

Smartline Personas Broadening understanding about communities

Smartline's Personas have been co-designed by the University of Exeter and participants in the Smartline Project. Personas are fictional characters based on real-life research. They provide opportunities for user-centered design without breaching personal privacy, and can support the development of products, processes, and services linked to eHealth and eWellbeing.

Why did we create Smartline personas?

Our personas help to communicate the needs, aspirations, strengths, motivations, experiences, behaviours, and lifestyles of people who live in Cornwall's social housing. The eight personas represent different groups of people and can be used by organisations to inform evidence-based and community-focused planning.

How did we create the personas?

We created the personas using data collected in 2017-18 from adults living in 329 social housing households in central Cornwall. The data included information about demographics, socioeconomic position, household composition, home environment, technology ownership, pet ownership, smoking, social cohesion, volunteering, caring, wellbeing, physical and mental health, and activity. We grouped similar households using a mathematical technique known as cluster analysis. Next, we overlaid information from qualitative interviews and sensor data, for example people's hobbies and electricity usage, and then used photographs to represent each persona.

How have we used Smartline personas in research?

We use the personas to introduce different perspectives in workshops, and to ensure we gather information from a range of households. For example, we wanted to understand how people use smart technology. To ensure we approached a representative group of participants, we involved at least one person from each persona category. The personas have also proved to be an engaging way of presenting complex data, demonstrating how research can generate greater impact, through being more transparent and open to the public. Beyond the project, we have also been asked to share our experience and methods with public health services to inform work on persona development.

For more information visit www.smartline.org.uk/research or contact smartline@exeter.ac.uk.

Smartline's personas at a glance

Here is a snapshot of our eight Smartline personas, including the three key characteristics that make each persona unique. All the personas have completed secondary education to the age of 16 and live in an urban area.



#1 Jack
Male, 59 years old, *10.2%
Resourceful
Competent
Capable



#2 David
Male, 65 years old, *11.9%
Poor physical health
Insular
Inhibited aspirations



#3 Mandy
Female, 55 years old, *7.7%
Frequent walker
Well connected
Strong sense of belonging



#4 Jennie
Female, 37 years old, *13.2%
Driven
Resourceful
Informed



#5 Fred
Male, 65 years old, *11.9%
Self-reliant
Happy and active
Reflective



#6 Raj
Male, 60 years old, *9.8%
Active community member
Disappointed by local services
Resilient



#7 Sarah
Female, 50 years old, *23.0%
Financial difficulties
Isolated
Caring responsibilities and has a disability



#8 Cathy
Female, 61 years old, *12.3%
Content on her own or with her small group of friends
Frequent walker
Enjoys mentally stimulating activities

* The percentage of people represented in this persona group from the 235 people included in the cluster analysis.

Characteristics

Here is a summary of the characteristics of each of the eight personas. On the following pages we have created stories based on this data, but the characters, names and their quotes are fictional.



Name	Jack	David	Mandy	Jennie	Fred	Raj	Sarah	Cathy
Age (median average)	61.0	67.5	52.0	34.0	65.5	66.0	55.0	63.0
The following rows show the percentage of each type in each persona group.								
Females (%)	66.7	60.7	77.8	74.2	60.7	65.2	70.4	72.4
Ethnic minority (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	11.1	2.4	0.0
Employed (%)	41.7	10.7	16.7	35.5	17.9	8.7	7.4	27.6
Retired (%)	25.0	64.3	22.2	0.0	64.3	56.5	25.9	48.3
The following rows show attributes of each household, with Yes/No indicating whether the household for that persona has that attribute or not, and Poor/Average/Good indicating the level of that attribute for that persona's household.								
Household size	1-3	1-2	1-3	2-4	1-2	1-3	1-2	1-3
Internet access	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Fuel poverty	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Mould	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Smoker	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Volunteering	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Physically active	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Physical health	Poor	Poor	Good	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Good
Mental health	Average	Average	Poor	Average	Good	Good	Poor	Good



#1 Jack

Male, 59 years old, 10.2%

Resourceful

Competent

Capable

Jack works for a building merchant and lives with his wife and cat in one of the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England.

Health and wellbeing

Jack's health and wellbeing are about average, and he is fairly active. He doesn't think that mould is affecting their health, despite having mould in the bathroom and his wife having respiratory symptoms.

Use of technology

Jack and his wife are online and own quite a few pieces of technology.

Interests and community interactions

Jack and his wife help out their neighbours. He takes pride in being self-reliant but also knows who to ask for help. He feels competent and confident in completing household and DIY tasks.

"I enjoy helping out my neighbours. We've been going online more and have downloaded some useful apps so we keep in touch and can monitor our health and so on."



#2 David

Male, 65 years old, 11.9%

Poor physical health

Insular

Inhibited aspirations

David retired early due to poor physical health and lives alone.

Health and wellbeing

David is a moderate smoker. He has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and spends most of his time sitting. His mental health is better than his physical health which impacts on many aspects of his life, from exercise and recreation to occupation and learning. He doesn't have mould in his house.

Use of technology

David does not own much technology and is not online.

Interests and community interactions

David is somewhat insular by choice and spends most of his time indoors, he does not do any volunteering.

