

## Digital Connections

By Stephen Moore, Project Manager Gloucester Life Changes

Age UK Gloucestershire's **Digital Connections** project has taken activity online. Our response to Covid has been informed through an appreciation that isolation has been a constant for many older people as has have the technical and emotional challenges of being drawn into the digital economy.

Age UK Gloucestershire already had successful social and activity groups that we refer to as "Springboard Groups". The older people who have joined these groups, within libraries and public spaces, have given each other support to jump back into community life. As lockdown took effect at the end of March this year, we created a new online space called "Gloucestershire Springboard"

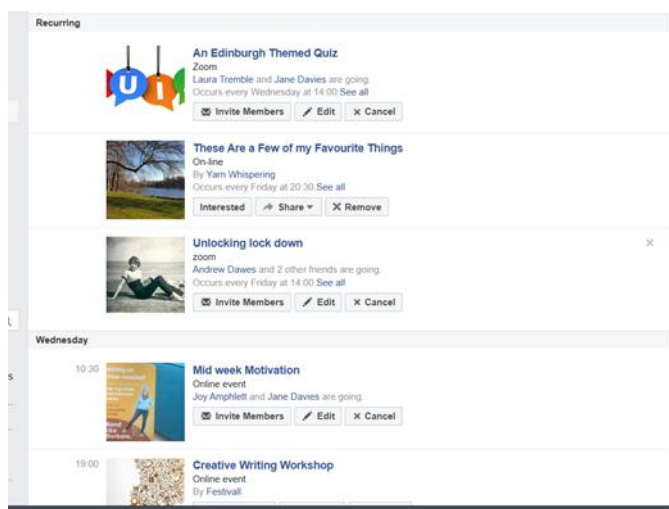
Some of our volunteers have become "**Technology Friends**" and supported people 1:1 to help them adapt their existing technology, start to use a loaned tablet or try software to help them connect.

**Gloucestershire Springboard** offers a welcome to new members from its private Facebook Group at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/gloucestershirespringboard/>

Content within the Facebook Group offers information, a chance to connect with others in online conversation and links to online activities that have been developed using the experience from the groups that met before lock down while responding to the new challenges that the immediate crisis and the 'new normal' bring.

At the beginning of each week, the Facebook Group events section offers a timetable of online activities for the week as well as encouragement to join with online conversation about what has been happening in our day to day lives. We also post links through the week to creative and activity opportunities offered by us and other organisations. Through the week, we provide updates to essential local information.



The events schedule includes links to Zoom facilitated groups that are open to older people around the County.

"IT and Tea at Three" is a group where our "Technology Friend" Volunteers talk to older people about their technology issues.

On Wednesday, we have a regionally themed Quiz and we are just about to start a session called



Reaching the audience and delivering the space to those who can benefit from it continues to require some work and is being addressed through collaboration with VCS and Statutory partners as well as the sharing of posts within community social media spaces.

"Digital Connections", offering; "Gloucestershire Springboard and "Technology" Friends, has been a response to a crisis but offers ongoing opportunities for isolated individuals. Beyond lockdown this resource should be maintained and continue to grow.

[www.ageukgloucestershire.org.uk](http://www.ageukgloucestershire.org.uk)

Facebook - @AgeUKGloucestershire

Twitter - AgeUKGlos