

00:25:21 Participant

The youngest we had was 15, 15-year-olds.

I tried to take it into schools and get the transition year students to help the senior citizens in their community.

Transition year students showed them... and then they showed...

00:25:38 Interviewer

How did that go?

00:25:41 Participant

Well, COVID put a stop to that in schools.

00:25:45 Participant

I'm in one school now in Farranree, so we welcome everyone and I just show them the ropes and then they can either take it up professional, join a club and join leagues which a lot of them have.

00:26:00 Interviewer

That's a great success story <WILLIAM>. Because I mean that is the intergenerational learning. So it's not just the playing of the bowls, like while they're sitting awaiting their turn, they'll be chatting and talking about different things. And, you know, learning from each other.

<*The audio dropped then and I missed <WILLIAM>’s comment but intergenerational bowls sounds like a good idea*>

00:26:19 Participant

Then Phil Goodman out in Douglas funded the intergeneration quiz, you know. So she’ll ring me and say “<WILLIAM>, the intergenerational quiz is on next month in the City Hall.” So I have to get senior citizens for Phil. I might have to make up 10 teams for City Hall.

00:26:48 Interviewer

Brilliant and would that be different age groups, different generations then?

00:26:54 Participant

Well, intergeneration is two transition year students and two senior citizens at a table.

And that's going on now, I’d say it’s seventh year, possibly sponsored by the Evening Echo and Cork City Council, the HSE, and things like that.

And so two years ago was the last time. There was about 54 tables in the City Hall.

00:27:22 Interviewer

Goodness, that's amazing. I wasn't aware of that. I knew about the work that Phil did in Douglas with the Young At Heart group.

00:27:39 Participant

It's very good, very interesting because you have two young students. I might get two from the Mon, two from Farranree , Terence McSwiney (schools), they could be 17, 18 years old and put them together with two senior citizens. That’s a team then.

We don’t ever seem to win anything, because the southside have all retired teachers take part in this in City Hall. We come from a so-called “disadvantaged area” the northside of the city – Churchfield, Gurranabraher, Farranree, Mayfield, Togher (on the southside). It’s all classed as disadvantaged areas. You’d be up against the likes of Douglas, Rochestown, then like yourself, all teachers, ex-this, ex-that, Gardaí.

00:28:36 Interviewer

Just thinking about, you know, getting around and removing those barriers. I mean, if you take the younger generation, the TY students, they will all be learning the same kind of thing at school, they'll all be the same. So isn't it then a question of getting the questions more biased towards the young people who will know them from school?

There’s ways around that <WILLIAM>, I’d say <laughs>.

00:29:00 Participant

You see you learn from the students and the students will learn from the senior citizens.

Because simple questions like questions of every category, sports, like if you went to a quiz and if there’s something about what’s on television I wouldn’t have a clue because I'm not interested. If you asked me a question, something about Coronation Street or Fair City, I know nothing at all about them. But then you ask the young generation a question, and a question that sticks out in my mind was the Father Mathew statue on Patrick Street, what way is it facing?

00:29:46 Interviewer

OK, facing north.

00:29:50 Participant

Yeah. Well, up Patrick’s Hill.

The kids at the table say “who’s Father Mathew?”

They had no idea. Other simple questions now “where is Terence McSwiney’s building?” Some people say Terence McSwiney College in Knocknaheeny.

00:30:20 Interviewer

That’s what I would have said because I don’t know of any other building.

00:30:23 Participant

It’s the City Hall. We were inside in it (at the time for the quiz), you know, so you learn something new every day, every day you learn something new whether it was from a young person or an old person

The young generation in my mind wont learn anything because they'll have no memories whatsoever because that's all....

<*audio dropped again*>

00:30:52 Participant

I have two grandkids here. Now they come here on a regular basis, they're only over the road. One is 11 and the other is 4.

One sits on the chair there and the other sits on that chair, and the first thing I say is “how did you get on at school? At playschool?” No answer. They’re on the phones. “How did you get on at playschool?” On the phone. The 11-year old “grand.” No conversation, none whatsoever. Having the dinner, phones open on the table in front of them. Not a word, not a word. You won’t get a word out of them. “What did you learn?” Nothing, nothing. It’s phones from the time they get up in the morning and they have it so close to their eyes they’ll be blind by the time they’re 20.

