

2 years ago, Saima walked into one of GOAL's centre, accompanied by her sister, who was concerned for her well-being. Having recently lost their mother, Saima was now all alone and had fallen into severe depression due to isolation and limited network of friends.

She was a companion for her mother and after her death became lost and lonely.

She was a very timid soul, 'a woman of few words'. She was enrolled into a basic English class. Despite being in the country for many years, she had a limited grasp of the English language.

Initially we worked with Saima to encourage her to join in and make new friends. She was sign posted to DOSTI group (a friendship group for older ladies) in the community where she would meet new people once a week over tea and biscuit without any obligation.

After lots of convincing she started to come to DOSTI group (on ad-hoc basis initially) but she befriended some of the DOSTI ladies and with their encouragement she started to attend regularly.

Despite the volunteers constant encouragement, she didn't feel comfortable about going on short trips with the group. Eventually, with peer support she agreed to accompany the group on a trip to fruit farm.

This was a massive break through. She started to attend the sessions more regularly; join in with activities such as card making, jewellery making course and even tried her hand at knitting.

She remained reluctant in using any form of technology. She had a very old phone and only knew how to receive calls but was unable to make any calls from it. She would always say, 'I am too old to learn. What use are they to me anyway.' She was supported by her brother and sister, who had their own families.

Over time, on good days, Saima became a keen learner and tried to participate in group activities and enjoyed socialising with new-found friends in DOSTI group.

Unfortunately, lockdown came along. Saima became house bound being classed as vulnerable due to her multiple ailments. She was totally isolated and since she lived on her own this contributed to her existing anxieties. She started to totally shut out the outside world from the fear of catching the virus.

She was identified as vulnerable and selected to receive a tablet, thanks to Good Things Foundation and BT through a project called DevicesDotNow setup by FutureDotNow.

Initially she was a reluctant recipient as she was never a keen on technology. This was a completely alien to her. She was supported by GOAL over number of weeks to use the device, initially to be able to make and receive WhatsApp calls. She used it keep in touch with her friends and family.

She has been pleasantly surprised at how simple it was to operate the device, once she got used to it. She admits she was afraid to use it initially in case she messed it up!

Being able to communicate with her friend and family has eased her feeling of isolation as she feels that her family are just a click away whenever she wants to see them.

Now that Saima has mastered how to use WhatsApp, she has progressed to YouTube to learn basic Arabic and has found this to be very good and keeps her busy and her mind occupied so she doesn't feel lonely and depressed and time passes quick too.

Saima can't wait to get back to the centre, where she wants to learn more about how to use the tablet to its full potential and maybe download even more apps.

Saima is hopeful that she will be able to confidently operate modern technology and maybe even buy a smart phone for herself in the near future

