

## **Blog title: September'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 extends the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund**

The government has announced [an extra investment of £76 million a year](#) to build homes for disabled people, older people and those with mental health needs until 2021. The move marks an extension of the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund which was established in 2012 to help local authorities and housing developers finance accommodation containing independent living features such as assistive technology.

#### **Survey finds older people prioritise looks over performance when selecting assistive products**

A survey of 1,000 older people published by bathing specialists Mira Showers has found that over-65s view the [aesthetics of independent living products](#) as more important than their functionality. The study reports that older people are likely to have high standards when choosing equipment, with 70% saying they prioritise style over function and 73% agreeing that brands do not invest enough energy into creating functional products that appeal to older people.

#### **Study highlights overuse of natural limbs among prosthesis users**

Researchers from the University of Salford have revealed that people with artificial arms and hands continue to [rely disproportionately on their intact limbs](#) for everyday tasks – a practice that can lead to injuries. The findings confirm a widely suspected hypothesis that prosthesis users tend to overuse one limb.

#### **NHS Wheelchair Services miss waiting times targets for disabled children**

NHS England is [failing to meet its commitment](#) to ensure that no eligible child is required to wait more than 18 weeks for a wheelchair from the time of their referral by 2018/19. According to an analysis published in the Health Service Journal, in 2017/18 only 82% of children were provided with a wheelchair on time, falling short of last year's target of 92%.

### **Technological developments and innovations**

#### **RightHear app guides disabled people through venues**

An app that helps people with visual impairments and other disabilities that make it harder than usual to navigate venues is being launched in the UK. The Israeli app [RightHear](#) uses strategically located Bluetooth beacons to guide people around buildings and unmapped open spaces where GPS technology cannot be applied. Venue owners can configure the beacons using through an online dashboard which lets them programme instructions and descriptions for visitors.

#### **EyeControl enables people with locked-in syndrome to communicate**

Another Israeli start-up [EyeControl](#) has created a wearable device designed to help people with locked-in syndrome to communicate with their family, friends and carers. The EyeControl is a lightweight headset that harnesses eye-tracking technology and artificial intelligence to allow users to express themselves with very little training or calibration.

#### **Chill-Out Chairs provide comfort, support and style**

The North American assistive technology company Freedom Concepts offers a line of [Chill-Out Chairs](#) for disabled people with a range of behavioural and therapeutic needs. The chairs contain high-grade foam cushioning and exploit a patented deep 'V' shape designed to hug the sitter's body, helping them to relax while remaining in place, dispensing with the need for traps and harnesses. Chill-Out Chairs are distributed in the UK by Moorings Mediquip.

### **Flic smart button promises flexible smart home control**

A [Flic](#) is a smart button that can be used to interact wirelessly with other devices connected through a dedicated smartphone app to provide a quick and intuitive way of controlling objects around the home. They can be stuck to any surface or worn on clothing to provide an easy means of operating smart appliances such as lights and thermostats and linked via hub to create a sophisticated control system.

*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.](#)*