00:31:40 Interviewer

And you're not alone. Parents are out there working. I saw it with my own sister-in-law. I mean giving the small fellow, I think an iPad when he was about two and a big fine case to protect it.

So what happens in 20 years' time, they won't have conversational skills, they won't be able to communicate in the way that you and I would and they wouldn't have a telephone conversation.

00:32:17 Participant

No no no, no no and you see, with all this bullying online, gambling online.

At least if there was bullying in the school, at least you can see it, you can deal with it with but bullying online.

And now there’s gambling online, people losing everything online and nobody knows it. They’re in their bedroom. Every child has a television now in their room whereas in our day we had no televisions.

00:32:46 Participant

To me it's a minefield now today, the Internet and all. It’s handy for some things, but to me the world in another 20/30 years will be barmy.

00:32:58 Participant

Nobody will know anybody and I don't know, it's just mind boggling. At the moment it’s even mind boggling with all this bullying online.

They can take a photograph of anything now, like a car accident. My son says “look at this” and I say “I don’t want to see it.” They take photographs of an accident or a fight and they put it up online. I said I don’t want to know anything about it, I don’t want to see it. I don’t have it on my phone. I’m not looking at it and I wouldn’t <passionate emphasis>.

00:33:28 Interviewer

No, and that's your choice.

00:33:31 Participant

I mean, you can't see it on the house phone. I have a house phone and I do everything through the house phone. I see nothing in it. Phones should just be for messages and calls, make a call, answer a call. And if there's anything important, the person will ring back, as simple as that.

00:33:49 Interviewer

Yeah, absolutely. I'm with you in relation to that.

So tell me then about COVID. What was it like then for all the community groups you were involved in particularly during the last year? I know it's starting to, you know, open up a little bit, so hopefully the community groups will soon be able to get back together in person, but what were those lockdown periods like for them <WILLIAM>?

00:34:14 Participant

Well, I meet a lot of people and the first thing they say is “<WILLIAM>, when are we ever going to get back?” Most of the people now in the group are 66 to 90, 90.

That was their whole thing every Friday morning. They collect their pensions. And they drop in to the drop-in group. We give them tea and sandwiches and we have a game of bingo. Or we’d have live music. Or we’d go away in the Garda community bus. Or we'd get a bigger bus if they were all going, rent a bus and we’d go to Rosscarbery, Skibbereen, Clonakilty, Bandon, Blackrock, anywhere. That’s all gone and their Friday was literally wiped out.

And then we used to run the tea dance once a month with Cork City Partnership.

<*<WILLIAM> spoke about the organiser of the tea dances who had an aneurysm and could not continue*>

00:35:28 Participant

So that closed down as well two years ago. There used to be 100 people at that on a Sunday afternoon.

All these things that we had, Funday in the Park, all these things have gone. Christmas markets, well, we hope to have the Christmas market back in the Parochial Hall. I think we got a date now for 10th December which is another big thing.

00:35:57 Participant

But the elderly people today have nowhere to go, nowhere whatsoever. Their routine has been taken away and completely cut off.

00:36:06 Interviewer

And do you think some of them will not recover from that when they start going again?

00:36:13 Participant

Well, if we open up they’d be all as if it never happened, as if nothing ever happened before. That's the way I look at it. If they could get back for one day and be like as if it never was there. They'll be back to their normal routine then. Then you know, they’ll be thrilled to get back.

00:36:33 Interviewer

I just think it's so important and I mean, the only work I do with Cork City Partnership is the Friendly Call with Brenda. So I make my call at lunchtime every day.

00:36:43 Participant

With Brenda, I'd be involved as well. I don't get involved with the phone calls because I couldn't, I just do Meals on Wheels and then I get involved with Brenda. We take people to anywhere she wants them. If she's having a function in the Commons (Inn) I use my car and if she wanted something I could do or somebody wanted a repair here or there she'd ring me up and I’d say “I’ll have a look at the job and see what I can do.” If I can do it I do it, if I can’t I can’t. So I couldn't commit myself to give phone calls, do phone calls or not because I'm involved in so many other things.

<*Sandra chatted about her experience with Friendly Call*>.

00:38:00 Interviewer

The lady that I speak to every day, she's very isolated, no family and you know, surrounded by her pets and it's very difficult so it's great to have Cork City Partnership and Brenda send out a taxi or bus or something for her hospital appointments and anything like that.

