

## **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**

#### **Government publishes review of tech for students with specific learning Study highlights widespread accessibility problems in mobile apps**

A [new study](#) by the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers has found that over a quarter of disabled people are unable to use smart phones and tablet apps. While over 80% of disabled people told the survey they used smart phones, one in four said they had difficulty using apps and almost half reported they have stopped using an app due to accessibility issues.

#### **Government advisors call for improvements to transport for disabled people**

The Department for Work and Pensions' independent Social Security Advisory Committee has [urged the government](#) to improve disabled people's access to personal and public transport. In particular, the group recommended that the Motability Scheme should be made easier to use.

#### **New tool helps governments develop assistive technology services**

The World Health Organisation has launched a [new tool](#) that helps governments plan assistive technology services in their countries. The assistive technology capacity assessment tool supports policy makers to design new public services and programmes that meet local needs.

#### **Research explores the global impact of Covid-19 on assistive technology services**

An [international survey](#) of assistive technology use and provision during the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the scale of the disruption to services caused by the crisis. The study calls for more user-centred and robust funding policies and infrastructure for assistive technology services.

### **Technological developments and innovations**

#### **Microsoft reveals improved image-captioning for visually impaired people**

Microsoft has built an [artificial intelligence system](#) that can automatically generate descriptive captions for images to help visually impaired people use software applications and surf the Internet. The new technology will be made available to software developers and rolled out in Microsoft Word, Outlook, PowerPoint and Seeing AI.

#### **Amazon launches Care Hub feature for Alexa**

Amazon has introduced a new feature on its voice-activated assistant Alexa designed to help disabled and older people to keep in touch with family members. [The Care Hub](#) offers a range of functions that allow users to call for help and for carers to receive alerts and updates to let them know their relative is safe.

#### **Tobii Dynavox unveils Boardmaker 7**

Tobii Dynavox has released the latest version of its Boardmaker communication software for disabled children and young people with communication impairments. [Boardmaker 7](#) boasts a symbol library of over 45,000 individual picture symbols and is designed to help learners take part in the school curriculum.

#### **Prototype enables Braille navigation of smart phones**

Students at the Indian Institute of Technology in Madras have created a Braille device that enables visually-impaired people to type, read and navigate their surroundings using a smartphone. Connecting via the smartphone's headphone port, the [Cube](#) translates visual information into tactile feedback.

*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.](#)*