

August's independent living technology news

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

Public policy, legislation and campaigns

Government announces new special school places

The government has announced [the creation of up to 3,000 new special school places](#) for disabled children with complex needs in England from September 2022. The places will be provided by 35 new schools which will offer tailored support and access to assistive technology.

Changing places toilets made mandatory

The government is set to [make changing places toilets compulsory](#) for new buildings in England from 2021. The new rule will cover a range of venues including shopping centres, supermarkets, sports arenas and arts and cultural centres.

Homes England aims to promote a more inclusive housing sector

Homes England – the government's agency focusing on affordable housing – has published its first annual [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report](#), pledging to work to make the housing sector more representative of the communities it serves.

Guide to accessible social media campaigns published

The Government Communication Service has [published a guide](#) to planning, creating and conducting accessible social media campaigns. The guide includes tips on best practice for content designers and other templates and resources.

Technological developments and innovations

Care homes pilot robotic care aids

Hampshire County Council has become the first UK local authority to [trial the use of robotic aids](#) to help care professionals with the physical demands of their work in care homes. Cobots are wearable devices that augment the user's strength to assist them in moving objects or supporting people.

Accessible switch specialist offers innovative alternative input devices

A company founded by amputee Derek Yerger has developed a range of switches and other plug and play tools that offer an alternative to standard accessibility switches for computer access. [Alternate Device's products](#) include the Vectis – a touch sensitive input device that can be used with a computer, tablet or other USB or Bluetooth compatible device.

Music making software allows eye or head control

A researcher based at the music and machine learning lab at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona has created a low-cost eye-tracker or head-controlled instrument. [The EyeHarp](#) allows people at all levels and ages to create music on a colourful interface.

Lightweight bracelet promises to ease digital sign language translation

Cornell University and the University of Wisconsin have [designed a lightweight](#) bracelet that designed to track the movement of the human hand in 3D which they say could be used to help translate sign language for non-signers.

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.](#)