

December's independent living technology news

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

Public policy, legislation and campaigns

NHS Digital and LGA to fund social care assistive technology trials

[The Social Care Digital Innovation programme](#) – commissioned by NHS Digital and run by the Local Government Association – is set to fund biometric devices designed to measure anxiety triggers for people with autism and exoskeleton technology for carers.

The government seeks disability champions in technology sector

The Department for Work and Pensions has announced that it will be recruiting [six new disability champions](#) to help tackle challenges facing disabled consumers. The government hopes to recruit new champions in the technology, website accessibility, product design, fashion, food and drink and countryside and heritage sectors.

Home Builders Federation's questioning of accessible house building prompts uproar

Sixteen charities and organisations from across the ageing, disability and housing sectors have [signed an open letter](#) to the Home Builders Federation expressing their alarm at its stated objections to around 15 local authorities seeking to build more accessible homes in their communities.

Rail regulator proposes measures to improve accessibility

The Office of Rail and Road has produced [a series of draft measures](#) that the regulatory body plans to impose in order to compel the rail industry to improve the assistance it provides to disabled passengers, including ensuring that more replacement services are accessible, providing better staff training and making it easier for people using mobility scooters to board trains.

Technological developments and innovations

Voice-controlled self-driving wheelchair under development

A team of engineers at the University of California is building an [open source and low-cost self-driving wheelchair](#). The wheelchair will be controlled using a smartphone or tablet computer app containing a number of preprogrammed locations around the user's home, allowing them to deliver a voice command before being steered to their desired destination.

HoloLens app identifies objects for blind and visually impaired people

Scientists at the California Institute of Technology have used Microsoft's HoloLens to create an app that scans the environment and identifies nearby physical objects as well as their relative position to the user. [The Cognitive Augmented Reality Assistant \(CARA\) app](#) is designed to help people with visual impairments perform everyday tasks by speaking the name of features and landmarks.

Brain implant allows people with paralysis to control tablet devices

A new research paper has shown that an [experimental brain implant](#) developed by engineers at Stanford University can enable people with paralysis to control a cursor on a tablet computer.

Able Label offers trendy and accessible clothes for disabled and older people

Former fashion buyer Katie Ellis has launched [Able Label](#) a new range of accessible stylish clothing designed to make life easier for disabled and older people who want to look good but find high street fashion difficult to wear.

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.](#)