July's independent living technology news

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

Public policy, legislation and campaigns

Relaxing planning laws may worsen accessible housing shortage

The Housing Made for Everyone (HoME) coalition – a group of organisations campaigning to address the UK's shortage of accessible housing– has [warned against proposals to relax planning rules](#) in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis. HoME says that looser regulations could result in even fewer accessible and adaptable homes being built.

New campaign promotes use of technology in care homes

Leading technology providers have launched the [Care Homes of the Future campaign](#) to encourage the care home sector to adopt digital products and services, ensuring home owners and staff benefit from the better individual outcomes, increased cost-effectiveness and workforce coordination that technology can bring.

Study reveals accessibility failings on streaming services

A new report published by the disability charity Scope has [highlighted a lack of accessibility features](#) on online streaming platforms. In its survey of disabled people, Scope found that 80% had experienced accessibility issues, with Sky Go, Now TV and Google Play being among the worst performers.

Monthly series to highlight the lives and technology of para athletes

World Para Athletics and the mobility aid company Ottobock have joined forces to [sponsor a series of monthly Facebook Live](#) sessions exploring the lives of leading para athletes. The first of the monthly episodes will focus on prosthetic legs.

Technological developments and innovations

Apple unveils new accessibility features for iOS 14

Apple has previewed its iOS 14 operating system Big Sur – due to come out later this year – which contains a number of [new accessibility features and improvements](#). One of the most hotly-anticipated additions is the new back tap function which allows users to reduce complex operations or gestures to a simple tap on the back of the phone.

Paraguay to launch guided voting system for blind and visually impaired electors

Paraguay is to allow blind and visually impaired people to [vote independently at elections using an audio guide system](#) designed to guide them through the process due on now voting to be rolled out in the country.

Virtual reality software app adapts videogames for disabled people

A new virtual reality videogaming solution for physically disabled people has launched on the online gaming platform Steam. [The WalkinVR](#) software allows games to be adapted for users with limited movement and supports a range of virtual reality headsets.

Smart phone app helps deafblind people send text messages

An app for Apple smart watches converts text messages into Morse code vibrations to help deafblind people communicate. [The Suno app](#) allows users to type in Morse code by tapping their device before relaying the message in English and translating responses back into Morse code vibrations.

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.](#)