00:00:00 Interviewer

Lovely, so that's great. Now I'll set that to record <ALICE>.

00:00:11 Interviewer

So what I'd like to do is just tell you a little bit about the study and then I need to read out some consent statements so it has to be an ethical study and it's approved by the university and all that kind of stuff.

00:00:28 Interviewer

And then we'll just get into it then, so they normally take about 45 minutes but <ALICE>, might be a little less, might be a little more. It depends how much you have to say.00:00:39

Participant

OK, Sandra

00:00:42 Interviewer

I'll tell you about the study now. 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. 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 our digital skills development of older adults.

So does that sound OK?

00:01:16 Participant

It sounds fine.

00:01:17 Interviewer

OK, lovely, so I'll go through each of these consents statements and you can be thinking about them as I read them and then at the end or you can stop me if you have any questions, but these are kind of fairly standard if that's OK, but there's seven of them in total.

00:01:32 Participant

No problem.

00:01:34 Interviewer

OK, Lovely <ALICE>, thanks.

So 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 if I'm involved in interview, 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, (and I don't include any names anyway).

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 number seven, I agree to take part in the above study.

So how does that all sound, <ALICE>?

00:03:08 Participant

It all sounds great.

00:03:11 Interviewer

All right, fantastic. It's fairly run of the mill kind of thing.

So, what I have is I have six or seven questions, which is just to tell me a little bit about yourself. And then after that we'll just go into the themes of the research so it is very conversational.

Some people I have been talking to have said, “oh, I thought you were going to have a long list of questions”, but it's not, and that's why I said pop the kettle on because you know it is more like a conversation.

00:03:41 Participant

No problem.

00:03:43 Interviewer

Lovely. OK, so the first question I have is your age range <ALICE>, so I'm asking in three age bands, so 75 years or over ...

00:03:55 Participant

75 or over.

00:04:00 Interviewer

OK, that's easy. I don't have to go through the other ones, lovely.

00:04:05 Interviewer

Now, gender. I will tell you a funny story. I was talking to a lady last week about gender because you have to be politically correct and she was so funny. She was a Scottish lady and she said, “oh I was female last time I checked” and we burst out laughing.

00:04:24 Interviewer

So I should ask you the same. Male, female, other or prefer not to say, <ALICE>?

00:04:32 Participant

Female <laughs>.

00:04:34 Interviewer

And the next question is your Irish county of residence, which I would imagine is Cork.

00:04:40 Participant

Cork city.

00:04:40 Interviewer

Oh yes, of course, most important, OK. Whereabouts in Cork are you as a matter of interest?

00:04:47 Participant

On the north side, Blarney Street.

00:04:50 Interviewer

Oh lovely. I used to work in Apple just up the road, you know.

00:04:58 Participant

Oh very near the top of Blarney Street. I’m at the bottom of Blarney Street.

00:04:59 Interviewer

Within walking distance. Yep, walked up there many times, grand part of the city.

00:05:05 Interviewer

Lovely, OK so that's an urban area, I have that now. Do you live alone ,with one other person or more than one other person, <ALICE>?

00:05:17 Participant

I live alone.

00:05:19 Interviewer

OK like myself.

00:05:24 Interviewer

And then what I have is the highest level of formal education. So when I say formal, it's when we left school first, so you know it could have been primary school, Inter cert, Leaving cert.

00:05:30 Participant

Inter cert.

00:05:37 Interviewer

Inter cert. OK, lovely, so you were about 15 or 16?

00:05:40 Participant

Just 15.

00:05:43 Interviewer

Just 15. OK, perfect and did you as a matter of interest, what did you do then? Directly after that <ALICE>?

00:05:54 Participant

I went to work as a shop assistant.

00:05:56 Interviewer

Brilliant OK. So you were working so young. But that was it back in those days that's for sure.

00:06:13 Interviewer

OK, so I just want to chat a little bit now about this business of lifelong learning that I've been talking about, so it's kind of interesting because you know when I think of lifelong learning, I think of you know and somebody said “cradle to grave” so for all of our life span and that's the way the European Union looks at it as well.

And it talks about “investing in people's knowledge, skills and competencies throughout their lives.” And I think that's a good thing. But then when it comes to the Irish Government, <ALICE>, what happens is they seem to interpret lifelong learning as being learning to re-skill or upskill to get a different job or enter the labour market so that's a bit different now to what I would expect, so I do like to start by asking you what does lifelong learning mean to you?

00:07:22 Participant

Well for me Sandra lifelong learning is how you get on with life.