00:38:20 Participant

Well, she got a little minibus, which was sponsored by Credit Union, HSE. That’s fierce handy for taking people to hospital appointments, doing shopping for people. Friendly Call is a fantastic service. How many calls does she do now a day? 350 I think?

00:38:51 Interviewer

it's just unbelievable altogether.

00:38:53 Participant

And it's only for the volunteers. She wouldn't be able to do it, but funding is a huge problem. I remember Kathleen Lynch. She was the Minister for Mental Health. We were trying to get funds for Friendly Call because it needs funding. Brenda’s doing a marvellous job for the little resources she has. I was delighted she won the Lord Mayor’s Award because there’s a lot of work involved. Brenda goes over and above her duties.

00:39:30 Interviewer

She’s amazing.

00:39:33 Interviewer

You know there's so much reliance on the voluntary sector, organisations like that with little resources, not enough to do what needs to be done, and you know, I think it is a credit to people in the Community, you know, like yourself, to do our own small little bit, but it's never enough and it's never going to be enough <WILLIAM>, you know?

00:39:53 Interviewer

OK, I'm conscious of the time now because we're coming up to about 40 minutes.

00:40:02 Interviewer

Anything else about yourself, <WILLIAM>? I think you've been very clear to me, it's the landline, the traditional phone, and it's all about keeping safe but more than anything, I would say, how would you even get time to sit down and look at a tablet, even if you wanted to? So I think you've shared your motivations with me quite clearly, you know.

00:40:31 Interviewer

Sorry, the audio now has cut out again.

00:40:34 Participant

Can you hear me?

00:40:35 Interviewer

I can. You're back to me again.

00:40:38 Participant

I prefer to be doing things that I can see myself doing, like out in the garden.

I do a lot of Care and Repair. If somebody wants something done, they say “<WILLIAM>...”. For two weeks now I've been clearing manholes up here, manholes are blocked. But other than that, I do an awful lot of things myself out in the shed. I make an awful lot of models with matchsticks.

00:41:05 Interviewer

Oh wow.

00:41:07 Participant

That can take me. I could sit down there for 16 hours on the trot making matchstick models. A matchstick model might take me 6 months.

00:41:18 Interviewer

Of course, and <WILLIAM>, would your grandchildren have any interest in doing that with you?

00:41:24 Participant

My grandkids used to help me, they'd be there now, and they’d say “Grandad, can I help you?” and I’d say “yeah, glue that matchstick now and hand it to me.” But the phones have taken over all that. They don’t even come up to see me making a model now. The small one might bring up a drawing that she’d made and she’d say “that’s for you Grandad.”

The other little one, I have about 6 paintings from her, she paints on canvas and she writes on the back of them ‘From Jodie, 18/1/21’ and they’re canvas, she just draws out of her head. And she sends them to her Nan and she signs the back of it then. And the small one then sends up a little note, she might put a little face and “that’s Grandad” you know.

00:42:15 Interviewer

Yeah, that's all lovely.

00:42:20 Interviewer

But I think you're right. I think it's the phones and technology you know will end up taking over, it’s an awful shame.

00:42:30 Participant

Yeah, yeah. They won't be able to have memories now about playing games, street games or anything like we did. We had no technology, we had no electricity, we had no phones, we had no cars, we had no bikes.

When we got our summer holidays we were out, we used play on the street, playing football, out fishing, picking blackberries. All the games, every street game that you could think, the girls used have scrapbooks, you know, and they'd be swapping scraps and they'd be skipping ropes and spinning tops and hula hoops.

00:43:13 Interviewer

But the kids (today) know nothing about all that.

We made a little film a few years ago and we showed the street games we played 50 years ago. And we showed the film then to the kids about what we did and they showed us what they did. It was all on tablets and laptops they were showing us and we were showing what we were doing physically on the streets playing games, but they were showing us on computers.

00:43:42 Interviewer

Yeah, because that's what they know.

00:43:45 Participant

That's what they know, they don't know anything else.

00:43:47 Interviewer

Yeah, and that's interesting you should say that yeah, because there was a lady I was talking to the other day and she's involved in North Cork with the Girl Guides and she had an intergenerational night so it was, you know, the Girl Guides, their mammies and their grannies there and again like that, when it came to talking about what each of the generations were doing it was all about, you know, the laptops and the tablets. That's all they knew. No conversation, nothing, exactly as you're describing all <WILLIAM>. So yeah, you're not alone.

