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

Public policy, legislation and campaigns

Councils urged not to undermine the right to care and support

Disability rights campaigners have called on English local authorities not to suspend care and support services after the Coronavirus Act passed by parliament last month weakened a number of provisions contained in the Care Act 2014 on disabled and older people's rights to live in the community with assistance.

New online forum launched to connect disabled people during the pandemic

The charity Euan's Guide has launched a new online forum aimed at helping disabled people 'boost spirits and share ideas' during the Covid-19 pandemic. The webpage has been designed to be a positive alternative online space to social media.

AT passports seek to improve services in Ireland

Microsoft and Enable Ireland have joined forces with Maynooth University to design an assistive technology passport which would be used to streamline service provision by collecting information about an individual's AT requirements.

AT 2030 publishes product narratives on improving access to AT in developing countries

The AT 2030 Programme led by the University College London has published the first of a number of planned product narratives that will report on what works in terms of improving access to assistive technology in developing countries. The first two publications explore wheelchairs and hearing aids.

Technological developments and innovations

Smart glasses help autistic children recognise emotions

Stanford University is working with digital therapeutics company Cognoa to develop smart glasses that help autistic children understand people's emotions. Based on Google Glass, the glasses employ augmented reality and artificial intelligence to identify and communicate people's emotional states using emojis.

Removable aircraft seat promises to allow disabled people to travel in their own wheelchairs

US aircraft seat manufacturer Molon Labe fundraising for a new design that would allow disabled passengers to fly in their own wheelchairs. The design allows a standard economy class aisle seat to slide over its neighbouring window seat to create a 36-inch wide wheelchair space.

Tactile tablet allows blind and visually impaired people to use Windows

A French start-up has built a tablet computer for blind and visually-impaired people that allows users to access the Windows operating system through a built-in Braille interface. The insideONE claims to be the first product to integrate mainstream technological performance and haptic ergonomics in a tablet PC for people with visual impairments.

Prompting technology guides people with dementia through everyday tasks

A team of researchers (including Designability staff) has developed a tablet-based prompter for people living with dementia designed to help them independently complete everyday tasks such as preparing snacks. The prototype allowed carers to programme the device with a sequence of actions necessary to engage in simple activities.

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.