00:07:37 Interviewer

Yeah, and there are so many different ways of looking at it because the way that I see it, you know we just talked about, you know, leaving school so that's formal learning and then you've got you know non-formal learning so for example, when they're up and running like Cork City Partnership and Brenda’s Friendly Call and they have all these outings and all different events and things to go to, and that's where we learn from each other. Because these are organised events.

00:08:06 Participant

Exactly.

00:08:09 Interviewer

Yeah, OK, we're on the same page and then informal learning is where I'm learning from you right now because we're having an informal conversation, so you know, meeting our neighbours, chatting with family and that kind of thing.

00:08:29 Interviewer

OK great so just tell me a little bit then I suppose, after you know you started work. Did you ever do any night classes or anything that you might have been interested in <ALICE>?

00:08:45 Participant

No, I didn't try anything to be honest.

00:08:47 Participant

I was involved in voluntary work.

00:08:48 Interviewer

Voluntary work, OK. And that can take up quite a lot of time. So what kind of community groups are you involved in?

00:09:01 Participant

I'm not anymore now unfortunately.

00:09:05 Participant

I was volunteering in Cuanlee, a refuge for homeless women and children. I was in the community association for years. I ran <couldn’t catch the name> for years. I was very involved in the Church. I was also involved in a voluntary capacity in the Credit Union.

00:09:38 Interviewer

Oh my goodness. My parents both were as well and then you know they went to employed people, full-time but all really worthy (causes) and again being in the city I think there's more need for (community) volunteers.

00:10:02 Interviewer

That’s what I loved in Apple more than I liked my actual work in the last couple of years that I was there. It was getting involved in the volunteering and you know, helping people out and stuff. It was great, you know.

00:10:15 Interviewer

Yeah, and that's all learning you know, you're giving, of course, but you're getting back as well, aren't you?

00:10:24 Participant

You are. What I really and truly loved, you know I used to deal with elderly people and build up my relationships and even though God rest their souls, they’d tell you the same stories forty-four dozen times <laughs>. I loved, loved listening to them. They had so much to say, nobody to say it to, and it was all going to die with them.

00:10:56 Interviewer

Yeah, it's so true, isn't it? And that would have been from when?

00:11:01 Participant

When I was very young.

00:11:05 Interviewer

OK, so from when you were in your teens?

00:11:12 Participant

Yes, indeed.

00:11:10 Interviewer

I think so too and I think you learn something new or you pick up something different all the time from listening and talking to people.

00:11:28 Interviewer

Great. So, Brenda said that you had a tablet, is that right, <ALICE>?

00:11:36 Participant

I gave it back.

00:11:38 Interviewer

Tell me about the tablet. Go on. I'm really interested in this.

00:11:41 Participant

I had an iPad and I can’t use it.

00:11:47 Interviewer

OK.

00:11:49 Participant

I struggle with my phone, it’s all before my time. So I said “hopefully somebody else will be very happy to have it” so I gave it back to Brenda.

00:12:01 Interviewer

Yeah, but with the phone, you know text messages are no problem to you <ALICE>.

00:12:09 Participant

I can make a call, answer a call and text.

00:12:11 Interviewer

And that’s probably all you need it for.

00:12:17 Participant

Yes, I suppose so.

00:12:18 Participant

Look Sandra, to be honest, my husband is, God rest his soul, he’ll be three years dead next month. He was an invalid for five years before that. Which meant I wasn’t actually out for five years. And to be honest, I don’t really want to go out now.

00:12:42 Interviewer

Yeah, and how do you keep connected with people? I mean, well, obviously that was very difficult during COVID, but things are, you know, opening up a little bit now.

00:12:50 Participant

They’re getting a little easier now.

00:12:58 Interviewer

Yeah. So will you go back out when these events and get togethers start happening again?

00:13:04 Participant

Oh please God I will when they come back, they’re not back yet.

00:13:07 Interviewer

No, they're not, they're not, and it has been a very difficult time and even just thinking about it, you know. I mean, we can get quite fearful, and because it has changed such a lot, you know.

00:13:21 Participant

Uh my God, I honestly and truthfully could tell you I have absolutely nothing to show for the last year. I haven’t been anywhere, I haven’t done anything. Everything just stopped.

00:13:44 Interviewer

It's been a difficult time, that's for sure, I also feel nervous now about, I know things are starting to open up but I'm kind of going “no, I’ll sit tight a while, I don't really need to go indoors for that cup of coffee.”

00:14:05 Participant

That’s it, you hold on.

00:14:07 Interviewer

Yeah, and that's the worry though, isn't it? That we hold on too long.

00:14:11 Participant

That’s it.

00:14:15 Interviewer

Yeah I think so too.