00:44:19 Participant

We had that in Farranree school. It was a grandad's day, so all the grandads had to appear in the school with the kids. And one thing I found so hurtful to one child she had no grandad.

00:44:39 Interviewer

Ah no.

00:44:41 Participant

And I thought the teachers should have picked up on that straight away.

<*Audio dropped again but came back in time to say that the child’s grandad had died*>.

00:44:52 Interviewer

Ah, God love us.

00:44:58 Interviewer

I think it sounds like it was too specific.

You know, it could have been an older family member day, so it wouldn't have to be a Grandad. It could've been a granny or auntie or something like that, you know.

00:45:06 Participant

Even if the grandmother was alive, even if the uncle was alive, he could have deputised as the grandad. The child was roaring crying. How old was she? That was 3 years ago so she was about 8. She was the only child there that had no grandad. And she was lost. And all the kids didn’t realise and she said “my grandad died” and she had no one. It was very, very hard on the child.

00:45:44 Interviewer

Yeah, and in principle, they're all great initiatives, of course they are, but they have to be carefully planned and executed so that there’s nobody upset.

00:45:51 Participant

Oh yeah, yeah.

00:45:57 Interviewer

<WILLIAM>, you've told me so much. This is fantastic. Was there anything else that we haven't talked about that you kind of thought “I must remember to say that to her”? We’ve covered a multitude, I have to say, which is great.

00:46:10 Participant

No, not really. But as people say, I think this thing people say they're lonely but I always say you can be lonely in a crowd.

00:46:20 Interviewer

You can.

00:46:21 Participant

I often ask people now “are you lonely?”

Sure you could be lonely in a crowd.

00:46:30 Participant

I belong to a Men’s Club as well, I was Chairman of the Men’s Club, I’m Secretary (now) but we’re closed down for two years.

00:46:37 Interviewer

OK.

00:46:38 Participant

You know we don't do any...

<*Audio dropped again but I picked up that <WILLIAM> was referring to the distinction from a Men’s Shed, a national organisation where the focus is on practical activities*>.

00:47:01 Participant

The community bus only takes 15 so if we're ever going away and we get more than that somebody will have to take a car.

<*Audio dropped again, a bus was passing and interrupted the signal*>.

00:47:24 Participant

The bus passes there and blocks the signal.

00:47:27 Interviewer

OK.

00:47:27 Participant

So we were asked would we join the Men’s Club (Shed I believe) and so all the funds would come through to us then.

00:47:36 Interviewer

OK.

00:47:37 Participant

But I said, “look, we're retired, we don’t want to be involved in woodturning and making things, fixing chairs, doing this and that.” We just act as a Men’s Club, we play pool, rings, stamps? And we go on a lot of outings. We go to Garnish Island, we go to Spike Island, we go to the Dáil...

00:48:10 Interviewer

So, outings as opposed to what the Men’s Shed does is what you're saying?

00:48:11 Participant

Yeah, but lot of Men’s Sheds do repairs. A chap might have a broken bike or he might have a table or a chair and he brings it to the Men’s Shed and there would be a carpenter there who would be able to repair it, or a broken piano and they'll all get involved then.

00:48:31 Participant

But they're all funded then if you needed the tools to do that.

00:48:42 Participant

Our group, we just go on walks, pitch and putt, outings to historic places, the barracks, forts, Fort Camden, we take all that in.

00:48:51 Interviewer

Brilliant yeah. And there's so much history associated with a lot of those places that you've mentioned. You know, it's fantastic.

00:49:00 Participant

Exactly exactly. So, we're still learning, we're still learning about things that we didn't even know.

00:49:09 Interviewer

And that is lifelong learning, absolutely.

So <WILLIAM>, I'm going to leave it there. I'm going to stop my recording.

<*I didn’t get to stop the recording at this point because <WILLIAM> went on to talk about a history book he was involved in about the Orthopaedic hospital near him and has promised me a signed copy*>

00:52:24 Interviewer

Brilliant, that sounds fantastic, <WILLIAM> thank you so much again for your time. I really appreciate it like this is just so it's just so wonderful. All these stories are just different, and they're amazing and they'll help me with my research, so I've taken enough of your time. I'm going to let you go.