

# Age UK Cornwall & Isles of Scilly

## Case Study - Pam's Story



*"I didn't know how much I was missing! It's one of the most wonderful things ever done for me. It's brilliant, a godsend. Thank you to all the staff that supported me"*



Pam, 74 years old, was referred to the Macmillan Community Navigator Team, with the idea of accessing the internet as a means to overcome her social isolation. Pre COVID-19, Pam took 5 trips out a week, but those have unfortunately stopped because of travel restrictions and self-isolating/shielding. Pam lives alone, and though she has a brother living in London, she has no family living nearby.

Pam has been personally affected by breast cancer and lives with on-going health conditions, some of which affects her mobility. She lives in rented accommodation so was limited as to what could be installed in her home. She had no previous ICT experience but did own a basic mobile phone (not a smart-phone).

### Creating Partnerships

Initially, we were contacted by the Mustard Tree Cancer Support Centre (Triangle Outreach at Liskeard Hospital) - asking if we could connect and support Pam.

To find the right support for Pam, we worked with one of our Inclusion Matters partners, the Digital Inclusion Team (DI) at Cornwall Council, to establish if they could help with equipment and training, which was all arranged on Pam's behalf.

We also worked with our Age UK Cornwall Community Coach, Jo, who was also in discussion with Pam to help identify groups and social connections, as well as arranging Zoom sessions with her brother (who is also new to this type of technology).

### Positivity was key

From the beginning, Pam was extremely keen to learn. Pam was open minded and on-board with the idea that connecting to the internet could help keep her in touch within and beyond Cornwall. **We talked about some of the digital solutions that could 'open new doors' and give her access to opportunities she hadn't considered before.**

*"We know that technology can enrich the world we live in and it is something that most of us take for granted. However, if you have never used this type of technology before, it can be a very daunting and challenging experience"*

After being a little unsure at the start, Pam embraced the new terminology and equipment for mobile broadband. Pam's confidence quickly grew **e.g. browsing the internet for items she would have usually used a paper catalogue for; looking for social groups remotely; listening to online music; using zoom; sending emails; checking for shop opening times etc.**

### The Challenges

Face to face meetings were not possible because of the pandemic, so DI had to adapt to train and support Pam via telephone and later, video calls.

Pam also experienced some teething problems with the first mobile phone provider. So much so, that the contract was cancelled and a new provider was established. **This did cause Pam some anxiety and briefly, to question whether this was the right path. However, stoically, Pam persisted and it has certainly paid off!**

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### In Words

*“It has been fabulous getting to know Pam and seeing her confidence grow. She has grasped the opportunity and realised the potential of the internet. We also had several conversations around her health and mobility, and how we could support her in finding ways to improve those. Since then she has received additional help both in her home and beyond. We had a fun Zoom call too – our first opportunity to actually see each other!”*

*Whilst Pam is a bubbly personality she does get lonely, so finding a way to engage with others and find things of interest online, has helped her re-connect and reduce those feelings of isolation. I'm looking forward to hearing about Pam's new online adventures!”*

**Linda Whittaker**

**Macmillan Community Navigator, Age UK Cornwall**

*“I didn't know how much I was missing! It's one of the most wonderful things ever done for me. It's brilliant, a godsend. I'm not perfect yet but am getting there. It's making me think a bit wider. Love the emails but no full stops yet! I wouldn't be without it now and I will progress further. Simon [Digital Inclusion] was brilliant with me. Thank you to all your staff for their support”*

**Pam**

### What we have Learnt

Giving Pam support through the learning, and reassurance of going online, has **helped her build confidence, reduced her social isolation and given her new skills.**

Building a rapport with our partnership teams was key - **enabling Pam to also consider her needs beyond the internet** i.e. to address her mobility issues, and her general health and wellbeing.

We also discussed some of the barriers that people have when trying to connect digitally (access to the right equipment, accessibility, financial restrictions, training etc.) - building on these discussions and Pam's Case study, we are assessing the potential of a project that brings family members in, acting as peer support, to move digitally excluded people online.

### Contact Us

If you know of, are caring for, or are personally affected by cancer please contact our Macmillan Team via our Age UK C&IOS Helpline:

**01872 266 383**

