



## Lifelong learning: the future is intergenerational

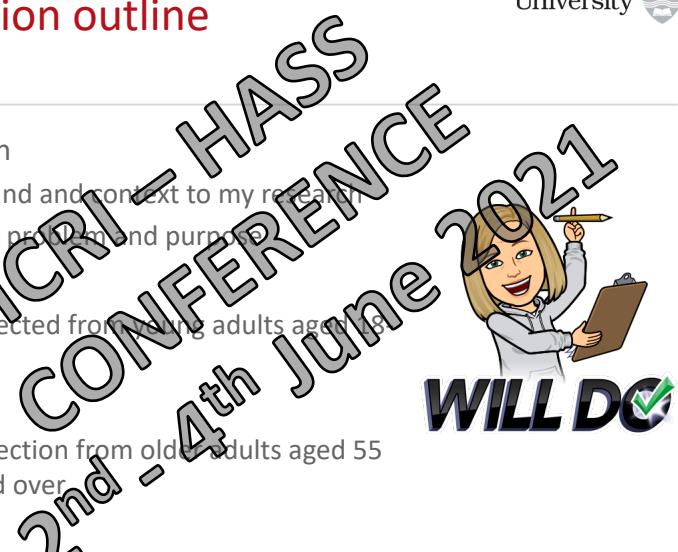
3 June, 2021  
Sandra Flynn



## Presentation outline



- ❑ Introduction
  - ❑ Background and context to my research
  - ❑ Research problem and purpose
- ❑ Insights
  - ❑ Data collected from young adults aged 18-25 years
- ❑ Next steps
  - ❑ Data collection from older adults aged 55 years and over



*All images courtesy of Bitmoji*

**Who is Sandra?**

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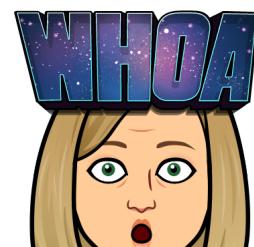
- ❑ A third year PhD student on the e-research and technology enhanced learning structured programme at Lancaster University.
- ❑ Eternal student and lifelong learner.
- ❑ An experienced project and programme manager.
- ❑ A long-standing part-time teacher of project management and MSc research supervisor at the University of Limerick, Ireland.

**Research interest area?**

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AgeAction  
For all older people



Majority of over 65s have never used the internet

*Source: <https://www.ageaction.ie/news/2018/03/28/majority-over-65s-have-never-used-internet>*

## So, what's my research problem?



During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the importance was highlighted for information and communications technologies (ICTs) for the over 65-year-olds in Ireland, in order to stay in contact with family and friends while confined to their homes.

Table: Never accessed the Internet

Year	65-74 year olds	55-64 year olds
2018	55%	25%
2019	33%	17%
2020	13%	9%

Source: Eurostat



## So, what was my research about?



I was interested in understanding more about the digital communications skills of these older adults during this period...  
...through the eyes of their young family members.

I surveyed 442 young people between the ages of 18 and 25 years at two universities in Ireland where 56% supported one or more older family members with digital communications during the Spring 2020 lockdown period between March and June.



**Research questions**

Overarching: To what extent and how, did young people contribute to the development of digital communication skills by senior cohort family members during the several weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in Ireland?

RQ1 - How successful, and in what way, did young people consider their efforts to support their senior cohort family members with digital communications?

RQ2 - What did young people themselves learn from this intergenerational exchange experience?

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**What did I find?**

- Theme 1 – “Age is a big number and family is everything”
- Theme 2 – “Mum has simply got left behind”
- Theme 3 – “The joy on their faces”
- Theme 4 – “Supporting older people is rewarding for both parties”

**WHAT HAPPENED?**



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## Moving along, what's my PhD research about?



- ❑ My PhD research examines the contribution of intergenerational relationships to informal and non-formal lifelong learning practices of older adults in Ireland.
- ❑ The overarching research aim considers how and the extent to which intergenerational relationships can support the development of digital literacy skills amongst older adults.
- ❑ It offers a proposition that younger adults can support older adults to develop and maintain digital literacy skills and thus contribute to quality of life in later years.

## PhD research questions



RQ1 - What has been the contribution of Irish government digital policy to the achievement of the sustainable development goal, SDG4, of promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all?

RQ2 - How do informal and non-formal learning exchanges through use of digital technologies across the generations contribute to adult lifelong learning at all ages?

RQ3 - What are the perceived impacts to personal quality of later life by being connected in a digital world?



What do I expect to find?

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References

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Age Action. Briefing Paper 6 - Supporting Digital Literacy among Older People. (2020). [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/supporting\\_older\\_peoples\\_digital\\_literacy\\_briefing\\_paper\\_6\\_january\\_2020\\_update\\_of\\_paper\\_5\\_first\\_publication\\_march\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/supporting_older_peoples_digital_literacy_briefing_paper_6_january_2020_update_of_paper_5_first_publication_march_2018.pdf)

Eurostat. (2019). Individuals - internet use. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/digital-economy-and-society/data/database>

