InformationNOW
Information for people in Newcastle upon Tyne

Social Networking

Older people may find social networking useful and interesting as it provides the opportunity to

Reconnect with old friends, colleagues and family members. As people retire or change careers, online social networks can be a way to stay in touch or get support.

Discover online communities of people with similar experiences. This could focus on a shared interest, such as gardening, music or possibly illness. This may be useful to those who are unable to leave the house and can find a source of support online.

Connect with their younger friends or family. Children and grandchildren may already be active Facebook users and it is a great way of keeping in touch and communicating in a quick and affordable way, especially if they live elsewhere.

Play online games There are a number of free online games that can be played via Facebook, such as FarmVille and DrawSomething. This enables Facebook users to play online games with their friends.

Getting Started

There are a number of different social networking websites available, including sites that are specifically aimed at older people. Whichever social networking service you choose to use there are a number of things that you will need to;

1. Register your account. This is usually **free.** You will need an email account to do this and to give some of your personal information to register.

2. Create your own personal profile. You can put as much or as little information as you wish into your public profile. You are in control of what information you want to share with others. For example, you may not want to publish your full birth date. You can choose to exclude the year of your birth which can help to protect your identity online. You may choose to include a photo of yourself as your profile picture. This will help others recognise you and could help your friends to find you online. However some people choose to use a picture of something else, such as a landscape as they don't want to share their own photos.

3. Choose your privacy settings When you set up your account it is a good idea to ensure that your account is protected. You can choose to make your account private or to restrict the view of your profile by others. This can make it more difficult for your friends to find you so you may wish to make your profile picture visible so that they can recognise you when they look for you.

4. Start finding your friends If you have your friends email addresses you can use these to find them on the social networking site if they have an account. You can also invite your friends to join

you online.

5. Friends may try to find you You may receive friend requests from others who you know, and some who you may not. It is wise to check that you know the person before you accept a friend request, as this means you share your profile with them and they can see the information that you choose to share.

6. Get Involved The more that you put into a social network the more you will get back from it. For example, if you find a video, a webpage or an article online that you enjoy you can share it with your friends. People can then comment on things that you post online and tell you that they 'like' what you have shared. Sharing photos is a great way of letting people know what you have been up to, or seeing friends and family. You can comment on photos or your photos may be commented on by your friends. Sharing your ideas can help to start conversations and these can turn into friendships.

7. Discover new interests You may find that your favourite band, local MP, TV programme, radio show, actor or newspaper have a social networking profile. Many organisations and public figures use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to let people know what they are doing. This can be entertaining and informative. You can 'follow' their updates on Twitter or 'make friends' with them on Facebook.

Which Social Network Service To Choose?

> Please follow the guidelines for staying safe online. Don't disclose any information that you do not wish to share and please remember that anything that you share online can be seen by others who you may not know, unless you make your account private. For more information please visit the **Staying Safe Online Article** on InformationNOW.
>
> If you are worried or concerned about another person's behaviour online towards you, you can report them to the website, particularly if they are being racist, rude or offensive and their account may be suspended. You can also block specific people from being able to see your profile and your information.

Facebook

Facebook is a very popular social media site. You must register before using the site and then create a personal profile. Facebook requires your name and profile picture (if you have one) to be accessible by everyone. You can control who sees the information that you have shared, as well as who can find your profile, through your privacy settings.

You can then add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile, to help stay up to date with what your friends are doing. In addition to this you may join common-interest user groups, organised by current and past, workplaces, schools or universities, or other topics such as films, TV programmes or hobbies. You can also group your online friends into lists such as "People From Work" or "Close Friends".

Your Facebook profile can contain photos, lists of your personal interests, contact information, and other personal information. You can choose what information to include in your profile. You

can communicate with friends and other users through private or public messages and a chat feature. You can also create and join interest groups and “like pages”. Liking a page is another way of becoming a fan of a something on Facebook, such as a local interest group, a band, or a product.

There have been some concerns about privacy with Facebook. To combat these concerns Facebook have introduced new facilities so you can now choose your own privacy settings and choose who can see specific parts of their profile. Facebook is **free** to use as it generates revenue from advertising.

For more information please visit the **Facebook website** where there is also a **help section** available to guide you through how to use Facebook.

