

Using technology to support independence for people with learning disabilities

Tunstall

“ Personalised Technology can have a huge impact on the lives of people with learning disabilities, helping them to communicate and have control over their lives. It also helps us to safeguard them, and use our resources effectively to give support where it’s needed most.

Steve Barnard, Director of Innovation, Hft

The challenge

Hft is a national charity, providing services for people with learning disabilities throughout England. Established in the 1960s, Hft works in partnership with the people it supports, their families and health professionals to develop effective, person-centred services. Its services include supported living, residential care and short breaks, and Hft helps the people it supports to make their own choices, such as by helping them to find jobs, build friendships, and take part in activities.

How is Hft using Personalised Technology to help people with learning disabilities to live more independent, safe, and healthy lives?

What we did

Hft is recognised as a pioneer in using Personalised Technology to enhance the lives of people with learning disabilities and increase their independence. Its approach is to establish what people want to achieve first, and then assess the solutions technology can provide, helping them to live life the way they choose.

Personalised Technology solutions can include anything from telecare equipment and environmental controls, to mobile technology and communication aids. Working with the individual and their carers and family, Hft staff carry out an initial assessment to establish their needs, goals, and the barriers they face to living life as independently as possible. A “toolkit” of technology is then designed and proposed to meet that person’s specific needs.

Hft follows the principles of the Mental Capacity Act which means consent is gained for Personalised Technology solutions from the person being supported. If this is not possible, then consultation takes place with the people that know them well. All Personalised Technology solutions are regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the person using them, and adjusted over time as necessary.

Photos have been posed by models and names changed to protect individual’s privacy.



Results

Personalised Technology is a vital part of the way Hft delivers services, providing high quality support that helps people with learning disabilities to live better lives. You can read some examples of the ways it has improved the quality of life for people Hft supports on the next page.



Case studies

Enabling independent living by managing risks and medication management

The situation

Andrew and Gillian were living together in a small bungalow attached to a supported living environment, but wanted to increase their independence by having their own front door. They wanted to have their own home together, with a private garden, and to have space to enjoy each other's company, without a support worker living with them.

The solution

Andrew and Gillian spoke to their Hft support worker, who worked closely with the couple to find a suitable flat for them to live privately, and supported them throughout the move. The Hft Personalised Technology (PT) team undertook assessments to explore how PT could assist in supporting their needs and enable them to live independently. A range of PT was suitable, including a panic button, alerting support workers of a problem, to a door sensor fitted to the front door, which will alert staff if the door is opened or closed. A Tunstall Lifeline home unit was also installed, which allowed the monitoring centre to ring the flat and alert support workers if Andrew or Gillian failed to answer.

Andrew was also given a Pivotell medication dispenser to remind him to take his pills without the need for a support worker to visit him, providing Andrew with more independence.

The outcome

Andrew and Gillian have achieved their goal of having their own front door and now live together in their two bedroom flat. They have more opportunities to gain confidence, develop new skills such as gardening and cooking, and can build their life together, with technology ensuring they are safe and have access to support when they need it.

Enabling freedom of movement and maintaining security

The situation

James loves getting up early to make his breakfast and go for a walk. However, support workers became increasingly concerned when they discovered that James would go out and forget to shut his front door, leaving it wide open and creating a security risk.

The solution

James' support worker spoke to the Hft Personalised Technology (PT) team, who then worked with James to find the perfect solution. After assessing his situation, the PT team installed a door sensor which would alert support staff if James had gone out and left the door open. James could now continue to leave his flat when he wanted, and he could do so without the support of someone else.

The outcome

After just a few months of having the door sensor fitted, James no longer leaves his door wide open. The added benefit of having the sensor fitted was that James was informed when he left his door open and, over time, he started to remember to shut his door when he left his flat. James can now continue make his own breakfast, go on his morning walk and live a safe and independent life.



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