

Hello and welcome to 21 Talks, a podcast series from Housing 21 that's challenging the way older people are represented and talked about in everyday conversations.

Geoff: Hi, everyone, and welcome to this new episode of 21 Talks. My name's Geoff Hopcraft, and I'm the lead learning and organizational development partner with Housing 21.

Now, as has become apparent through the COVID-19 pandemic, technology plays an important part in our everyday lives and certainly does in mine. It enables people to stay connected with one another, to do simple things like ordering food and shopping, and for some, even enables them to do their jobs effectively, even from home.

However, this hasn't always been the case, and there are still millions of people across the UK who don't have the digital skills, say, to use a laptop, or a tablet, or a mobile phone. And Age UK estimate that at least two million people aged over 75 are still digitally excluded, and that cannot be good.

In today's episode, we're going to speak to a number of people, firstly, to residents who are keen to get to grips with using technology that will benefit them on a day-to-day basis, increase their competence and confidence. And we're also going to speak with one of our local housing managers, who will help highlight the work that we are doing within Housing 21 as part of our Transform 21 strategy and partnership with Digital Eagles to support people who are in a similar position.

So, Pauline and Rosina, thank you so much for joining us on this podcast today. Maybe you can perhaps introduce yourselves for our listeners.

Pauline, how long have you been living at the court?

Pauline: I've only been here two years.

Geoff: Two years?

Pauline: Yeah, I lived in Spain for 16 years. I've just come back.

Geoff: Right, okay. Slightly different weather.

Pauline: Much better weather, yeah. But I still like my roots. I still like it here.

Geoff: Absolutely.

Pauline: I wanted to come back. It's my home.

Geoff: Fantastic. And Rosina, what about yourself?

Rosina: I've been living here nine years now. I've just moved in from a studio to a one-bedroom, so loving it.

Geoff: What attracted you to moving into the court?

Rosina: I moved in when my husband died, so I didn't want to be on my own in the house we were in. So, I had been down here anyway, so I was lucky enough to get in.

Geoff: Fantastic. Well, it's great to have you both joining me today. I know there's maybe a slight age difference between the two of you? I'm not going to gauge what that is at all!

Pauline: Absolutely. Now, she would tell you how old she is. Go on.

Rosina: I'm 50...I'm 66.

Pauline: And I'm nearly... I'm 84, 85 in June.

Geoff: Wow, I'm 50 next month. So, there we go.

Pauline: Oh you're a babby ain't he! He's a babby!

Geoff: Thank you so much!

So, if we think about technology over the years and how it's evolved and been adopted, I can imagine that, between the two of you, your experiences of using technology are probably quite different.

Pauline: Absolutely.

Geoff: Maybe we can look at you sharing technology that you would have used in your previous job roles and maybe how that changed as your career developed?

Rosina: When I first went to do with computers, we had a huge room and it always had to be sterile. And you used to have to go through a room into another room to get to this computer, which was the size of... I don't know what.

And it took up the whole room and you used to have to just put cards in it - it was pathetic. Now you can just pick up your phone and do it all on the phone. It's just so different, so totally different.

Pauline: Yeah, mine's been a learning curve. I didn't start even looking at it in Spain until I was about 70. My son teaches computers at a secondary school, an academy, and he doesn't have the time to keep coming over here and showing me what to do when I do everything wrong. So, he said, "Mum, it's a learning curve. you must just sit there and try to do things on your own", which is what I try to do.

Geoff: And realising you can't break it. You just have a go, you know.

Pauline: Luckily, this lady, this Rosina here, she's lovely. She always has more ideas of what to do with computers than most of us in here. We've got a lot of some... we've got a lot of people in here that don't even have a computer and won't even have... They've still got the lift-up phones - Doras, the old Doras - and they just wouldn't have one, would they? They can't use it. They can't use it because they haven't got a... Well, they've not been shown, or they haven't got a clue and they don't like them. At least I've got a smartphone, so! [Laughs]

Geoff: Absolutely, yes, absolutely.

My aunt is in her 90s and she has her tablet, and she loves going on Facebook and she says, "Oh, I always know what you're up to because I've seen you've got a picture of this and you're doing this and you're all over the place". So, she keeps in touch or sends me a message on her mobile. She's, you know, really tech savvy. I think it's great.

I think... the thing with technology, if you can find something that it helps you with something or enjoys, then it's a benefit, isn't it? And I think that's.

Pauline: The thing. I've got to admit, when I was in Spain, Geoff, the only way I could really keep in touch was either by phone, which was expensive, ringing to England, or go in a video link – Facebook - which I did on Facebook. And I still do with all my family in England because they're dotted all over the place.

