

January's independent living technology news

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

Public policy, legislation and campaigns

Study explores assistive technology support for people with learning disabilities during pandemic

The Open University has published the [results of a project](#) exploring the role of technology in supporting people with learning disabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic. The project recommended measures government and care providers can adopt to help people with learning disabilities use technology more confidently.

AT2030 examines access to digital assistive technology in developing countries

The UK government-funded AT2030 programme has published the [last in a series of reports](#) identifying barriers and market interventions that can shape disabled people's access to assistive technology in developing countries, focusing on digital assistive products.

Report maps a path to more accessible travel

Leonard Cheshire has partnered with online travel agency Expedia Group to publish the [Breaking Down Barriers to Travel](#) report, setting out a range of recommendations designed to make the travel industry more inclusive and accessible for disabled people.

Microsoft unveils online employability hub

Microsoft has launched a [new online hub](#) showcasing technologies and practices to make workplaces more accessible for disabled employees. The hub brings together a host of informative videos tailored to employers and jobseekers respectively.

Technological developments and innovations

New partnership seeks to make Alexa accessible for people with speech impairments

[Amazon has partnered with Voiceitt](#), a company that makes voice recognition software for people with speech impairments, to make Alexa more accessible for disabled people. Voiceitt has been trialing a version of its mobile app to allow people with motor neurone disease and other conditions to use Alexa-enabled devices for everyday activities.

Hearing device converts sounds into vibrations and light

A Japanese technology start-up has created a hearing device that allows hearing impaired people to experience the characteristics of sound through vibration and light. [Ontenna](#) is a small wearable device that can be clipped to the user's hair, earlobe or clothing and can convert sound into 256 levels of light and vibration in real time to convey patterns, rhythms and volumes.

Eye gaze app bridges gaps in communication aid availability

A new Android app aimed at people with physical and speech impairments allows users to select and speak aloud prewritten messages with their eyes. The [Look to Speak app](#) is designed for situations in which the user's main communication device might be less suitable such in transit or outdoors.

Smart wheelchair design offers increased stability and comfort

Phoenix Instinct has developed the [Phoenix i](#) – an ultralight manual wheelchair that uses sensors, power-assisted front wheels and computer algorithms to provide enhanced stability and a more comfortable ride. The design was recently awarded first prize by the Toyota Mobility Foundation's Mobility Unlimited Challenge.

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.](#)