

Innovating by design: Transforming supported housing

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Assistive technology is nothing new. But often, it can be challenging to visualise what types of devices encompass the breadth of it.



In an ageing population, it might be tempting to think of assistive technology in its simplest form which features a button on a necklace that an older person can press in case of emergency – but contrary to stereotypical beliefs, assistive technology is so much more than that. At Sanctuary Supported Living, our range of extraordinarily adaptable technology enabled living products are designed to support anyone to live healthy, happy, and independent lives.

Whilst the idea of assistive technology is not new, what has changed is the rate at which technology is progressing, and cutting-edge, smart devices in the home are now readily available for a broad range of purposes. This has been game-changing for the way we deliver care and support services and bridge the gap for so many marginalised and isolated people who are unable to lead a fulfilling life – whether those people are indeed elderly, or they have a disability, or they're experiencing homelessness, or they have mental health needs.

As we ambitiously drive innovation with inclusion in mind, our technology enabled living services are significantly enhancing people's lives in every support setting by complementing personalised support plans. And as we use assistive technology as part of a whole-person, holistic approach, we're transforming the way that support services are delivered. At the heart of Sanctuary Supported Living is our commitment to support customers to be their best, and our priority is to have meaningful conversations with customers to find out what matters to them.

For one customer, John, who could only look at the pictures in his fishing magazine, this meant

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being able to actually read about the roaches that he caught from the river in his spare time. So, the enablement service in which he lives facilitated a pilot for a state-of-the-art reading pen, designed to support independent reading. Since John has been using the pen, he enjoys confidently reading his fishing magazine for the first time, which has boosted his confidence and spurred an interest to attend college.

Alongside our in-home technology, we can support customers when they are outside the home too – like Craige, who lives at a learning disability service in Sheffield and has epilepsy. When Craige had a seizure down the local pub, hospitality staff were quick to activate his GPS locating device so that our in-house, 24/7 call monitoring and technology installation service could be alerted, and an ambulance called.

So, there is still an element of using traditional personal risk monitoring devices for customers' security and safety. But also, we're firmly advancing into a new space where our customers – and especially our young customers – are using 'off the shelf' technology like smart phones which enhance support by providing apps that can be used for wellbeing, nutrition, budgeting, banking, and safely staying in touch with friends and family. These solutions not only support customers with their natural independence but expertly provide multiple and individually considered solutions to suit them.

As well as providing safety devices and initiating proactive wellbeing calls - in between, we also design accommodation with innovative kitchen features like accessible rise and fall worktops to encourage customers in wheelchairs to safely push their limits or provide lone-worker devices for frontline staff who may be at risk. And we do this with one goal in mind; to enable people to live confidently, safely, and independently in their homes and communities.

Put simply, we're innovating by design to transform supported housing, and our technology enabled living services are truly life-changing and lifesaving.