So that's lovely, I can keep in touch with all... I've got another two sons - I can talk to them on the video. We can see one another. And that's something that at least I can do that. And I'm on Facebook all the time. I love Facebook. And you can see what's going on with your grandchildren and, can't you, what's going on.

Luckily, you see, Rosina's got family pretty near, haven't you.

Rosina: Yeah.

Pauline: Pretty near. So, she's...she's lucky to have family near to her. But I'm sure you'd still go on there, wouldn't you? Video and that? Camera?

Rosina: I do. I go on my phone, and I speak to my sister. We do FaceTime.

Pauline: Yeah, yeah. Because you've got a sister in Cornwall she can talk to, haven't you.

Geoff: Let's talk a little bit more about technology. So, I know you've both put yourselves forward for one of our digital skills courses with Digital Eagles. But for our listeners, how confident would you say you are when it comes to using a computer, laptop, tablet? I know you've touched on it briefly, but can you perhaps expand? Rosina, perhaps you first?

Rosina: I'm not too bad on it. I can try and find my way. But there's things that I can't seem to do, and I get really frustrated. So, then I come off because I get annoyed.

I've had my son come round and I said to him, "how do I do this?". And he'd go on there and he'd go, 'blip blup blip blup blip blup blup'...it's done.

Pauline: That doesn't help you, does it?

Rosina: It doesn't help me because I've missed the second blup, after the first one, so...

Geoff: Yeah.

Rosina: ...that's why I want to learn more so that I can feel more confident to try.

Geoff: Yeah, you learn by doing, don't you?

Pauline: Yeah, it's what my son says.

Geoff: You don't want the solu... Yeah. You don't want the solution to the problem. You want to know how to solve it yourself, don't you?

Rosina: Yeah. It's like when you used to learn your tables, you repeated it, repeated it, repeated it. You know, and that's what I need to do.

Pauline: Yeah. The trouble is when I try to do things like this, invariably I do it wrong, and I turn things off that I shouldn't have done, and I can't get them back. Then I get in a 'paddy' and I have to go all the way over to my son's in the evening, who lives in St. Leonards, near here, when he comes from school, and say to him, "look, I've done this and this and this. I've lost Facebook". I'm in absolute tears. And he says...he just goes the same: 'duh duh duh duh duh' and puts it back. But because he's tired and wants his dinner, he doesn't show me what he did! [Laughs].

Geoff: Yeah. So, it's great that you're using your technology. What is the thing you're probably most looking forward to being able to use technology for, perhaps, that you can't do at the minute? And, you know, you've touched on your son, et cetera. Has that been encouraged by your families?

Pauline: Well, virtually, I suppose it is. But with him, it's the time - the timescale. He works at the school all week, obviously. Weekends he's got a family and he's got a wife that they go out their...on his Harley and he hasn't got really a lot of time to come here and sort me out. My husband's a bit better than me. He does any ordering on eBay or the other one, which I don't do. He does all that. I'm happy with....

Geoff: But he still prefers to go shopping. Doesn't he do Online shopping, for example?

Pauline: No, no, no, no. If it came to the fact that I got ill or he got very ill, then I think we would sit there because my son has told me what I can do to get them to deliver. So I've got a rough idea. But it's things like I can't send photos to people, little things like that.

Say I've got a photo of we've been out somewhere, and I want to send it, I can't. And you get these people that do, like, little videos on there and I can't do that. It's very frustrating at times, I must admit.

Geoff: So, they're two things that you'd be really interested...

Pauline: ...in doing.

Geoff: ...Digital Eagles, for example, helping you, yeah. Fantastic. What about yourself, Rosina?

Rosina: I'd like to...because I have problems with my hands, I'd like to set up an address book so I could just print labels off, so I don't have to keep writing addresses out when I do send mail.

I want to be able to do, like, as Pauline was saying, do a digital collage of all the photos of all the family and all the grandchildren...

Pauline: You've been talking about that, haven't you.

Rosina: So, I'd like to have a couple of collages with all the kids and, say a yearly one, so that I can see the difference in them all over the year. Otherwise, I've got to have 12 photos everywhere, and it's...

Geoff: That's how it's changed, isn't it? When you think, particularly photographs, you know, gone are the days where you used to come back from holiday, get your True Print envelope, send it off through the post, wait for it to come back, see how many heads you've cut off and all of that.

Rosina: Hold on, hold on, you used to have to go to the shop first before you got True Print, mate!

Pauline: [Laughs]

Geoff: [Laughs] Absolutely! But you only had a set number of pictures as well, didn't you? So, you had to be really careful about, "ooh, I've only got one left", you know.

Pauline: That's right.

