May's independent living technology news

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

Public policy, legislation and campaigns

TechForce 19 Challenge winners announced

The government has announced the winners of its [TechForce 19 Challenge](#) – a funding competition rewarding the best innovations to support vulnerable people required to self-isolate during Covid-19.

Inquiry explores the impact of video and phone court hearings on disabled people

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published the [interim report of an inquiry](#) into the use of the video and phone hearings in the justice system and the risks they pose to disabled people.

Transport urges rail sector to maintain accessible services

The Minister for Transport Chris Heaton-Harris has asked the rail industry to [ensure the accessibility of services](#) during the Covid-19 pandemic so that disabled essential workers can travel. The request follows complaints from disabled travellers reporting staff refusing to provide assistance.

United States launches automated vehicles Inclusive Design Challenge

The United States Department of Transportation has announced a [new Inclusive Design Challenge](#) to make future automated vehicles accessible to disabled people. The challenge will reward design solutions that enable disabled people to get to their workplaces, healthcare facilities and other critical destinations.

Technological developments and innovations

Tablet computer connects and entertains older people

A California-based company has built a purpose-built tablet computer for people over the age of 75 called [GrandPad](#) that allows them to stay connected with family and friends, while enjoying access to music, games, news and other features in a secure environment.

Nintendo Switch offers new controller button re-mapping feature

The Nintendo Switch has [released an update](#) that allows buttons to be re-mapped at the system level. This allows game controls to be customised by disabled players so they are easier to use.

GPS robot guides visually-impaired people

Students at Northern Illinois University have [developed a GPS-powered robot](#) designed to help blind and visually-impaired people find the shortest route to their destination. The robot would run just ahead of the person, telling them where they are and inform them of any obstacles in their path.

Voice-banking technology replicates speech within minutes

An Israeli company has created [The Voice Keeper](#), voice-banking software that allows people with progressive conditions such as motor neurone disease to preserve an authentic and version of their voice within minutes using either a smartphone app or a computer.

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.](#)