SHEFFIELD
FLOURISH

Digital approaches to tackling social isolation

Combating social isolation

Be brave and reach out to someone. It doesn't have to be face to face; you could share a post on social media.

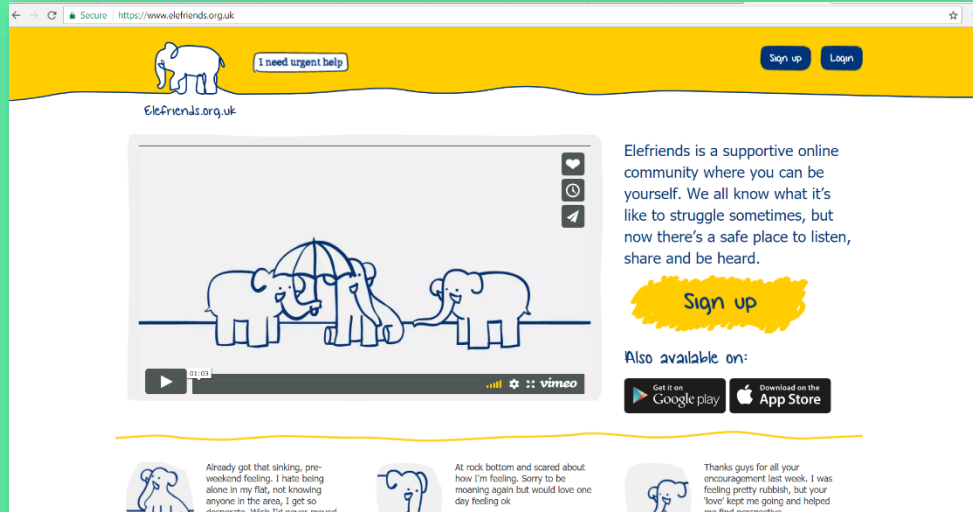According to AgeUK and Mind, the best ways to combat loneliness are:

1 Opening up and talking

2 Making new connections

3 Getting involved with something new
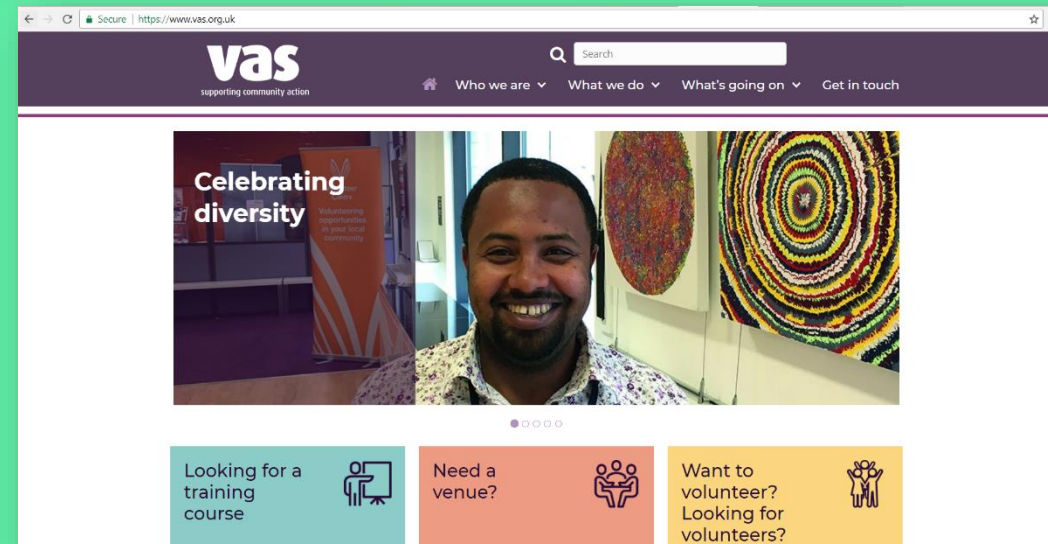
Some home-grown examples

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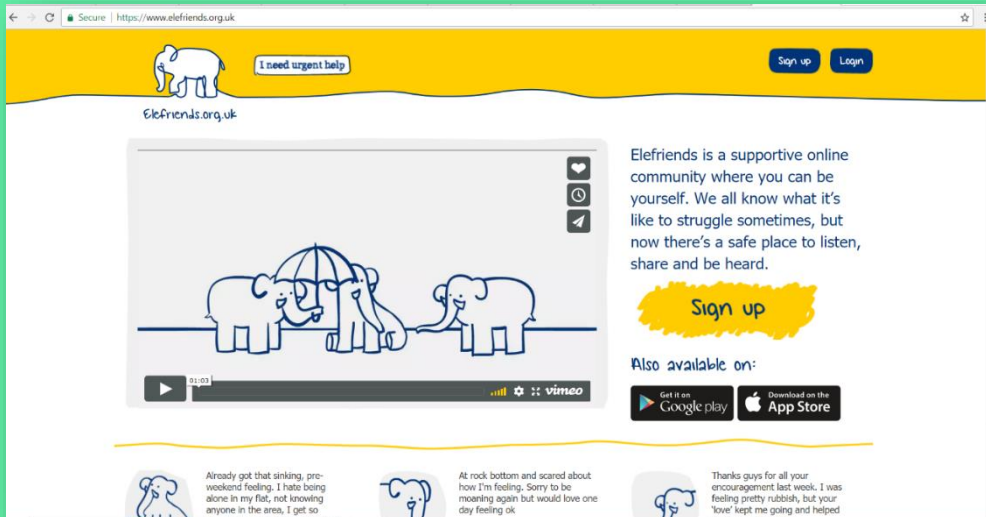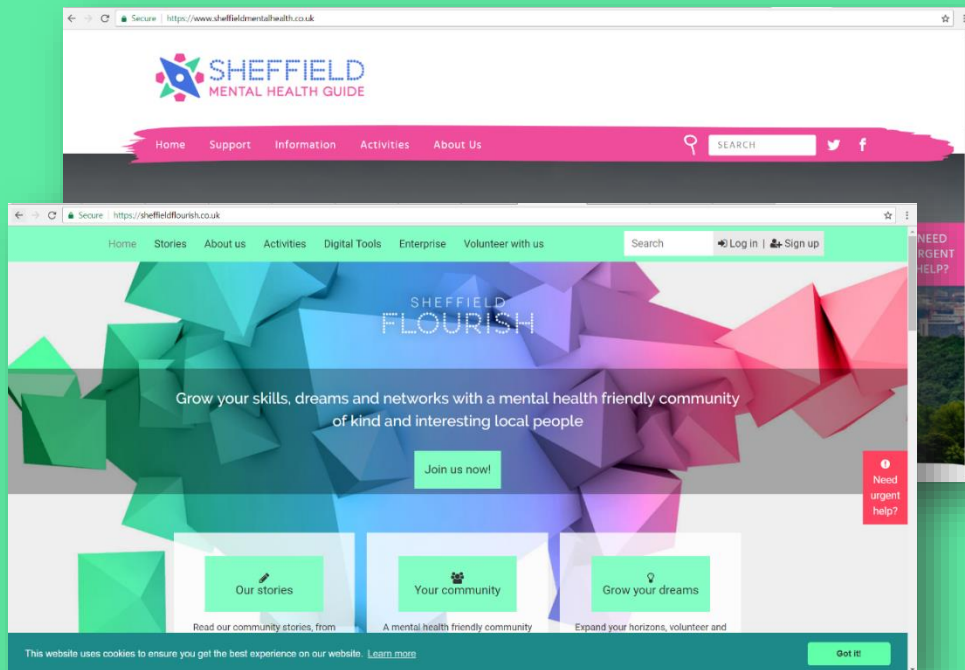
# Making new connections: Elefriends

- A coproduced online community where people can talk.
- The 'elephant' creates a safe space.
- Very user-friendly with special supportive functionality.

Opening up: Sheffield Flourish

- A website where people can read and share stories about their lives, and find out about activities.
- Supported through face to face activities and digital ambassadors.
- Coproduced from the ground up, and linking up with the Sheffield Mental Health Guide.

