

Empowering Independence: How Assistive Technology Transformed Lives at Hill House

In the realm of adult social care, the transformative power of assistive technology cannot be overstated. At Leonard Cheshire, we've had the privilege of witnessing this transformation firsthand. Today, we're excited to share the story of our most significant project at Hill House, a Leonard Cheshire adult social care site.

The challenge we faced at Hill House was not unique. In large-scale support settings, providing truly personalised supports for disabled adults can be a daunting task. The residents, 21 people living in one place, supported by a staff of dedicated workers and nurses, often found it difficult to have ownership over their time and space. This lack of ownership impacted their independence, a fundamental aspect of their lives that we aimed to restore.

With a generous donation from a local funder, we embarked on a mission to deliver technologies that would empower people to regain independence for the most common tasks in their daily life. We introduced Alexas in common spaces, which played music, set alarms for different events, played pub quizzes, and told jokes to make residents laugh. We installed Smart televisions in common areas which could be controlled by voice, tablet, or by accessible remote control.

We also created a sensory room with visual, tactile, and auditory stimulation options to engage residents with complex disabilities in enjoyable and accessible activities.

As residents began to engage with these products, we started supporting those who were also interested in making their personal spaces more accessible. This included devices like Amazon's Echo Show to play music and control Alexa-enabled devices like televisions, lights, and fans. We also introduced

infrared (IR) environmental controls so people could open and close their doors, windows, and shades, all of which could be controlled with any IR interface such as wireless switches, AAC devices, and rugged remote controls.

The impact of these changes has been nothing short of life changing. Hill House, once a quiet place, is now a boisterous, busy hub of activity. Residents are watching movies together in the common space, making video calls to their families without waiting for support workers to facilitate, and advocating for themselves. They're opening and closing their windows to be more comfortable in their own spaces without asking for help.

The transformation at Hill House is a testament to the power of assistive technology when it is well-matched with the preferences and needs of those who will be using it. The substantial gains in independence for residents, and their extreme happiness and satisfaction, have led us to plan a regional rollout of the same process. We're proud of what we've achieved and excited about what the future holds.

Stay tuned for more updates on our journey as we continue to harness the power of assistive technology to transform lives!

To find out more, go to:

leonardcheshire.org/assistive-technology-leonard-cheshire