

To tech or not to tech:

Lessons from the GOALD project about physical activity in older adults

Positive Technology Visions Seminar
8 September 2026

Presented by Simone Tomaz

On behalf of the GOALD Research Team:

Catherine Hennessy, Ray Jones, Richard Haynes, Anna Whittaker
Hannah Bradwell, John Ritchie, Leonie Cooper, Levi Tippett, Colin Shore
Gemma Ryde, Pete Coffee, Alison Warren, Karen Watchman, Sheena Asthana, Katherine Willis,
AC Chatterjee, Greg Mannion, Alison Dawson, Swen Gaudl, Alejandro Veliz Reyes, Tanja Krizaj

UK Research and Innovation

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING

GOALD
Generating Older Active Lives Digitally

What is GOALD?













Physical Activity: What is it?



Caspersen CJ, Powell KE, Christenson GM. Physical activity, exercise, and physical fitness: definitions and distinctions for health-related research. Public Health Rep. 1985;100(2):126-131.

BE THE DIFFERENCE

Physical Activity for FUN



BE THE DIFFERENCE

Introducing: Physical Activity X Digital Technology

- Menu presented to different groups in Scotland:
  - 3 care homes
  - 3 community groups
- Numbers:
  - 60 ‘older people’
  - 2 ‘younger people’
  - 18 other adults (e.g., volunteers, staff)
  - ~60 delivery sessions
  - 4 co-production workshops



Tomaz SA, Shore CB, Ryde GC, et al. Generating Older Active Lives Digitally (GOALD): Exploring Older Adults' Views of Digital Technology for Physical Activity. J Phys Act Health. 2026;23(5):653-665.

Why the Scotland focus?

- Care homes in Scotland already had structured, in-person PA sessions:
  - at least once weekly
  - varied PA exposure (e.g., dancing, strength & balance, yoga)
  - delivered by care home activity coordinators / volunteers / students
- The community groups in Scotland regularly included PA (e.g., curling, bowls)



Physical Activity Sessions







danceSing
Enriching Lives

RETRO
REHAB

good boost

https://games.retrorehab.io/register

BE THE DIFFERENCE

Physical Activity Sessions cont.









motus VR

BODY BOOSTING BINGO

HUR
For Lifelong Strength

What did we find in Scotland?

- (1) recognizing the potential of technology
  - opportunities in bad (Scottish) weather
  - novelty >>> curiosity / learning new things
- (2) suitability of PA technology
  - participation (and thus benefit) is conditional
- (3) barriers to using PA technology
  - health and safety > enjoyment and simply ‘liking it’
  - physical and social accessibility
  - familiarity >>> enhanced experience

Cooper L, Bradwell H, Shore CB, et al. Developing Digital Platforms to Help Older Adults Stay Physically and Socially Active: Co-Design Study to Develop a Toolkit and Evaluate Its Impact. JMIR Aging. 2026;9:e89785.

What did we find in Scotland?

- (4) motivation to engage with digital technology
  - social connectivity
  - fun <u>with</u> others
- (5) content suggestions for future PA technology
  - <u>choice:</u> time, type, intensity
- (6) preferences for PA technology delivery
  - clear guidance: audio and visual
  - relatable
  - participants wanted to be sure they were doing things correctly

So...

To tech or not to tech?



So...

To tech or not to tech?

YES,
but it depends



Summary findings through PA-tinted goggles:

- Tech-based PA is not > good PA delivered in-person. A complement, not a replacement!
- Enjoyment is important
- Music may be a key feature for enjoyment
- Barriers are not always linked to the tech itself: Consider the setting (e.g., swimming pool, care home lounge), cost (in time and money), physical capabilities / mobility
- ‘Easy to use’ needs consideration



Thank you for listening

Let’s chat!



Simone Tomaz

simone.tomaz@stir.ac.uk