

# A rapid review of the effectiveness of interventions for addressing digital exclusion in older adults

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Alesha Wale, Jordan Everitt, Toby Ayres, Chukwudi Okolie, Helen Morgan, Hannah Shaw, Elizabeth Doe, Bets Ingram, Mel McAulay, Ruth Lewis, Alison Cooper, Adrian Edwards

## Background

**Digital exclusion** involves sections of the population who **cannot or decide not to exploit the benefits of digital technologies**.

Older adults constitute the largest proportion of non-users of the internet.

It is important to understand **how best to support older adults** to overcome the challenges they face with accessing or engaging with the digital world.



## Aim

This rapid review aims to assess the effectiveness of interventions to **address digital exclusion in older adults**.

## Evidence Base

A total of **21 comparative primary studies** were included in the review across **14 countries**, published between 2018 and 2023.

## Key Findings

**Overall, the evidence relating to effectiveness appears to be in favour of the interventions.**

There is **low certainty** evidence of the effectiveness of:

- Traditional digital literacy interventions
- Interventions that are incorporated into existing services
- Interventions incorporating gamification
- Tailored computer software
- Intergenerational approaches
- Teaching specific digital literacy skills such as deception detection



There is **low certainty** evidence that a range of interventions can improve **digital literacy, increase technology uptake, improve self-perceptions of abilities and acceptability of technology itself**.

Low certainty evidence also suggests that older adults are **accepting of interventions to improve their digital skills**.

## Research Implications

- **Further high-quality UK-based research is needed** to better understand the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions
- Implementation of interventions requires **rigorous evaluation**

## Evidence Gaps



A lack of **cost-effectiveness studies**



No interventions to address **language barriers** (e.g. for those whose first language is Welsh)

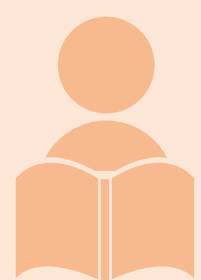


No studies specifically aimed to address the **accessibility and affordability issues** of digital exclusion

## Policy and Practice Implications

To **reduce digital exclusion in older adults**, evidence suggests:

- It is important to address structural barriers, such as **access to the internet** and **affordability of devices**.
- **Educational interventions may help to reduce perceptual barriers that contribute to digital exclusion** (including lack of confidence, fear and anxiety, or perceived lack of ability to use digital technologies.)
- Older adults should have the **choice** to interact with essential services physically (offline) or digitally.



The full report is available to view here:

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2024.03.21.24304670v1>