



## Types of Technology in Aged Care:

# Social Engagement Technology

Aged care services are increasingly embracing innovative digital technologies to improve the care experiences of older people and to enable care workers to do more, even with fewer resources (e.g., staff, financial). This information sheet on social engagement technology is part of a series covering types of technology currently used in aged care. These information sheets are available on the [ARIIA website](http://www.ariia.org.au).

### What are social engagement technologies?

Social engagement technologies support older adults to keep in contact with friends and family. [1] They include social media apps such as video chat products (e.g., WhatsApp) and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These technologies can also connect older people with people they don't know who share common interests, thereby expanding their social connections.

### How are social engagement technologies used in aged care?

Older people living in residential aged care or alone in the community are at increased risk of social isolation and feelings of loneliness. Technologies that support communication can play an important role in integrating older adults into the wider community and promoting social connectedness. [2] Older people living in residential aged care can be encouraged to use these technologies at any time of the day or night. However, assessment of existing facility infrastructure may be necessary to support increasing levels of online engagement. This may require increasing the range of Wi-Fi access so that it reaches bedrooms and shared living spaces. Other considerations include having reliable and fast broadband speed, providing ample power points for charging devices outside of rooms, and supplying electronic tablets (e.g., iPads) to people who do not have their own. Not all older people will have the skills or knowledge to use mobile devices, or the apps required to connect with others. Therefore, residential aged care facilities and home care services may need to address technology literacy skills to increase the confidence and ability of older adults to use technology safely without the need for ongoing staff support. [4]

### References

1. Sixsmith A, Gutman G. Technologies for active aging. 1st 2013. ed. New York, NY: Springer US; 2013.
2. Zamir S, Hennessy CH, Taylor AH, Jones RB. Video-calls to reduce loneliness and social isolation within care environments for older people: An implementation study using collaborative action research. *BMC Geriatr.* 2018;18(1):1-1.

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ARIIA was established as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, set up to lead the advancement of the aged care workforce capability by promoting and facilitating innovation and research to improve the quality of aged care for all Australians.

### How can social engagement technologies benefit the aged care sector?

Social engagement technologies offer many benefits to the aged care sector – they can increase socialisation and contact with loved ones for older people and enable them to independently communicate with others. This can increase their sense of autonomy and may improve quality of life and general mental health. [3]

### Examples of social engagement technologies in aged care

Some social engagement technologies include:



**Facebook:** An interactive application that can be used to connect with friends and family.



**WhatsApp:** A free, simple, and private messaging and call service designed to keep people connected.



**Words with Friends:** An online game where players take turns building words into a crossword-puzzle. This game allows people to play with friends or connect with new people and can provide mental stimulation for all ages.