

Case study

Creating life-changing opportunities for carers through digital skills for Carers NSW



The issue they faced

There are more than 2.65 million carers in Australia and the role they play in our communities is essential.

Findings from the Carers NSW 2020 National Carer Survey showed that more than one third of carers are highly socially isolated and one in four carers have low levels of social support. Around half of all carers responding to the Survey indicated that they had experienced some form of financial stress in the last 12 months.



The Survey also found that only a minority of carers were accessing carer support services, but most played a key role in coordinating services for the people they care for, which many carers reported to be complex and challenging. While most carers responded that they were confident online, their overall confidence was lower with accessing online services than with other activities, such as communicating with friends and family and sourcing information.

With COVID-19 exacerbating social isolation and increasing reliance on online delivery of information and services, Carers NSW wanted to find a way to support carers to build their confidence online, while also addressing financial barriers.

In 2021, Carers NSW partnered with YourLink to create the 'Connecting Carers Online' digital project as part of their Carer Gateway service offerings in the Hunter New England, Central Coast and North Coast regions.

The solution

‘Connecting Carers Online’ is a digital education project to help carers gain access to smart devices and learn the essential basics of online skills in order to use them with confidence.

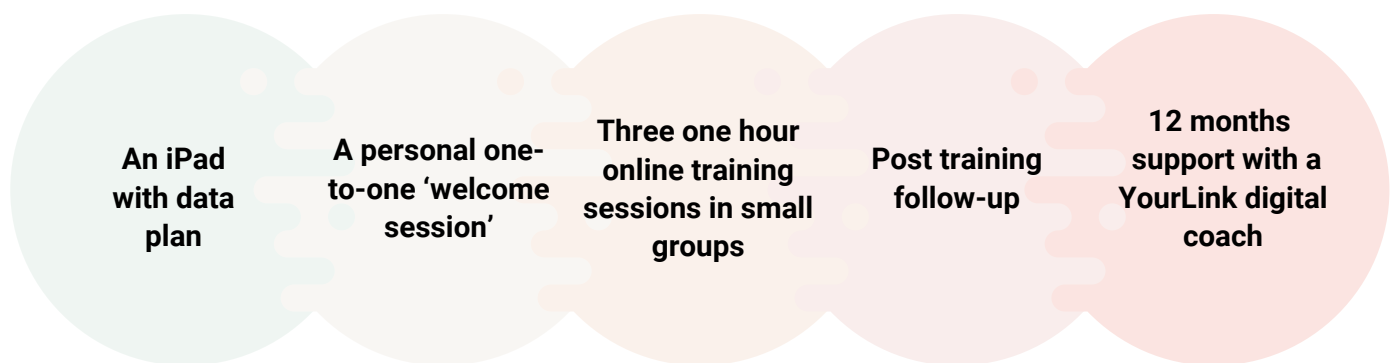
YourLink’s approach to successful digital learning and long-term adoption is through co-design. Carers NSW and YourLink partnered to ensure that carers’ needs, situations, skills and environments were at the heart of the program.

Marketing and communication support was also provided by YourLink to help with attracting appropriate participants to join the program.

“By partnering with YourLink for this project, we will be supporting these carers who may not have had the confidence, skills or resources to engage online with friends, family and support services, up until now.”

– Carers NSW, CEO, Ms Elena Katrakis

The first phase of the program supported 70 carers between March 2021 and March 2022 and included:



Adapting delivery in a COVID-19 environment

Running a program like this during COVID-19 lockdown is no easy feat. The environment meant that access to carers was disrupted, limiting the ability to hand over iPads. More flexibility was also required with the program schedule and moving things around to accommodate carers individual support needs. YourLink invested in making this work to build a supportive, group learning experience focussed on learning digital skills and removing barriers to participation.

* iPads were used for this project as YourLink is an Apple Reseller and team members are part of the Apple Consultants Network.

The impact

The program has been so successful that it will continue supporting the first group of carers and bring in an additional 100 Carers in 2022.

The results from the program to date:

70

carers have received iPads and a personal welcome session

32

online group training sessions were delivered via Zoom

94%

carers gave feedback that the training experience met or exceeded their goals

Participants are surveyed at the beginning and end of the program to ensure that the training and support offered meets their individual needs, and to enable analysis of the impact of participating in the program on carers' digital confidence levels.

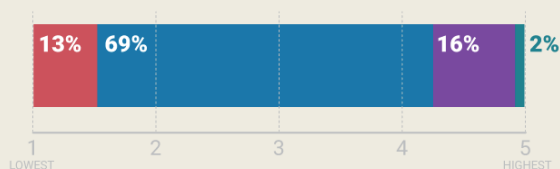
Participating carers start the program with varying knowledge, skills and confidence and a range of different individual goals. The vast majority of carers either met or exceeded their goals by participating in the program.

“Learning to connect online can greatly improve carers’ wellbeing and reduce feelings of isolation by connecting them with friends and family and to access information, services and interests without leaving home. This project has really delivered on that. The team at YourLink have gone over and above to support our Carers to participate in an incredibly challenging time. I’m looking forward to working with them again on the 2022 program.”

