

ENGELSK VERSJON

Title: Digital exclusion – “Digifriend” and intergenerational meetings as a solution

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Issue

600.000 people are living in digital exclusion, and one of the groups struggling the most are the elderly. In the last years, digitization has expanded, and the pandemic has resulted in an increased tendency of exclusion. In the public health initiative, exclusion is an increasing problem, and elderly will remain outsiders until customized education is given. The need to master the digital world is increasing, both in terms of socialization, inclusion and to gain access to equality in online health services.

Description of the problem

The project “Digifriend» was developed as an answer to the exclusion challenge and works as an educational model, where youths guide elderly to increase digital competence. The main goal was to create arenas for social meetings across generations, as well as increase digital competence and digital health competence. The project was developed in the region of Nord-Gudbrandsdalen and was driven by the regional council, the high school, municipalities and volunteers. “Digifriend” consisted of both digital and physical guidance, in addition to follow-ups and continued digital meetings.

Results(effects/changes)

A total of 45 students were trained as digital friends. 6 municipalities were included, and the project reached 450 elderly. In cooperation with the elderly, the project developed an educational model for the device called KOMP. Participants went from having physical contact with their loved ones occasionally to having digital contact daily. Recipients of a digital friends had their network expanded, as well as increased contact within their existing network. The elderly also experienced a close relationship with their digital friend at school and gained new relationships through the training.

Lessons

The elderly feels more included and get to follow their families on a daily basis. The group is motivated to learn and have an increased understanding of how the technology works. We have experienced and been told from the participants themselves that they feel less lonely as a result of the relations that occurred in this project. Going forward there will be a need for differentiation in training due to varying basic technology knowledge in the group, and different access to technological tools. The project generated far more volunteer-hours than initially assumed, indicating that the project resulted in positive relations that both elderly and students desired to maintain.

“Digifriend” is a sustainable solution to the digital exclusion challenge and is likely to be an applicable method nationally. It is a direct answer to the UN’s goals for sustainable development, regarding partnerships for the goal, reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, quality education and well-being.

Main messages/Implications for prevention

“Digifriend” has resulted in multiple positive effects: increased digital competence, prevention of loneliness, increased family contact and expanded network. The project can be developed nationally.