Twitter

Twitter is a very popular social media service. It allows users to share very short text based messages (also known as ‘tweets’) of 140 characters in length. Twitter is similar to SMS or text messaging from a mobile phone. It is also known as a ‘micro blogging site’ which means rather than writing a long article of ‘blog’ Twitter allows users to exchange small elements of information such as short sentences, individual images, or video links to let others know what they are doing right now. This information helps to generate conversations as you can respond to another persons’ tweets.

The topics covered on twitter are very wide ranging, covering personal information about day to day life, to information relating to specific subject areas or interests, such as baking, a TV programme, cars and is used for campaigning and putting out key messages. Twitter enables users to share information that they find useful or interesting by ‘retweeting’ or posting a message that you have read from someone else, to the people who follow you.

You don’t need a Twitter account to read tweets. If you register for an account you can then post tweets through the Twitter website. You can also use your mobile phone to post tweets through text messages, or a range of apps for mobile devices, such as the iPhone or a SMART phone.

When you register for a Twitter account, you will need to provide an email address and it is useful to have a photo or image as your profile picture. You can provide a short description of yourself and a link to your own blog or website if you have one. This helps to explain to others what you are interested in and what you will post tweets about.

If you have your friends email addresses or know their Twitter username, you should be able to find them using the search function. You can ‘follow’ as many other twitter users as you like. You don’t need to know the other people in order to follow them on Twitter. You can find subjects that you are interested in by searching for terms. Twitter uses hashtags (#) to indicate the subject of a tweet, for example if you like food many people include the hashtag #foodie in their tweets, so other people with a similar interest can find them. Many TV programmes encourage viewers to ‘tweet along’ to start a conversation around the viewers’ thoughts on the programme, for example Question Time often encourages debate in this way.

Here are some twitter users that you may find of interest; **Stephen Fry, BBC Breaking News, Guardian News, Channel 4 and BBC Radio Four and InformationNOW**

As with all social networking sites, you can set your account to private so that only people who have to give permission for people to 'follow' you or read your tweets.

Twitter is a free service however accessing it through your mobile phone could incur phone service provider fees. If you are unsure please check with your mobile phone provider about text messaging costs or mobile internet costs.

For more information please visit the **Twitter website** where there is also a help section available to guide you through **how to use Twitter**.

Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that emphasizes photo and video sharing on its mobile app. It is a good way to boost your brand and connect with followers. You can take, edit, and publish visual content for your followers to interact with through likes, comments, and shares. **Help Centre**. Owned by Facebook.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social network that focuses on professional networking and career development. You can use LinkedIn to display your resume, search for jobs, and enhance your professional reputation by posting updates and interacting with other people. It can be a good way to find a job and get interactions and views of your profile that you wouldn't get by applying to one job. **Help Centre**

WhatsApp

WhatsApp offers a way to chat with a group online. You can set up your own group or agree to join a group using your mobile phone number. **Help Centre**

Streetbank

Streetbank is a website that helps you share and borrow things from your neighbours. Streetbank is meant for everyone. It is not for private benefit or for individuals to make a profit or professionals to sell their services.

Other Useful Information

- **Learn My Way** offer useful short online courses which you can work through online. You can learn the basics of computers and the internet and then you can start learn a little bit more. Whether you want to chat to family and friends on Facebook, share digital photographs, learn how to shop online, find out how to use online banking, or look for a job they have a short course to help you do it. Please visit the Learn My Way website for more information.

- **Digital Unite** has a huge range of free learning guides to help people with using computers, the internet, tablets and other mobile devices. The easy-to-follow guides cover the essential topics from getting started with a mouse and keyboard to web browsing, emailing, shopping online and internet safety.
- For more information on Getting Online please visit the **Using the internet and computers** section of InformationNOW..
- **Digital Voice** works with participants who are excluded from digital media, helping individuals and communities to access the internet and web information.
- For more information on choosing a mobile phone or a smart phone please visit the **Mobile Phones article** on InformationNOW

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Useful Organisations

Digital Unite

Email: du@digitalunite.com

Website: www.digitalunite.com

Learn My Way

Email: hello@goodthingsfoundation.org

Website: www.learnmyway.com

AbilityNet

Email: enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk

Website: www.abilitynet.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 180 0028

Address: Acre House,, NW1 3ER

StreetBank

Website: http://www.streetbank.com/splash?locale=en-GB

Telephone: 0300 180 0028

Address: South Park Studios, SW6 3HH

Digital Voice

Email: julie@digitalvoice.org.uk

Website: https://www.digitalvoice.org.uk/

Telephone: 01207 566 866

Address: Chopwell Community Centre, NE17 7HS

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