

Blog title: June's independent living technology news

Here's what's new in the world of independent living technology this month.

Public policy, legislation and campaigns

Survey reveals hearing aid consumers favour independent retailers over NHS

A survey of hearing aid users by the consumer body Which? has [found that consumers prefer](#) local independent retailers to the NHS and large high street chains. While customers tended to end up with the same hearing aid product regardless of their choice of provider and all providers scored similarly in relation to professionalism, expertise and overall customer service, private providers significantly out-performed the NHS on waiting times and after care.

Tech4Good awards name finalists for 2018 prizes

AbilityNet and BT have announced [the finalists of the 2018 Tech4Good awards](#), which recognise organisations and individuals who use digital technology to make the world a better place. Among this year's entries are Microsoft's free Seeing AI app, Facebook's use of artificial intelligence and machine learning to power accessible technology and Alcove's home connected care system.

Report argues for investment in robotics to liberate health and social care staff

A report led by the surgeon and former health minister Lord Darzi and published by the IPPR think tank has encouraged the NHS and social care sector to [embrace robotics and automated technologies](#) as a way of freeing up staff to spend more time providing care. The research argues that using technology for tasks such as booking appointments and processing prescriptions could reallocate £12.5 billion per years' worth of frontline professionals' time.

Research highlights the advantages of the internet for older people in difficulty

New research from the Centre for Ageing Better and the Good Things Foundation has called on policy makers and practitioners to adopt [a more targeted approach](#) to assisting older people to enjoy the benefits of the internet. The study argues that interventions designed to help older people get online should focus on supporting individuals through periods of transition or crisis.

Technological developments and innovations

Virtual reality system targets special and early years education

The assistive technology supplier Inclusive Technology has partnered with Avantis Education to develop the first virtual reality product for special and early years education. The [Inclusive ClassVR](#) provides an immersive experience in virtual environments designed to encourage exploration and play.

Remote hailing system makes refuelling easier for disabled drivers

The inclusive customer service technology firm Contacta has designed a remote hailing system that allows disabled drivers to alert petrol station staff that they need assistance. [MyHailo](#) aims to provide an easy and dignified way to for drivers ask for help by pressing a key fob from their vehicle which activates a beacon in the station window that changes colour to signal that a member of staff is on their way.

Medical app offers simplified medicine guidance

A Glasgow based start-up has launched an app to help patients manage their medication and tackle prescription drug waste. In addition to allowing users to set medication time reminders, the [Medsmart](#) app offers easy-to-follow and trusted information about their medicine which can be downloaded by scanning the product's barcode.

Low tech communication device provides short-term support

American technology company Talk To Me Technologies has released a low tech laser based communication system that provides an instant means of interaction in the absence of a longer term alternative. The [Pointello](#) is a switch operated headset with a laser that allows users to point at symbols, words and letters on a communication board, providing a quick if rudimentary way to themselves.

These stories were originally published in the dispATches newsletter – a free monthly e-mail about assistive technologies that empower disabled and older people to live more independently. [Click here to sign up for dispATches.](#)