Rosina: And the amount pictures of feet you got and people with no heads.

Pauline: Yeah, yeah.

Geoff: Ah, my mum was the expert. If you wanted a head cut off, my mum would always say, "give it to me, I'll cut your head off"!

Pauline: Or red eye. With the Kodaks we always had red eye when we... It looked like something from the devil.

Geoff: Or you've got your finger...you got your finger in front of the lens!

[All laugh]

Pauline: Yeah!

Geoff: But now with tablets, yeah, tablets and mobile phones, I mean, we don't tend to use cameras a lot these days, do we? We tend to, you know have a phone and, "oh, I can snap it immediately". Boom, boom, boom.

Rosina: My sister, my grandson got my tablet, and he was telling my sister, and she says....and he said, "it's a really big tablet". She said: "How does he swallow it?"

Geoff: **[Laughs]**

Rosina: She did!

Geoff: I remember when I first started training IT years and years ago, and I said, "can you just move your mouse?" He said, "Aaah! I can't stand mice!"

[Laughter]

Geoff: It's how it develops, isn't it? You know, the things that we take for granted now become second nature, and that will probably continue to develop.

Pauline: Also, my husband now does his banking on Internet. But what I've had to make him do, which I've told you, haven't I, should anything...because he's got heart problem, should anything happen, he's had to write down exactly what I have to do, and I've hidden that away on a piece of...a big piece of paper so that should I not remember what I'm doing, I can follow the things down.

Rosina: But you should try and do it now while he's alive.

Pauline: This is the thing. But it's the time thing. I know because we retired, we're supposed to be able to have all the... you'd be surprised, we don't! We have here at the moment, we have Book Club, which we go to, games, which we go to.

Rosina: Bingo, which I do.

Pauline: Bingo, which she does. About five times a week, you've got all these things. Then you've got your housework to fit in and all your work and visiting the relations, et cetera. So, we're busy old people. Well, *I'm old - busy old person* [laughs].

Geoff: Absolutely. Never enough hours in the day, are there? Well, I suppose if there's anything that you can tick off when it comes to your digital skills list, it's featuring on a podcast! You know, you've done it!

Pauline: That's right! Yeah, yeah.

Rosina: This is our first.

Geoff: Thank you so much for being with us today. It's been really interesting to hear about the changes that you've seen. And I hope that just by listening to this, it will inspire many more people interested in learning to make it possible.

Time for me to say goodbye to you both with grateful thanks and in turn give an equally warm welcome to one of my colleagues, Dave. Dave, thanks for joining us. Perhaps you could start by introducing yourself and explaining your role to our listeners.

Dave: Absolutely. My name's Dave Vause. I am a Local Housing Manager for Housing 21 based at Kipling Court in Bradford. I've been working with Housing 21 now coming up for 18 months. I have a finger just about in every pie that can possibly go within Housing 21 and absolutely loving what I'm doing.

Geoff: That's fantastic to hear. And I know that you're particularly someone who's really passionate about creating opportunities for older people to gain and improve their digital skills. So, I thought maybe you could just share more about this and why you think that's particularly important.

Dave: Well, from my perspective, in the sense that dealing with the generation that we have in the way of our residents, sometimes I can see that some of them are being left out, unfortunately.

And it's disheartening to see those that when you say, "Oh, it's all online," and go, "but I don't have access to a computer". And "this is online, but I don't have access to a phone". And I feel very saddened that...I appreciate societies moving towards a digital world, but unfortunately, some people are being left behind. And that's our residents of the older generation.

And, with that in mind, here at my court and another court, I've done everything that I can to include...and one of the big things I achieved so far at Kipling Court was to invite Age UK in to carry out a primary introductory to working a computer, a tablet, or a smartphone and how to be safe when doing something online. That went down absolutely fantastic and I'm looking to rerun that course.

Geoff: That's fantastic, fantastic to hear. And we heard from the lovely Pauline and Rosina, who are both residents of Housing 21 Scheme - not yours, but one of the other ones that we have throughout the country. And it was really interesting, we heard about their experiences in using technology. So digital skills generally, they highlighted, and I'm sure you and I are aware of how digital skills can, even just the basic ones, can make a big difference to a person's life. In your 18 months at the scheme, what devices do your residents typically use at the court?

Dave: So, the majority use tablets and smartphones. And it's very interesting in the sense: I'll often get a knock on my door, "Dave, I've got stuck with this"; "Dave, can you help me with this?"; "Dave, I can't download this". And it's just sitting down with them, showing them how to do it, which is very simple and watching them walk out with a smile on the face. Love it.