"I do smoke, but not that much. I don't do a lot of exercise and I'm not one for technology or smart meters, but I know what gas costs."



#3 Mandy

Female, 55 years old, 7.7%

Frequent walker

Well connected

Strong sense of belonging

Mandy is a self-employed cleaner living in a three-bedroom house with her daughter who is at college. Mandy also has a few cats.

Health and wellbeing

Mandy has never smoked. Her physical health is good, but her mental health is poor. She walks a lot, including to cleaning jobs, but reports of crime in the area undermine her sense of safety. To save money on heating, Mandy only heats certain rooms and avoids opening windows.

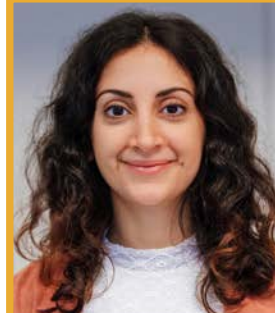
Use of technology

Mandy owns a tablet computer and a smart watch.

Interests and community interactions

Mandy spends a lot of time indoors at the weekends but she has a strong sense of belonging to her community.

"It gets cold in this flat. I keep the windows shut to try and keep any heat inside but maybe that's making the damp worse, I don't know?"



#4 Jennie

Female, 37 years old, 13.2%

Driven

Resourceful

Informed

Jennie lives with her partner and infant in a 3-bedroom home, she balances childcare with doing an NVQ course at college.

Health and wellbeing

Jennie and her partner both smoke, but they try not to smoke indoors. The family have mould in the bathroom and bedrooms which she is concerned is affecting the family's health, but they only heat specific rooms.

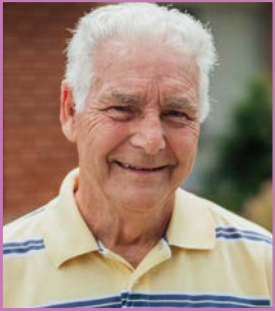
Use of technology

Jennie owns a smartphone and knows how to obtain information if she has an issue.

Interests and community interactions

Jennie is resourceful and well connected. She wants to work but the jobs available locally don't fit with her family commitments, skills and training. Jennie is also worried about the lack of parking where she lives.

"I would say overall I'm pretty active and I feel well in myself, but I do smoke. I like my house, but it's a bit damp and cold."



#5 Fred

Male, 65 years old, 11.9%

Self-reliant

Happy and active

Reflective

Fred is a retired taxi driver living with his wife and a dog in a one bedroom house in one of the 10% most deprived areas in England.

Health and wellbeing

Fred feels that his home is adequately heated, but he uses a dehumidifier as they have some mould. Fred and his wife are fairly self-reliant, happy and active. But the couple are also reflective because they worry about community spirit and job security.

Use of technology

Fred owns a smart watch and a laptop.

Interests and community interactions

Fred volunteers and also helps his neighbours. He has a strong sense of social cohesion.

"I don't mind our place - there's a little mould and damp but it's warm enough. I've got an app on my mobile for my health and activity and like to keep busy and stay fit."



#6 Raj

Male, 60 years old, 9.8%

Active community member

Disappointed by local services

Resilient

Raj lives with his adult son and is looking for work in a factory.

Health and wellbeing

Raj smokes and gets short of breath, but otherwise his mental and physical health and wellbeing are fairly good. The house doesn't have much mould and although all the rooms are heated, Raj does not think the house is warm enough.

Use of technology

Raj and his son have quite a bit of technology.

Interests and community interactions

Raj enjoys helping out in his community. He is more focused on the community and the services available, rather than his internal surroundings.

"I'm happy and quite active in the community. I do suffer a bit with my lungs, but I do smoke rather a lot. I know some around here suffer with mould in their houses but it's not too bad."



#7 Sarah

Female, 50 years old, 23.0%

Financial difficulties

Isolated

Caring responsibilities and has a disability

Sarah used to work, but now can't work due to a long-term health condition. She also helps to care for an elderly parent.

Health and wellbeing

Sarah is frustrated by her declining mental and physical health, and her limited finances. Her home smells mouldy and she is worried about how it impacts her health. She doesn't go outside much and avoids opening windows to save heat.

Use of technology

Sarah has concerns about smart technology and privacy so only has a simple mobile phone. This makes it difficult to access some services which require being online.

Interests and community interactions

Sarah does some volunteering at a charity shop but feels socially isolated.

"I've been off work for a long time now, my mental health has been really bad. I suffer a lot with anxiety and depression and though I'd like to work, I just find it too hard. So I stay at home on my own."



#8 Cathy

Female, 61 years old, 12.3%

Content on her own and with her small group of friends

Frequent walker

Enjoys mentally stimulating activities

Cathy is retired and lives with her adult daughter who has a pet snake.

Health and wellbeing

Cathy's physical and mental health are good and have been improving. She dries her clothes indoors and is not concerned about the cost of heating.

Use of technology

Cathy has upgraded to smart gas and electricity meters.

Interests and community interactions

Cathy's hobbies include crosswords, reading and knitting. She is fairly insular but has a close group of friends. She is busy at home so does not have much interest in the community.

"We're happy enough and the flat is in a nice area. I do worry about the damp air so I keep the windows open to keep the house ventilated."