Case Study: The Human Impact of Digital Skills Learning

This report highlights the diverse and transformative journeys of eleven learners who participated in the *MBLR Digital Skills for Over 50s Project*. Through their individual stories, we demonstrate the project's success in not only imparting technical knowledge but also in building confidence, fostering community, and empowering individuals to overcome significant personal barriers.

1. Overcoming Personal Adversity The project was designed to be inclusive, and several learners demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of unique challenges.

- **Catryn:** Living with a chronic pain disability and being neurodivergent, Catryn's journey was a testament to her dedication. Despite her physical challenges, she participated with admirable perseverance, asking insightful questions and providing valuable feedback that enriched the learning experience for all. Her commitment proves that with the right support, physical and cognitive barriers do not have to limit digital growth.

- **Peter:** Acknowledging his learning disability, Peter was a model of honesty and determination. While some complex tasks were challenging, he consistently attended sessions and participated fully in group activities. His presence and active listening highlight that success is not just about mastering every skill, but about the courage to show up and engage with the learning process.

2. Building Confidence & Overcoming Reluctance For many learners, the project's most significant outcome was a boost in self-belief and a change in mindset towards technology.

- **Ebbie:** Initially anti-technology and reluctant, Ebbie came to the project for one-to-one help with emails. The supportive environment

and engaging content inspired her to join every subsequent session. Her journey from being reluctant to being an enthusiastic and active participant with great determination is a powerful example of how a safe and friendly learning space can overcome initial aversions.

- **Julie:** Julie's lack of digital skills was compounded by low self-confidence. However, her determination to learn was a driving force. By actively asking questions and requesting specific learning topics, she took ownership of her education. Her story illustrates that active participation, driven by a desire to understand, is key to building competence and self-assurance.

3. The Power of Peer Support & Community A key component of the project's success was the strong sense of community and the culture of mutual support.

- **Errol:** Already possessing some digital knowledge, Errol's greatest contribution was his role as a peer mentor. He actively used his expertise to help others, creating a warm and relaxed environment. His willingness to share his knowledge and encourage others to grow demonstrates the ripple effect of learning and the power of a supportive group dynamic.

- **Paul:** A good team player, Paul came with some digital knowledge but focused on strengthening his weak areas with great resilience and determination. His commitment to learning and his willingness to contribute to group discussions and provide feedback show how collaborative effort benefits both the individual and the group as a whole.

- **Phillip:** Joining the project halfway through, Phillip's quick integration and participation were a testament to the welcoming group environment. He seamlessly gelled with the group, participated well in learning activities, and showed a great willingness to learn, reinforcing the importance of creating a space where newcomers feel welcome and supported.

4. Focused Learning & Personal Goals The project successfully catered to the individual needs and specific learning goals of each learner, from using new devices to ensuring safety.

- **Teresa:** Limited to using only her phone, Teresa demonstrated that powerful learning is not dependent on having a variety of devices. She participated tremendously well in all activities, proving that focused effort on a single device can yield incredible results and allow a learner to get the most out of what they already have.

- **Jerod:** Driven by a personal goal to become more digitally independent, Jerod's learning was focused on getting the most out of his phone. Inspired by his wife's skills, he was a dedicated learner who actively participated and asked questions to ensure he truly understood, highlighting the motivation that comes from having a clear personal objective.

- **Debbie:** Debbie's journey was defined by a strong focus on online safety. She participated well in the group and made conscious decisions to only perform certain sensitive tasks on her laptop, demonstrating a keen understanding of security best practices. Her cautious, yet proactive approach to managing personal information underscores the importance of a mindful approach to digital security.

Conclusion The stories of Catryn, Teresa, Ebbie, Julie, Paul, Errol, Jerod, Debbie, and Phillip collectively illustrate the profound impact of the *MBLR Digital Skills for Over 50s Project*. They show that regardless of a learner's starting point, personal barriers, or prior mindset, a supportive, well-structured, and person-centred approach can lead to significant positive outcomes in digital literacy, confidence, and personal empowerment.