So, what I have here are a few statements and I just want you to think about them and it's a scale, a self-assessment really of our quality of life and what I'm interested in is “does technology make our lives better or worse?” We're all getting these scam calls like I got one yesterday.

00:14:46 Participant

Oh my God, I am scourged from them, absolutely scourged.

00:14:52 Interviewer

Yeah, and what do you do when you get them?

00:14:56 Participant

I just hang up.

00:14:58 Interviewer

You're right too.

00:15:01 Participant

There’s no point in saying anything because you’re only talking to a machine.

00:15:06 Interviewer

But it looks like a legitimate number coming through, that's the problem, isn't it?

00:15:08 Participant

That's the problem. Now could you believe it? I got one yesterday morning at a quarter past seven.

00:15:15 Interviewer

Oh stop it.

00:15:15 Participant

A quarter past seven in the morning.

00:15:17 Interviewer

Yeah yeah. And how do you feel them when they come through <ALICE>? Do you feel it's a nuisance? Or are you worried?

00:15:27 Participant

I feel it’s a nuisance and I feel mad.

00:15:30 Interviewer

Yeah yeah, and I saw something on the news the other evening and you know they were saying they can't do anything about it because they’d have to block everyone’s number. You know, they're really smart about it.

00:15:43 Participant

The time will come when we won’t answer our phones.

00:15:46 Interviewer

Yeah, yeah.

00:15:48 Participant

It could be an urgent call and if I don't know the number I’m going to ignore it.

<*Sandra explained her recent experience of almost ignoring a genuine call about a repair to a neighbour’s stairlift because of not recognising the mobile number*>.

00:16:25 Participant

Oh my God.

00:16:45 Interviewer

I suppose we just have to keep doing what we're doing until there's some magic solution to that. But I'm not seeing that anytime soon.

00:16:53 Participant

No, we’re not going to see it in my time either. I’m 79.

00:17:02 Interviewer

No way. Well, you don't sound it.

00:17:04 Participant

I am, girl <Cork expression>.

00:17:48 Interviewer

So during the during last year's lockdown, I mean, you live on your own, <ALICE>. What was that like when you couldn't visit anyone, you couldn't have anyone visit you?

00:18:00 Participant

It was a nightmare, a nightmare.

I have nieces and nephews and they would come to the window to talk me through the window, but I told them to stop. I just couldn't take it any longer, so I asked them to stop. We just stayed in touch by phone then.

00:18:30 Interviewer

Yeah, and that probably worked best because at least you could hear properly, you know?

00:18:33 Participant

Yes, indeed.

00:18:35 Interviewer

Yeah, I think so too. I know plenty of people like that and it was just so difficult and then what I’m finding is that the people who took to Zoom and those kind of things they had, you know, younger people to help them. You know, maybe nephews, nieces but very, very difficult if you're if you're (on your own). I totally understand that.

00:19:07 Interviewer

So it had to be the phone. I mean, it wasn't a time that anybody could learn to use technology, a device or tablet or anything like that. You just couldn't.

00:19:15 Participant

No, no, no.

00:19:22 Interviewer

OK. So, it's difficult I suppose with the time that we're at right now, but do you think your outlook on life is more positive or negative, <ALICE>?

00:19:44 Participant

Oh it’s negative, definitely <*said without hesitation*>.

00:19:45 Interviewer

OK, and has that gotten worse since COVID?

00:19:49 Participant

Oh, much worse.

00:19:50 Interviewer

Has it? OK, well I hope the sooner the things open up a little bit and you can get back to those little outings and that kind of thing, I think it'll be something, you know.

00:20:13 Participant

Something to look forward.

00:20:06 Interviewer

Because I think it's hard as well. You know, the evenings are drawing in and you're looking at you know, another winter.

00:20:13 Participant

It’s the dark. I hate the dark mornings because I’m someone who is up very early in the morning. Coming down in the morning at 5 o’clock and having to have the light on until 7 or 8 o’clock.

00:20:29 Interviewer

And do you get one of Brenda's Friendly Callers every day?

00:20:37 Participant

I do. And I often make calls to Brenda.

00:20:41 Interviewer

I call a lady every day at lunchtime and it's just nice. It's nice to have a chat because like that I'm on my own, my husband died suddenly two years ago and it's just me and the dog.

Because I think it doesn't really matter what age I think if you're you know, unexpectedly left alone and there are very, very difficult times, you know, and people don't understand it.

00:21:09 Participant

It has to knock at your own door, girl.

00:21:19 Interviewer

When I was at Apple I was teaching part-time as well and I wanted to do research in this area because please God we’ll all age and I just want to try and find ways of making life better with my research.

