

Case study



# Digital inclusion for people with learning disabilities

Solent NHS Trust

Lucie Mirams

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## About Lucie

Lucie Mirams is a dedicated occupational therapist with a passion for working with people with learning disabilities. She works for the Portsmouth Integrated Learning Disability Team.

Lucie's first job as an OT was a fixed-term role in her local Community Learning Disability Service.

Here, she took a lead in developing three toolkits, which were designed to help support providers to offer better quality care. They built on the 'Foundations of Good Support,' a resource produced by United Response (2020).

She provided practical resources to help services act on recommendations in the toolkits. These have now become part of the team's housing strategy. They'll be built into commissioning arrangements for all new tenders to provide support to people with learning disabilities in Portsmouth.

Lucie's part in developing these toolkits was recognised and she was offered a permanent position. She was asked to carve out a new OT role

in the intensive support service.

She contributed to the development of a team pathway and a multi-disciplinary screening tool. These helped the team deliver a more holistic service. She educated the team about the importance of occupation which has enabled them to better assess and tailor their support to individuals.

Jenna Symanski (Intensive Support Team lead) says, 'Lucie's input has been influential. We see our cases through a different lens now.'

Lucie has taken an interest in technology. She has promoted the benefits of using mainstream technology for independence. She led a project looking at the use of a virtual reality headset for anxiety management. She has developed a database of apps and websites to help with independence. As a result, Lucie has been asked to lead the implementing a care technology strategy.

## About the innovation

During the COVID pandemic, periods of lock down increased isolation and mental health problems (Tull et al 2020).

Many people used virtual technology to stay in touch with friends and family.

However, Lucie noticed that many of the people she worked with didn't have access to computers, tablets and phones. If they did, many

didn't know how to use them. To tackle this, the government created the Digital Lifeline Fund to reduce inequalities for those who are most digitally deprived. Lucie and her colleagues won funding for 21 tablet devices. These were given to people they worked with who were most in need. She undertook individual assessments. Some people needed keyboards with larger keys and headsets. Lucie got extra funding for these items.

Lucie and her colleagues set up the devices prior to delivery and connected the internet dongle, set up emails and passwords. They provided easy read information about internet safety and how to use social media. They also developed pictorial guides on how to use email.

They also offered socially distanced one to one education sessions, telephone support and signposted individuals to; [a website which has resources to help people use technology.](#)

## Impact

Data regarding hours of support provided and skills achieved were sent to Digital Lifeline and the results of the project were reported nationally (Mackey et al 2022).

68% of people felt their confidence in using technology had increased and 64% felt their skills had improved. 57% felt more connected to others and 53% felt less lonely as a direct result of the project.

Locally of the 21 people who received devices through Lucie's team, everyone found them useful.

For example, Lisa was given a tablet and taught how to use it. She now has the skills and confidence to attend virtual meetings for her volunteering role. This means she can keep working and stay connected with family and friends, reducing her isolation.

The team submitted a proposal to their NHS trust, winning money to spread the innovation further. They purchased smart speakers, smart plugs and an internet dongle allowing them to set up technology skills drop-in sessions for people with learning disabilities.

Tom was supported to start using a smart speaker to manage his daily routine. This means he doesn't need a person to prompt him in the morning – a cost saving of £320 per month.

Feeling inspired to pilot your own innovation?

Share your ideas with the **RCOT Innovation Hub** who can offer support along your journey and share learning more widely.

## References

Mackey J, Howe L, Appleby M, Stone E (2022) Digital Lifeline: a qualitative evaluation Good Things Foundation: London

Tull M, Edmonds A, Gratz K (2020) Psychological outcomes associated with stay-at-home orders and perceived impact of covid19 on daily life Psychiatry Research 289:113098

United Response (2020) Foundations of Good Support [Foundations of Good Support - United Response](#)