Geoff: Absolutely. And it's taking that fear away, isn't it? Which is fantastic. Am I also right in thinking that your part... your scheme is part of the pilot of Housing 21 with Connect 21? Is that correct?

Dave: It is indeed. We've just recently had a new digital TV installed which allows us to display anything related to Housing 21 on its screen. So, it's like... best to describe as an electronic newsletter, electronic bulletin. Now, since the launch of that, I've got an idea going through my mind which I need to... raise, which is also sitting down with a Bluetooth keyboard and Bluetooth headphones to connect to the TV so that I can sit down and do a virtual display on that. And also, those that don't have digital access, we can do it on the big screen for them, and it kills two birds with one stone.

Geoff: Absolutely. And perhaps building on that, I also believe that you're working as part of our programme of being Digital Champions, where I have aspirations of us having Digital Champions in all our schemes. And we've worked in partnership with Barclays to get that underway. Perhaps you'd be able to talk about how you see Digital Champions improving the skills of our residents.

Dave: Being a Digital Champion is broadening some existing knowledge that we may already have. And I found that the Barclays programme from my initial training with them so far has been fantastic. Some of the areas that they've shown I've not seen before. And it's like, "oh, I never knew that. Fantastic. I can put that into when I'm talking to people". And then going on to the actual digital programme to self-teach... or self-teach on a training module to attain more advancement, more knowledge, and being then able to share that information in such a manner, which is very easy to understand. It's just... it's the way forward.

But it's not just about residents, Geoff. We've also got to look at our colleagues because some of our colleagues are not off with some of the areas as well. So it's about helping them if they get stuck and helping them to pass on the information to their residents.

Geoff: So that's fantastic to hear, Dave. And obviously, your part of the first tranche of digital champions. And we're looking to have those throughout every scheme in-house within Housing 21, which I think will be such a valuable asset to our residents in engaging with technology and building that confidence and reducing that fear that you've already touched on - that some of your residents knock on the door and ask you at the minute.

Dave: Yeah, absolutely. Totally agree with that one, Geoff. It's taking away the fear. You can't put it any simpler than that.

Geoff: Yeah. And we heard from Rosina and Pauline, and one of the key things for them was imagery - that was a key area. Taking photographs and sending images around, creating collages. Are there any common themes that you've had from doing the digital training yourself and talking to the residents who come of certain apps or functions that you think residents would be more interested in about learning about but perhaps don't know where to start?

Dave: I think the biggest ones that I've come across with some of my residents being shopping online, the fear of: but if I put my card details in there, somebody's going to get it. And it's talking to them and advising them to understand that by going down these paths, it's a very secure path and giving them that confidence and assurance that: you go online, you do your shopping as long as it's this web address, it's got this bit on the end of it, and you put the card detail, you are secure, you are safe.

However, you always have a fall back and always give them fall back. Just like I say, to build up their confidence, to reassure them that there's no fear. As long as you're using that trusted website, you've got every confidence it's going to be okay. And the flip side of that is communication.

For a lot of our residents, some here have got family in Australia. So it's getting them to go on to FaceTime and having them talk to their family long distance over the apps. And that is brilliant to see. But it's again, I go on and about 30 light-up, that's what it's all about - having them included, getting them to talk to family, getting them to do this, and it's like, I buzz with it. I really am buzzing with it.

Geoff: Thanks so much for sharing those. And I do think across the housing and care sectors that providers can definitely use existing schemes such as we have with Digital Eagles and Digital Champions for the benefit of the residents. I know one of the most popular modules that we look at delivering is about fraud and scams, which is exactly what you're talking about: taking that fear out, giving that confidence, and getting people to use the technology, such as shopping and banking and that type of thing.

Fantastic. On that note, perhaps for anyone who's listening to today's episode, who doesn't feel particularly confident with using a computer, or maybe shies away from speaking to their local Housing Manager, such as yourself, through fear,

embarrassment, or about asking for help, say to pay their rent online, for example, what would be one piece of advice that you would give to them?

Dave: I kind of say it's the fear of the unknown, but don't be afraid to ask. There's always an answer and we're there to help. If you go to your doctor to ask something about your health, you're asking for your own benefit to get an answer. Look at it as if you're speaking to your doctor to get an answer for digital inclusion. That's the best way I could describe that.

Geoff: Fantastic. Yeah, and very often it's not about the solution, is it, it's about the experience getting there because if you do that, you're going to do it again, aren't you. So fantastic.

I have to say, Dave, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us and also for the work that you do each and every day. It's been great hearing from you and I'm sure that our listeners found it useful too. So, thinking of those, thank you to all our listeners today for tuning in. We'll see you soon. Take care for now.

Dave: Thank you. Goodbye.