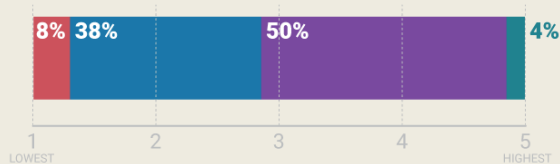
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Participants’ self-ranking prior to training. 1 = lowest rating to 5 = highest rating.

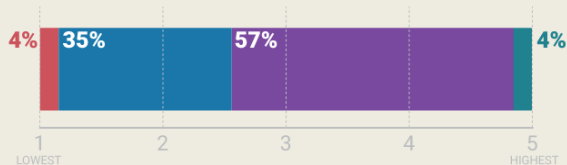
Knowledge



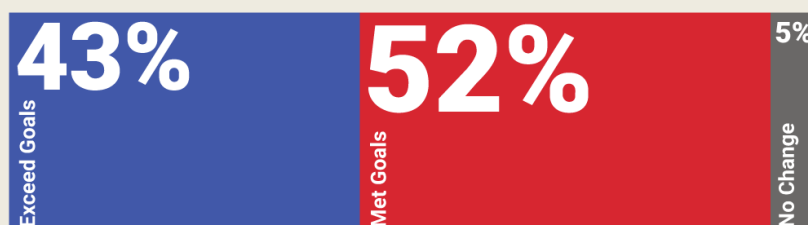
Skills



Confidence



Participants’ self-ranking after three training sessions YourLink conducted follow-up calls 3 weeks after Session 3.



Feedback from Carers

"I'm independent from the kids and someone helping me, this is really good. Everyone is so busy with no time to help and now slowly I have been able to do emails, safari, it's excellent."



"I have been going to the library for 55 years but haven't been since I got the iPad as I have been enjoying so many other forms of entertainment, movies etc on iView and other platforms. I haven't downloaded a book yet but plan to."

"I think I was a zero but I've gone to a 7."

"I have been using the Podcast App and it's my new best friend. I've been downloading episodes for my husband to listen to. He has dementia and this has been the only thing that I've been able to get him to stay focused with. It has been amazing for him."

"The Ipad was just a black box before and I was petrified - now it's becoming my friend."



"Facebook is my 'best friend', all my friends live out of my area so they live on Facebook for me. It's great to be able to contact them through Facebook and also Messenger. I use it to keep in touch with my family as well."

"I love it and use it all the time, it's encouraged me to explore more things, I've been downloading brain training games."

"I was on a zoom meeting the other day and I could hear other people and see everyone in the meeting so that was great now that I learnt to use all the settings."

"I've learnt a hell of a lot more since the training and I'm much more inquisitive about things to check them out. I do everything on the iPad now - car rego, licence, family by video...anything I do I tell them to send me any email. The only downside (laughing) is it's a great time waster"

"I have just completed a Cert III in Individual Support for Home and Community all online since I got the Ipad. I'm tickled pink with what I've achieved. It's been a life changer for me. I'm a tupperware consultant so having the iPad has been really helpful for this as well."



"At the beginning I didn't have a lot of confidence. I was scared to try things on the Ipad. I've gone from terrified to more confident."

"I feel more secure. I don't need to keep running to the grandkids to ask them for help, now I can do things without needing their help and getting in trouble for touching the wrong buttons on their iPad."

About YourLink

YourLink recognises that aged care providers work in a dynamic environment faced with many challenges. Embedding a digital inclusion program might seem like a large and challenging task, especially when you don't know where to start, how to fund it, resource it, or manage the delivery so that the program is truly a success.

We have trained over 4,500 seniors, carers and care workers and bring this unique experience to co-design the right solution for you. Our approach is to simplify things through an integrated offering. We partner with you and provide a unique managed solution enabling your program through strategy, program design, training, coupled with devices and data connecting seniors living in aged care and independently at home.

4,500

seniors, carers and care workers trained by YourLink

96%

would recommend us to friends and family

96%

would attend another training event with us

We also assist in guiding you in what Government funding might be available to achieve a cost-neutral solution.

Our partnerships with other organisations can complement your program and we are the leading Apple Consultants Network member for the Australian Aged and Community Care sector.

To achieve our mission of opening up the digital world for seniors, let's talk about what we can do together.

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About Carers NSW

Carers NSW is the peak non-government organisation for carers in New South Wales (NSW). A carer is any individual who provides care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail. Carers NSW is part of the National Carer Network and a member of Carers Australia. For more information, please visit carersnsw.org.au or phone 02 9280 4744.

Carers NSW also delivers in-person Carer Gateway services in the Hunter New England, Central Coast and North Coast regions of NSW. Carer Gateway is a national network of support services for carers.

For more information, please visit carergateway.gov.au or phone 1800 422 737.

For more information about Connecting Carers Online, please email contact@carersnsw.org.au or phone 02 9280 4744.

Carers interested in participating in the program who live in the Hunter New England, Central Coast or North Coast regions of NSW can phone Carer Gateway on 1800 422 737. Please note that eligibility criteria apply in order to ensure that the program assists those most in need.