And I worry <ALICE> because the way the government, and you probably found this as well during COVID, like was you'd ring up a number and be told to go online, go online, is what you're told you know.

00:21:50 Participant

Press this, press that, press the other. You’d be on for half an hour. Oh, don’t go there.

00:21:57 Interviewer

Who were you trying to get through to that you had that those problems with?

00:22:03 Participant

Oh, I had it with everyone you’d try to ring.

00:22:15 Participant

Insurance company, everything.

00:22:17 Interviewer

Right and the banks, of course?

00:22:21 Participant

Don't even go there. They don’t want us anymore <*laughs, but she’s serious*>.

00:22:23 Interviewer

Insurance companies definitely. I'm hearing a lot of that. And then of course you know you get the behaviour of, well, maybe you're not affected quite so much in the in the city, but certainly in the country towns the banks are shutting down the services or there's no counter, even if they leave the branch open.

00:22:45 Participant

Oh no counter. They don’t want you there anymore.

00:22:47 Interviewer

They don't, and I think that's the problem. We understand they need to make money and digital first is how they're going to do that, but it shouldn't be digital only. It really shouldn't.

00:23:03 Participant

Oh no. I mean everything now is go online. That’s no good to me.

00:23:08 Interviewer

Yeah. And how does that make you feel <ALICE>?

00:23:13 Participant

Inadequate.

00:23:14 Interviewer

Inadequate, yeah, it's wrong, you know? You're just excluded and marginalised.

00:23:24 Participant

Excluded. Get on with it.

00:23:29 Interviewer

I think as well, there are plenty of people, all sorts of ages. You know that just they have no interest in being online and it does nothing for them and you know it should be their choice and that you can get the services without going online.

00:23:47 Participant

Yes exactly. When you go to pay some bill or other, if you go online you get a discount.

00:24:01 Interviewer

That’s a good point actually, because that's discrimination, isn't it?

00:24:07 Participant

It is.

00:24:09 Interviewer

Nobody has made that point to me before now.

00:24:17 Participant

Go online, get 10% discount and tough luck (if you don’t).

00:24:20 Interviewer

Yeah, tough luck. And because you can't, particularly in relation to the utilities, though I presume, we all have electricity but you’d have piped gas wouldn’t you?

00:24:32 Participant

I have, yeah.

00:24:33 Interviewer

Yeah, and if you have the two together with one company and pay online, you get more of a discount.

00:24:44 Participant

So much off, yeah.

00:24:45 Interviewer

And as well, what bothers me is that you know from a security perspective, you know we wouldn't give out passwords or anything like that but to do that (get the discounts), that's basically what you have to do. You would hope that it might be someone you trust to help you with that, but I mean fraud can be close to home as well, you know.

00:25:08 Participant

You never know.

00:25:17 Interviewer

So I think those things are a little bit of a worry too you know.

00:25:20 Participant

Oh definitely.

00:25:30 Interviewer

Yeah, I think you know, from what you're saying. I mean certainly this technology and the digital world. It's certainly not helping your quality of life in any way, <ALICE>?

00:25:35 Participant

No.

00:25:37 Interviewer

And if anything it's having a negative impact?

00:25:42 Participant

Very much so.

00:25:52 Interviewer

When I look at some of the statements that I have here for example “I can do the things that I want to do” then no, you can't because technology will not allow you, right?

00:26:04 Participant

Yes, that’s it.

00:26:15 Interviewer

And the opportunities then are online and we saw this with COVID. So for example, where the social groups, they might have been singing groups or choirs or bingo, or things like that that you might enjoy going to in-person and then by putting those online they were fine for some people, but for many “no, it just wasn't for me”, you know.

00:26:43 Participant

One it’s online I can't do it anyway.

00:26:46 Interviewer

No, not at all. Well, honestly, I think when it comes to the phone and like that...

00:26:55 Interviewer

And what kind of television do you have <ALICE>?

00:27:00 Participant

I have free-to-air and the dish? I have to be honest, I don’t watch much television. I have books.

00:27:11 Interviewer

OK you’re like me, what do you like to read?

00:27:16 Participant

Anything. And if I’m rightly stuck I’ll read the same book a second time. You would be surprised if you read a book a second time you’d pick up something new you hadn’t the first time.

00:27:32 Interviewer

That's true and do you ever use the local library?

00:27:37 Participant

No, I don't. I buy the books.

00:27:39 Interviewer

OK. So what did you do then during lockdown? Did you have a stash of them?

00:27:49 Participant

The shopping centre that I use, they have a bookshop of school things so they were allowed stay open.

