



Linking Local was an 18-month project to strengthen community-based social connections. The project was designed around people affected by dementia but worked for lots of other people too.

# Digital Connections

For the first half of the project we supported people to strengthen their digital connections. This meant that they were able to stay in touch with the people, places, and activities that mattered to them.

We were able to supply iPad and Mi-Fi devices through Connecting Scotland.

This summary shares some of our learning and top tips.

I was able to keep going to my exercise class online and I've even started doing video calls with my friends and family

## Internet Access

We were surprised at how many people already had internet access in the rural communities we were working in. Lots of people we supported had internet as part of a television or telephone package but didn't have a tablet or smart phone so didn't browse the internet. There are different ways to get an internet connection:

**Broadband** - Internet can be installed in your home. This means getting a small device called a router put in your house which is connected to the internet network via a phone line. Lots of telephone and television packages come with broadband included.

**Mobile Internet** - You can get a data sim card which will allow you to use mobile internet. These sim cards fit into your mobile phone and some tablets so you can get internet when you're out and about.

**Mi-Fi Hotspot** - You can use a device called a mobile hotspot (also called a mi-fi or portable hotspot) to get internet on tablets and smart phones. They also work for devices without a sim card slot, such as a laptop or PC. There are more ways to get the internet. We have linked some resources that go into more detail: **Connecting to the Internet – Choices and Options**  
[https://otbds.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/4634635\\_A4\\_3.pdf](https://otbds.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/4634635_A4_3.pdf)

www.





## Devices

The choice of devices can be overwhelming. We worked with Apple iPads and Samsung Galaxy tablets. Lots of people used their own smart phone, like iPhones, too. Some people had a laptop given to them by a friend or family member and just needed a bit of help getting it set-up. Here are a few things to consider when choosing your own device:

- **Cost** – This can vary hugely with iPads tending to be more expensive, Samsung Galaxy Tablets were more affordable. Lots of organisations and community groups can offer support to find a device for you.
- **Size and Weight** – Some people found the screen size of a phone too small and preferred the larger screen on a tablet. Most people found the tablets comfortable to hold without them getting too heavy. Laptops are heavier and can sometimes be difficult to open.
- **Internet Connection** – All smart phones will accept a sim card but not all tablets do. We found the tablets that accept a sim card to be slightly most expensive. If you don't have broadband/ Wi-Fi at home a tablet with a SIM card is a great option.

## Buddies and Support

We learned from the Digital Buddies project based in the Scottish Borders. The approach matches a person with someone already in their social circle. This could be family, a friend, or a neighbour. It doesn't have to be someone who is a digital expert – just someone with a bit of time and patience.

During lockdown this was hard to do over the phone but lots of people managed to sort things out on the doorstep. We also matched people with buddies through local Time Banks and volunteer groups which also helped to build their social connections even further.

There are national organisations like AbilityNet who have their own team of volunteers. Find them at [www.abilitynet.org.uk](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk)

The Digital Buddies project has now produced some helpful resources found here - [www.otbds.org/projects/digital-buddies/](http://www.otbds.org/projects/digital-buddies/)



# Accessibility Settings

We found most modern mobile phones and tablets had great accessibility features which you access in the settings of your device. They let you adapt your device to make it work better for your own vision, touch, and hearing preferences.

There are so many options it can be a bit overwhelming. It can take time to work out what works best for you. Some of the most popular features were increasing contrast, enlarging text size and slowing the 'scroll' speed. We heard about other people connecting their iPhone to their hearing aid device.

