



## SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

# Project Case Study: Tackling Social Isolation - Creating Social & Online Communities for Disabled People



### THEME:

Health

### FUNDING (ERDF+Match)

€5,557,509.42

### MATCH FUNDERS:

Department of Health  
Northern Ireland & Ireland.

### LEAD PARTNER:

Disability Action NI

### PROJECT PARTNERS

Disability Action NI, NI  
Housing Executive,  
Supporting Communities,  
Independent Living  
Movement Ireland

**Start Date:** 01/05/2018

**End Date:** 31/12/2022



[www.disabilityaction.org/  
onside](http://www.disabilityaction.org/onside)



@ONSIDEccc



@onside\_project



onside-project

The phrase 'social isolation' may be a new concept during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it's a well known one for those living with disabilities.

The cross-border Outreach and Navigation for Social Inclusion and Digital Engagement project (ONSIDE) is helping improve the health and well-being of disabled people by reducing the social isolation they experience daily.

*"What most of us are experiencing now is not real-life 'social isolation'. We can still go to the shop or head out for a walk once a day. We also know thankfully, these restrictions are not forever. But what if they were?"*

*Many disabled people live with long term social isolation. Issues such as limited or restricted access to transport, no after-hours social care and limited uptake of internet use mean many recreational hobbies and leisure activities are not accessible to them. Rather than living as active citizens they are forced indoors to face the reality of an unwanted, lonely life".*

**Orla McCann, ONSIDE Project Manager**

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic hampered the creation of social connections in participants' local communities. In response, staff quickly refocused their efforts to upscale the digital training element of the project which sees participants take part in an eight-week, digital skills programme.

Such training equips and supports participants in becoming socially connected online. Staff focused on digitally training as many participants as possible, using Zoom and realigned their programme to be entirely online.

The benefit of this digital training on participants' health and well-being was two-fold: participants were able to connect with family and friends during lockdown periods, helping to reduce feelings of social isolation; and they were able to remain living independently, reducing feelings of anxiety and stress.



**THEME:**

Health

**FUNDING (ERDF+Match)**

€5,557,509.42

**MATCH FUNDERS:**

Department of Health  
Northern Ireland & Ireland.

**LEAD PARTNER:**

Disability Action NI

**PROJECT PARTNERS**

Disability Action NI, NI  
Housing Executive,  
Supporting Communities,  
Independent Living  
Movement Ireland

**Start Date:** 01/05/2018

**End Date:** 31/12/2022



[www.disabilityaction.org/onside](http://www.disabilityaction.org/onside)



@ONSIDEccc



@onside\_project



onside-project

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

## Project Case Study: Tackling Social Isolation - Creating Social & Online Communities for Disabled People

Having gained their new digital skills and equipment, participants were able to socialise in their online communities, shop online, bank online and order essential services e.g. prescriptions and home heating oil.

The extracts below demonstrate the life-changing impact this project is having upon participants.

*“ONSIDE has improved my overall well-being. I feel more confident using the internet and to register for, and take part in, online activities. I was able to join Tesco and Iceland and do online grocery shopping while I was shielding during lockdown. I love having my tablet and listening to podcasts on it. It's a way of connecting with the wider world. Learning how to use zoom has been really useful too. I find it easier to do research using the larger screen on my tablet.”*

*“It was an education! I've learnt how to do things that I didn't know how to do before. I now use my tablet to look up cars for sale, and manuals for equipment.”*

*“It has helped my well-being. I don't feel as isolated anymore and it has boosted my confidence. I don't feel as lost. I feel more a part of something and supported.”*

