



How technology is changing day to day life for many with low vision

November 2024

Over the past 15 years or so, significant steps have been taken to make everyday technology more accessible.

Especially for people living with low vision.

Technology today is supporting people with low vision to continue complete everyday tasks such as: writing documents, browse the internet, and send and receive emails. Screen Reading features, either built in or specialist, and Braille devices allow people with low vision to continue to use computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices independently.

Similarly, people with low vision can use screen magnification features and devices to enlarge letters, pictures, and other objects for more comfortable viewing. Technology is ever evolving and has removed many access barriers for people with low vision, especially with the advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI).

In the past, low vision has meant some form of handheld magnification tool. This is still important, but technology can, and is supporting daily living, as there are more technologies people use every day without necessarily realising, they are part of technological development.

Sarah's story

This is Sarah's (name changed) Story of how technology supports her day-to-day life.

6.30am

Sarah is woken by 'Alexa' and 'Alexa,' turns her lights on in the morning and off in the evening.

Alexa turns off her alarm in the morning and tells Sarah what is planned in her calendar for the day ahead.

By 6.45 am

Sarah gets showered and dressed for work, she uses an app on her mobile phone to help her identify the colour of her trousers.

7 am

Time for a cup of coffee!

Into the kitchen and Sarah uses a one cup kettle to ensure that the cup does not overflow.

7.30 am

After the morning coffee and breakfast, it is time to leave for work.

Sarah checks with 'Alexa,' what's the weather like today?

Now she knows there is no rain due, so leaves the umbrella at home.

Continued...

<p>8 am</p>	<p>Sarah is on the bus going to work when she realises, she has left the heating on at home.</p> <p>Sarah opens up an app on her mobile phone and switches the heating off, as every penny helps.</p>
<p>9.05 am</p>	<p>Now at work and she has some post in her in-tray.</p> <p>She asks Google Assistant on her mobile phone, to open up Envision. An app that reads aloud privately and independently any correspondence.</p> <p>Throughout the working day, she uses the built-in accessibility features on her computer to magnify elements of the screen needed, as well as listening to documents and emails if her eyes need a rest.</p>
<p>3.30 pm</p>	<p>Her mobile phone notifies her that there is a knock at her home front door, via the video doorbell.</p> <p>Through this she is able to communicate with the delivery driver to leave her parcel with the next-door neighbour.</p>
<p>5pm</p>	<p>At the end of the working day, she checks the bus times home via her bus operators app. The bus is running 10 minutes late, so there is no need to rush to the bus stop.</p> <p>Using "Hey Google, she calls Home." to notify those at home that she will be running a bit late.</p>
<p>6pm</p>	<p>Upon arriving home, it's time to prepare dinner. She uses an electronic vegetable chopper to prepare vegetables for the evening meal.</p>
<p>7pm</p>	<p>It is now time to unwind in front of the TV. Sarah uses the built in screen reader on her TV to navigate the program guide and find out what programmes are available with audio description.</p>

Sarah's story highlights, that there are a variety of technologies that can play an important part in everyday life and enable someone living with low vision to complete their daily tasks without the need of relying on others or their remaining functional vision.

Ultimately, technology is a tool, and like any tool, it can be used for a variety of purposes. As long as we are able to identify a purpose for our own specific needs, this is where the value of technology lies.

The future of low vision aids

It is anticipated that by 2030 nearly all people across the UK will be online. The **Royal National Institute of Blind** People report goes on to suggest that by tackling [the] barriers associated with the factors of age and knowledge is likely to reduce the divide and speed up the adoption of technology [for] blind and partially sighted people.

Currently, Low Vision devices include a number of adaptations, for example reviewing lightning in the home to better support reading. Magnifiers that help increase the size of fonts and pictures and can be handheld.

Assistive technology is continuously changing and a growing field especially in relation to the advancement of digital technology and emerging needs and support needs.

It is suggested that the future for low vision aids incorporates everyday technology, with the potential of adaptability to support varying needs.

Thank you so much for the information to enable me to access audio books on my Alexa.

It has been a god send and to have someone to turn to for help.

4Sight Vision Support

Our vision is for everyone living with sight loss in our county; to receive the support they need to lead a life without limits.

4Sight is an independent charity which provides specialist advice and support for blind and partially sighted people of all ages, across West Sussex.

We understand that a sight loss diagnosis can be a devastating and life-changing time.

We are a caring and trusted team who will help relieve fear and anxiety by helping you to adapt and give you the confidence to do the things you want to do.

If you're supporting someone with sight loss, we're here for you too.

Our services are available across West Sussex: anyone can contact us; you do not need to be referred.



Website: www.4sight.org.uk



Email: enquiries@4sight.org.uk



Telephone: **01243 828 555**



Talk to us

If you have questions about the content of this report, please either call 0300 012 0122 or email cheryl.berry@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

How this insight will be used?

We recognise that all health and care services are under pressure at this time and have had to adapt their ways of working. We will share this report with the local NHS, Local Government, and other providers to help them understand where things are working well and services are adapting to meet peoples' needs, and to help them identify any gaps. We see this as a continuation of discussions taking place and will continue to use this fresh insight and the solutions presented to challenge for a better future.

For help, advice, and information or to share your experience

We also help people find the information they need about health, care and community and voluntary health and care support services in West Sussex.

Here to help you on the next step of your health and social care journey



You can review how we performed and how we report on what we have done by visiting our website www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Healthwatch West Sussex works with **Help & Care** to provide its statutory activities.



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