

Sandra's Digital Journey



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Many people relied on technology to keep them connected to the outside world during the Covid-19 pandemic - but what if you had no digital experience and had to learn from scratch? This is Sandra's story...

Sandra, a North Tyneside resident is a retired nurse and lecturer, she put patients at the heart of everything and still believes that's how it should be. Naturally, good communication is key and face to face contact was the most important element of her work.

Whilst Sandra did use computers in her job it was mainly for emails or the occasional presentation. When Sandra retired her main way of communicating with old colleagues, family and friends was either in person or on the landline phone. It's fair to say she wasn't keen on mobile phones or computers; her husband uses these devices and she feels he embraced technological changes more than she did.

Sandra is a very active CCG Patient Forum member and is always enthusiastic about sharing her experiences and views for the benefit of patients. When the pandemic hit it became very clear early on that staying involved would mean having to learn how to use devices and being comfortable with them. Sandra was happy to be interviewed and to share her story.

When and how did you realise you needed a phone and laptop?

When the CCG started holding meetings on MS Teams I decided to invest in a smart phone, I had never had one or felt the need to have one up to this point, also the laptop I could have used at home was a bit outdated. I was also aware as well as not being part of meetings I could quickly become distanced from family and friends if I didn't embrace technology.

How did you feel about buying them in terms of what you needed and cost?

My husband was my sourcing and technical help and the cost wasn't an issue and on reflection I now feel it was one of my best investments.

How easy or difficult was it for you to learn how to use them?

On a scale of one to five, with one being easy and five being very hard I would have rated myself a five and knew instantly

I would need lots of practice.

What were your biggest concerns?

Feeling obliged to be more involved and available was a concern and I soon realised I was in control of that, but the biggest problem was my aversion to technology although this was outweighed by not wanting to be left out or behind.

Did you understand about Teams, texts and emails?

I had an awareness of these terms especially emails as I was familiar because of my job but not texts or Microsoft Teams

Did you find it easy to use them, did you need or get any help?

I appreciate the patient help and guidance from the Patient Forum facilitator and Frank and would have struggled without that.

Has it become easier to use over time?

Looking back, I feel so glad I've done it as I have stayed involved with the different groups and been able to receive and send family videos for example. Apps especially are a big part of my usage as is searching for answers to questions I have. I have decided not to be part of Facebook because of the amount of friend requests I'm likely to get and the time I feel it would take up.

What do you feel you would have missed out on if you didn't have devices?

Family and friends contact and attending meetings would have all been minimal or stopped.

Would you say you feel part of digital life?

Yes, I absolutely would say that I'm doing so many things on my phone and laptop.

What would you have done differently through your journey?

I should have faced my fears of the unknown and embraced it sooner also I would have invested in the devices sooner than I did.

Will you continue to use your devices after COVID?

I will continue to use my mobile phone and laptop as I see the benefit of having them now.

What advice would you give to other people in your situation?

Embrace technology, don't be scared and ask for help.

Are you pleased with how you have adapted?

I'm very pleased, it has enriched my life and I never thought I would think that.

Any other points you want to raise?

Just to confirm people should face their fears it keeps you connected it links you to support, the internet is a wonderful thing.

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