

## **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**

#### **Expert council to advise government on innovations for older people**

The government has stepped up efforts to meet the changing needs of an ageing population by appointing a new [UK Longevity Council](#) of specialists from across society to advise on the latest innovations in technology, products and services.

#### **Rail regulator calls for better services for disabled passengers**

[The Office of Rail and Road](#) has urged train operators to improve services for disabled passengers. The regulator calls for more reliable assistance, shorter notice periods for booking support during journeys and opportunities for redress and compensation when things go wrong.

#### **Report advocates a sector deal on assistive technology in social care**

Learning disability charity Hft and Tunstall Healthcare have published a report arguing for the [government to work with the social care sector](#) to realise the potential of assistive technology to help people live more independently and give carers the freedom to provide more meaningful support.

#### **Parliamentary group urges the scrapping of upfront charges for disabled students**

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology has published the results of [an inquiry into a £200 charge](#) that disabled university students are required to pay as a contribution towards the cost of laptops purchased through the Disabled Students Allowance.

### **Technological developments and innovations**

#### **AAC software launches keyboard set aimed at people with changing disabilities**

The assistive technology company Smartbox has released [a new set of keyboards](#) for its popular communications software Grid 3 that is designed to help people with changing physical disabilities to express themselves with ease as their condition evolves.

#### **Amazon Alexa to provide access to health information from the NHS**

[Amazon has partnered with the NHS in England](#) to allow people to access health information from the health service's website for using its voice-activated digital assistant Alexa. It is hoped that the initiative will help reduce pressure on services.

#### **MacOS Catalina introduces Voice Command**

Apple has announced that its new operating system macOS Catalina will offer a new [Voice Command feature](#) that will enable users who can't operate traditional input devices to control their computer using only speech recognition technology. MacOS Catalina is due to come online this autumn.

#### **MIT 3D prints flexible material for more personalised wearable devices**

Engineers based at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology have designed [pliable 3D-printed materials](#) that could form the basis of more personalised wearable supports, such as ankle and knee braces worn by people with physical impairments. They are developing new mesh materials that would be flexible enough to emulate and support softer tissues such as muscles and tendons.

*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.](#)*