00:27:58 Interviewer

OK. An essential service.

00:28:03 Participant

Newspapers and things, so they were allowed stay open. I was very lucky.

00:28:06 Interviewer

Oh very lucky, absolutely. Because down here in Skibbereen we have a great library and I'm a big fan of the library and what they were doing was they were sending somebody out with boxes of books.

They'd look at your history of borrowing to see what you like and then they’d try and put some of that in. So, that was great I think for the people here.

And then others, not too many people that I know of because I do read on my iPad. It's just convenience, not all the time. I do like to have, you know, a book, a paperback or whatever that I can read if I was sitting up in the garden or something like that.

00:28:48 Participant

I absolutely love, the feel of the page, the smell of the book, I’m a bit old-fashioned.

00:28:54 Interviewer

Well, I'll tell you a funny story. My cousin was down in Kerry with her husband in their camper van a few weeks ago and she picked up a Patricia Cornwell book. Do you ever read her?

00:29:07 Participant

No, I haven't come across her now.

00:29:08 Interviewer

She's Patricia Cornwell. She's an autopsy kind of person. You know, it's all about people who died. She's a post mortem kind of person <*couldn’t think of the word pathologist*>.

00:29:21 Interviewer

But anyway, and I hadn’t read one in years. She brought him this book to me and said “have you read this” and I said “no, I don't think I have” so she gave it to me and when I opened it, any wonder she gave it to me, it was in French!

00:29:36 Participant

Oh lovely <laughs>.

00:29:37 Interviewer

Yeah, so I've been brushing up my French skills on that, but again she got it in a second-hand bookshop. A holidaymaker had left it, and you know, I think the second-hand book shops are good too, because I'd be an avid reader. I still have the first books I got from a jumble sale when I was seven. Heidi, the Railway Children and I can’t remember the third.

00:30:16 Interviewer

In the tiny library on a Thursday afternoon, children were allowed in to pick a book, two books, and it was great. And then years later, they moved to bigger premises and it's a lovely library now where they do so much more than just lending books. They have classes there and talks and that kind of thing. So all of that you know I think it's quite good, but again people who live in rural areas tend to be cut off, and that's not really, quite as accessible, and I think that's part of the problem then is that they're the kind of people that they're saying “go online” to but they can’t or they don't have the connectivity and all of those kind of things.

00:31:03 Interviewer

OK. So we've talked about quality of life. We’ve talked about lifelong learning. We've talked about the social exclusion I think which is important.

So that's pretty much everything I want to cover. You know, <ALICE>, if you managed to get through all those lockdowns without a tablet, I don't think you need one now.

00:31:32 Participant

Gone too old now, my love. My head would want to go in a concrete mixer first to get the cotton wool out of it.

00:31:44 Interviewer

I think you have to have the interest.

00:31:47 Interviewer

My cousin's husband, so he's 77 and he doesn't text now or anything and like that but he had to learn and she had to teach him. It was when they were putting an extension on, now this might have been about 10 or 12 years ago, so he would have been early to mid 60s and the only way he could get in contact with the builder was to text him.

So she taught him how to text and then when the extension was finished, the texting finished too. He had no interest.

00:32:23 Participant

No, no interest. It was all before our time.

00:32:28 Interviewer

You know, I think it is and you know what bothers me as well <ALICE>, is that it all changes too quickly. I mean it's moving so fast and I can't keep up.

And Idon 't think it's good either when you see the children, their faces stuck in the phones and they can't hold a conversation.

00:32:52 Participant

All day long.

00:33:00 Interviewer

Do you have any young family members, relations in that category?

00:33:02 Participant

I have grandnieces and grandnephews.

00:33:04 Interviewer

It's all the same kind of thing with anyone I speak to, parents are very very busy and they give them the tablet, the device or whatever just to keep them occupied and yeah and I think when you and I are not around <ALICE>, we’ll see some of the fallout from that in years to come,

00:33:32 Interviewer

OK, do you have any questions for me at all <ALICE> because I've gone through all of mine now?

00:33:37 Interviewer

That’s all now Sandra <I think>.

00:33:37 Interviewer

Ah OK, alright no problem.

00:33:40 Participant

May I wish you luck.

00:33:41 Interviewer

Thank you so much. This is going to keep me busy through the end of next year, so this is my semi-retirement project.

00:33:49 Participant

OK, well good luck with it.

00:33:50 Interviewer

Thank you so much for your time <ALICE>, I really appreciate it and it’s been a lovely pleasure talking to you. Alright then, take care <ALICE>.

00:34:01 Participant

Alright then bye bye, thank you too. Bye bye.