More details can be found in the - [Digital Buddies Accessibility Settings Guide for Samsung Galaxy Tablets](#)

## QUICK TIPS

- **One step at a time.** The choices for digital activities can be overwhelming. We found that introducing only one or two activities helped make the process feel less overwhelming. This might be making a video call or looking up local information.
- **Keep it relevant.** Build digital learning around the things you already enjoy or things that could make life easier. People enjoyed joining their online church service or finding out how to get their weekly food shop delivered.
- **Accessibility.** Most devices like laptops, tablets and smart phones will have options to make it more accessible and easier to use. Each brand and model will offer slightly different settings.
- **Written Guides.** Some people who have dementia said they like having a written step-by-step guide for their digital activities. These can be simple hand-written instructions but some people find images alongside the written instructions helpful. We have an example easy-read guide on our [Linking Local web page](#).
- **Getting the right support.** Support from family, friends, or neighbours made a big difference. The digital buddy role can be shared by a couple of people.  
**Little and often.** People told us that they found it quite tiring. Frequent support for a short amount of time helped more than, for example, a three-hour slot once a week. It's easy to forget new skills but doing it regularly builds confidence and familiarity.

# How to join Monday Movers on your iPad

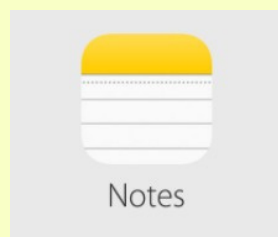
1. Plug in the little white box (this is what makes your iPad connect to the internet) and press the button to turn it on (two green lights should appear).



2. On your iPad press the home button twice (the first press turns it on to the time / date and the next press opens the home screen).



3. Press on Notes which is in the top left-hand corner of the screen.



4. This brings up a message **‘To join Monday Movers press on the link below’**. When you do this, it will open and join the class.
5. It may then ask you if it is ok for Zoom to access your microphone and camera. This is just so that you can be seen and heard by others in the class. Just press yes for each of these questions.
6. When you finish Monday Movers simply close the case on your iPad and it will turn itself off. Then turn off and unplug the small white box till next week.
7. Your iPad will also need charged every couple of weeks. To do this connect the charger and plug it in. It should charge up in a few hours.



If you need help you can call XXXXXX on XXXXXXXX.

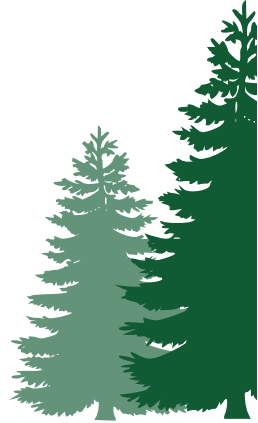




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## Connecting Outdoors

We connect with our communities in lots of different ways. Sometimes it's the small things that can make a big difference to how connected we feel. A hello from a neighbour or a wave from the person in the local shop reminds us that we are part of something bigger than our own households.



People told us how important it was to be able to get outside, especially while pandemic lockdowns kept us apart from our friends and family.

"Some of the woodland paths at The Birks are a bit uneven so I stick to the pavements, I tend to see lots more people going about their day."

"Being outdoors really lifts my mood – I really missed my walking group but I kept up my afternoon stroll."

"I'm never out for long but short walks let me see other faces. A couple of short outings are better than one long one"



Having access to outdoor spaces is important to all of us but there can be some extra things to think about for people living with dementia.



## Think Sensory

Some people who are living with dementia will also experience sensory changes. Different people experience these changes in different ways. Some people have said that it can make trips outdoors a bit disorientating, but with some planning they still enjoy their time in nature.

Here are some examples to consider so you can be more sensory-aware for your next trip outdoors:

"I have issues with my spatial awareness so the shadows from trees and branches can cause me difficulties. I sometimes think they are much closer than they are"

Some people find their sense of touch changing so might find changes in temperature or windy conditions unpleasant.

Reflections - Puddles and ponds can look like holes or ditches in the ground and sunlight on water can cause bright glare.

Hyperacusis is an intolerance to day-to-day background noises. "I'm more sensitive to traffic noises or spaces where there is a lot of chatter. Once I realised I was struggling with the noise I was able to plan my visits for quieter times."

These resources provide more information about some of the sensory changes that can be experienced when living with dementia:

### Dementia and Sensory Challenges

<https://otbds.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/Dementia-and-Sensory-Challenges.pdf>

### Sensory Changes and Dementia –

Taste and Smell <https://otbds.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Sensory-Changes-and-Dementia-Booklet-Final.pdf>

