

Assistive technology

Independence and well-being 4

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Assistive technology has huge potential to help people remain independent.

- it provides choice to users, for example, by enabling them to remain in their own homes
- it supports both formal and informal carers
- it can be used to deliver health and social care more conveniently

Assistive technology is an important way of delivering many public policy initiatives.

- many of the targets in the Priorities and Planning Framework can be underpinned by the use of assistive technology
- assistive technology will play a major part in delivering several of the National Service Frameworks
- assistive technology has a vital part to play in keeping hospital services local and in supporting the transfer of services from secondary to primary care
- assistive technology offers the opportunity to provide better and less expensive care for many of the country's 18 million people who have chronic health conditions

The evidence to prove its success is strong, but the take-up is slower than the weight of evidence would merit.

- the organisation expected to invest in AT (typically local authorities) is usually not the beneficiary, making some reluctant to invest
- assistive technology often requires significant changes to the way that people work – implementation often needs well-planned programmes of organisational development
- there is a crowded change management agenda, which can marginalise assistive technology service developments
- suppliers could ease the implementation of assistive technology by offering whole packages of care, not just the technology

Public services need to use the potential of assistive technology to keep people independent and ease the pressure on existing services.

- health and social care organisations need to take maximum advantage of funding flexibilities available under the 2000 Health Act to pool budgets and support developments across agencies
- local authorities need to channel energy into providing information that empowers users and enables them to make informed choices about assistive technology
- wherever possible, suppliers need to market assistive technology products to individuals rather than content themselves with selling to public agencies