

Case Study MP3 Players for the Beacon Club

Background Information

In an increasingly digital world, many people cannot imagine life without the internet. However, not only are there 3.4 million people aged 65+ who have never used the internet, but there are also a further half a million older people who have used it in the past but not recently.

The risk is that the divide between those with digital skills, and those who struggle to overcome barriers to access and use, the growing social and economic gap between those who are connected and those who are not, continues to widen (ONS, 2019; The Wales Co-operative Centre with Carnegie UK Trust, 2018).

Older people have consistently made up the largest proportion of internet non-users, and pattern of internet use by age is replicated when looking at digital skills (ONS, 2019).

A survey from Citizens Advice Scotland (2018), showed that of respondents aged between 65 and 79 years:

- Only 25% used the internet often
- 46% never used the internet
- 18% have difficulty using a computer
- 16% cannot use one at all

In March 2020 with the onset of Covid-19 the Beacon Club faced many challenges and one of the biggest ones was the lack of internet access or devices for all 30 of our members. With most services moving on line with a selection of zoom and team activities offering everything from cooking and art classes to singing groups, exercise classes or simply meeting up with friends for a chat, being digitally excluded made for a very isolating and lonely time for lots of our members. We called regularly for chats but some members didn't like talking on the phone or had been scammed in the past so didn't like to pick up the phone. We prepared newsletter with interesting fun articles, quizzes and updates but this again had limitations for members whose eye sight was not the best. Talking to carers the main issuing arising from not attending the service was boredom, they were sitting in their chars all day watching the TV and were struggling for lack of stimulation and loneliness.

The Initiative

We decided to think outside the box for a device that could hold a large amount of data, wasn't too expensive, did not need internet access, was quite simple to use and had longevity power. We consulted with different organisations such as playlist for life and Ace-It as to the best MP3 Player to buy and hand a short list of 2 players. We looked at the positive and negatives for both and decided which one suited our members needs best. We purchased 30 MP3 Players and headphones.

 **Bluetooth**



Each MP3 Player was filled with

Book Contents

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austin

Call of the Wild by Jack London

Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer

Grim Fairy Tales by the Brothers Grimm

The Invisible Man by H G Wells

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens

The Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte

Forgotten songs from the broom cupboard plays an hour of obscure, little known and forgotten songs and artist. All from original 78, 33 and 45 rpm records.

The Thelma Tapes podcast showcases memories of days gone by, the past brought to life by the hundreds of people who have told us their stories.

Christmas Past & Christmas Past 2, Clothes and Fashion, Hogmanay, Home Remedies

Ken B, Leith Docks, Leith Walks, Make Do and Mend, Pet Show Pick-N-Mix

Pubs of Edinburgh, School Days, Sporting Heroes, Sweets

The Demon Drink Valley Day Wav

Leith Lives Podcasts

The stories of the men, women and children who have shaped the very history of Leith and made it a place to be proud of.

A selection of member's favourite music from the Beacon Club

The instruction for use were emailed to the members carers and next of kin with instruction of when the best time to sit there loved one down in a comfy chair with a hot drink and start the MP3 Player.

The players were delivered to each member in a A4 zipped plastic folder and include instructions and a large visual aid to show them how the player worked was delivered to all our members



Feedback

After the completion of the first month of use we contacted 25 carers for feedback on the players and the results were as follows.

Question 1

How did you find using the MP3 Player and headphones?

- a) Could you negotiate the user buttons on the player Yes No
Any Comments

- b) Were the instructions helpful Yes No
Any Comments

From the 20 responses 18 could negotiate the buttons and 3 had problems, comments included, "it's a small device but I guess it needs to be, I had never used an MP3 player but my son had and he had no problems using it and setting it up for his gran". 20 felt the instructions were helpful, comments included, "as the device was so small it was good to have arrows pointing to each part but after the initial getting it set up it was really easy to use".

Question 2

- a) Did the member enjoy listening to the Player Yes No

Any Comments

- b) Did they have any problems listening to the Player Yes No

Any Comments

From the 20 responses 19 members enjoyed listening to the player, comments included “it took a while for my dad to get into listings to the player he didn’t like the music, but once he got to the podcasts her really enjoyed it”. 10 responses had problems listing to the player at first, comments included, they didn’t like the stories or the music, they kept falling asleep, and the headphones kept falling down. 9 responses said that after a while they found something on the player they enjoyed listing to, one member did not like the MP3 player at all and did not want to listen to it

Question 3

- a) What was the member’s favourite section of the player?

Any Comments

- b) What would the member like to listen to in future downloads?

From the 20 responses, 9 members liked the music the best, comments included “I didn’t think mum would like listing to the player as she is 98 but as soon as the music came on she started tapping her food and enjoyed every minute”. 6 liked the podcasts, comments included, “dad loved the Leith Lives podcasts it brought back great memories of his youth living in Leith and he made his grandson listen as well”.

2 members liked the audio books the best comments included, my grans eyesight is not good now and although she used to be a keen reader doesn’t do much now so the audio books were great for her , she listened to ever one although I had to rewind a few times as she fell asleep occasionally”. 1 member liked all the contents of the player and 1 member didn’t like any of the contents.

Comments for 3 b) included country and western music, big band music and 1950s music, Charles Dickens books, First & Second World War books and romance books.

Question 4

- a) Do you think that members listening to the MP3 player helped elevate boredom and stimulate conversation Yes No

Any Comments

19 respondents said yes the MP3 players had helped to elevate boredom and stimulate conversation, comments included, "dad really enjoyed listening to the podcasts so much so that mum also listened so they could discuss the podcast and the memories they both had. One evening we 3 generations of my family discussing life in Leith and my dad telling us his own stories that listening to the podcasts had reminded him off". "Mum looked forward to her afternoon listening to her audio book it was a revelation for her I really don't know why we hadn't thought of it before".

Conclusion

Overall the MP3 players were well received by the members, having spoken to carers who did not complete the questioner there was some problems for members who did not have family visiting and had to rely on carers to set the player for them, we had 5 members who did not have the support to do this which was unfortunate but hopefully in the future when government guidelines allow, we will be able to do this for them in future. We also had 3 members who had retreated quiet badly due to lockdown and moved to care homes. 2 of our members also passed away. We will continue to fill the MP3 players monthly with new stories, music and anything else we think the members will enjoy and hopefully this will elevate a little boredom and loneliness.

One last thing I would like to share with you, one of our oldest members of the Beacon Club passed away last month, her daughter told me that the last few day before her mum passed away she could not talk but when her family put the headphones on her and played the music form the MP3 Player her eyes would sparkle as she listened along.