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Trying something new: VAS
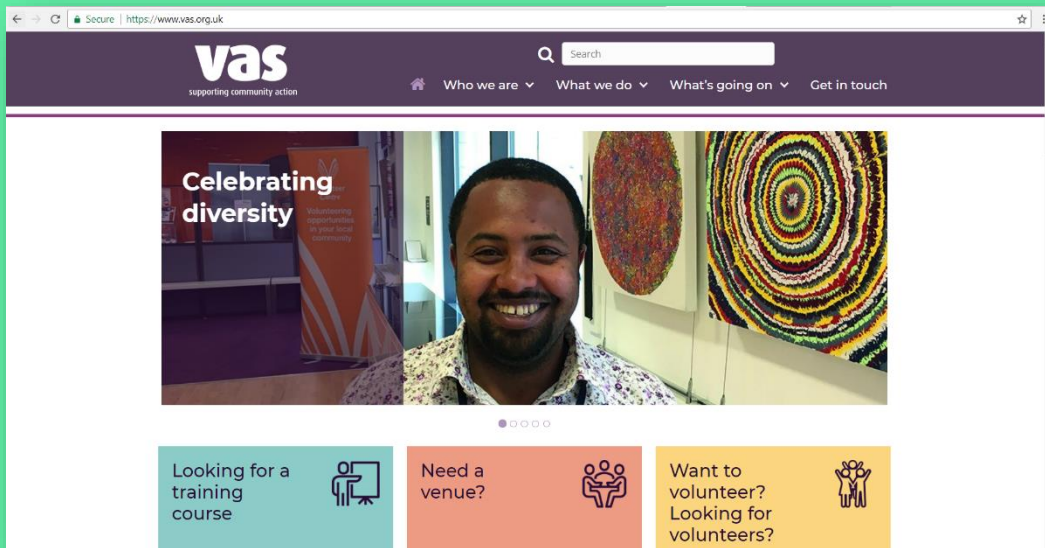
- A website where people can search for volunteering opportunities.
- Links up with support for individuals and organisations.
- Links up with much wider support and events.

Using digital to reduce social isolation

- Find out what people want and base digital approaches on this (coproduction exercises can reduce isolation too!)
- Digital approaches work best when they complement what's happening in the community, for example sharing information about activities.
- Signpost to opportunities for learning about digital.

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Limitations

- One size doesn't fit all – we have to be flexible with approaches.

- Those who are most socially isolated are less likely to be using digital.

- Digital can never replace face to face interactions and the benefits they bring.

- And there are lots of associated risks.

Good Things Foundation
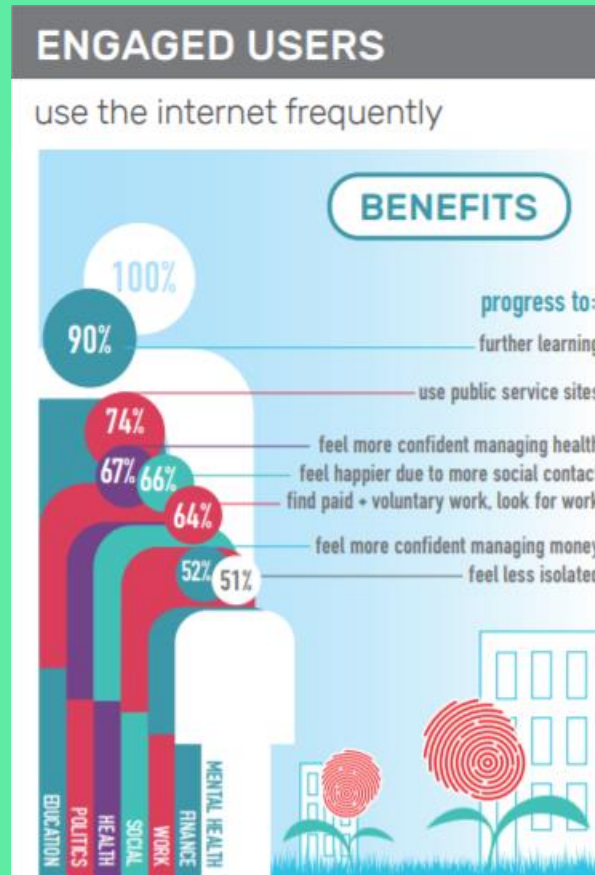
Digital Nation 2017 report found that people who become 'engaged users' of the internet (use it frequently):

- 67% feel more confident managing health
- 66% feel happier due to more social contact
- 51% feel less isolated