

Self-directed support

Stuff or staff? Equipment and technology

Many people spend their personal budget on getting support from other people. But the best thing about self-directed support is you can spend the money in a way that suits you.

For some people, this means finding ways of being independent without a supporter there – using equipment and technology.



To get more help
contact In Control.
Tel: 01564 821 650
Email In Control
help@in-control.org.uk

Find more fact sheets at:
www.in-control.org.uk/factsheets



 This fact sheet was produced by In Control and Mencap as part of In Control and Me, a lottery funded project.
www.in-control.org.uk/icandme

The basic facts

Technology is changing fast. New inventions are coming out all the time. Gadgets are getting cheaper. You can find useful pieces of technology in the supermarket or hardware store.

There are also more and more specialist providers of aids and adaptations that might make life easier.

When you make your support plan, think about any equipment that could help you and increase your independence. Think about the things you need support with. Does it always have to be a person that gives that support? Could a piece of equipment be better?

More information about technology and equipment

Who might help you to think about useful equipment of technology? Perhaps you have an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist or a speech and language therapist. If you do, they may advise you.

The Disabled Living Foundation has qualified professionals who can give impartial, independent advice. The Foundation has a showroom. You can look around and test out pieces of equipment. See the contact details at the end of this fact sheet.

There are so many kinds of equipment, that it isn't possible to list them all here. In the next section, there are examples of what people already do to. These examples might give you ideas of what you could do.

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More detail – people who are already doing it

Greg's webcam

Greg has severe diabetes and needed staff to come in to support him to take his blood sugar levels and administer his medication.

Greg was finding this very intrusive. To him it seemed like it was staff that stopped him getting a life – not his diabetes. Greg looked into the options with his social worker. He decided to use some of his personal budget to buy a laptop with a webcam.

For a very small retainer fee to staff, Greg was able to check his blood sugar level wherever he was, share it with a staff member using his laptop and webcam and then self medicate with their 'virtual support'.

This simple change has enabled Greg to use his staff in a more effective way. When he needs to go somewhere, he knows he can still get support. He has the personal space he needs at home or with friends to do what he wants without having to have a supporter with him.

Andrew's medication dispenser

Andrew has a condition that requires several doses of medication throughout the day.

Before he had a personal budget, Andrew needed to stay at home for a support worker to physically give him his medication. Now, he rents a medication dispenser coupled with the medication reminder feature on the Lifeline Connect+. He has more freedom and privacy. The Careline works with local GPs where clinical advice may be required – for example, in the case of missed medication.

Margaret's chair

Margaret is an independent married woman. She has lived with MS for years. Over the past few years her condition has deteriorated. Margaret's husband works full time and can't be around during the day.

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Margaret has some great personal assistants who pop in as and when required. They support her to attend meetings and other activities. Margaret is an acclaimed academic and loves writing and spending time on her computer when no-one is around. She can use a Zimmer frame to get around, albeit slowly, but really struggles getting up and out of her chair.

Margaret decided to spend £1,000 of her personal budget on a recline-to-rise armchair and this has really increased her independence. The occupational therapist was worried about health and safety, but Margaret knows her situation best and thought the chair was the ideal solution. Finally, everyone agreed. Margaret describes how her chair has made so much difference, you think she is describing a member of her family!

Billy's exit sensor

Billy has Asperger's Syndrome and had always lived at home with his parents. He recently moved into his own home and used his individual budget to fund a telecare system that includes a property exit sensor. This means that, if he leaves home at unusual times of day or for lengthy periods of time, a carer or relative will be alerted. This device helps Billy to stay safe but doesn't restrict his independence.

Jack's pilot seatbelt

Jack has a rare genetic disorder and he needs a high level of support. More recently, he has needed 3:1 support in his car as he kept lurching forward and attacking the driver – even with his seat belt on.

He recently changed his mobility vehicle. His support team mentioned the problem to the car dealer. They found out that, for just £80 paid out of his personal budget, Jack could have a specialist pilot's seat belt fitted. Jack has felt so safe since this new belt was fitted, you can now drive his car without anyone else supporting him. This has made a huge difference to his mum and means there's much more left in his personal budget to spend on other things.

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Charlotte's waterproof pendant

Charlotte has a degenerative eye condition, and the installation of a Lifeline unit with waterproof pendant means she now feels safe to have a bath by herself. This means her husband can leave their home for short periods. These simple changes have delivered an enormous improvement in quality of life for both Charlotte and her husband.

Older people's Lifeline service

After a series of burglaries in the area, a number of older people have chosen to add to their basic Lifeline service with a security package including property exit sensors, PIRs and bogus caller buttons. These devices help them to feel protected. In some cases, this reassurance has been enough to change or delay decisions about moving people into sheltered accommodation.

Mrs Moon's motion sensor

Chris Moon-Willems says of her parents: 'I'll give you an example of what's possible if you really know the person. My mother finds it difficult to manage some health-related equipment. She forgets to close a tap and it's a big problem. You could jump to the conclusion that she needs more personal or nursing care. But we did some research and came up with a technical solution for £35. So she's still in her own home.

This works for my father, too, because he doesn't want even more people coming into the house. Also, I got a motion sensor switch for £7 in a cut-price store. The light goes on if my mum gets out of the other side of the bed, which is really useful, because there is a big problem about her falling. That's what families can do – know the person well enough and take the time to come up with solutions that are right for them.'

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There is a lot of information about self-directed support on In Control's website: www.in-control.org.uk

Free to download or you can buy a copy from:

In Control Support Centre, Carillon House
Chapel Lane, Wythall, B47 6JX
or www.in-control.org.uk/shop

A report on In Control's First Phase 2003-2005

A report on In Control's Second Phase: evaluation and learning 2005-2007

Printed publications for sale at:

In Control Support Centre, Carillon House
Chapel Lane, Wythall, B47 6JX
or www.in-control.org.uk/shop

Keys to Citizenship: a guide to getting good support for people with learning disabilities Simon Duffy

Information about equipment and technology

Disabled Living Foundation

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Email info@dlf.org.uk or helpline@dlf.org.uk
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www.shop4support.com

About the **In Control and Me** project

A three-year project to produce accessible information for everyone who wants to direct their own support, funded by the National Lottery through the BIG Lottery Fund. You can find out more at www.mencap.org.uk/incontrol or www.in-control.org.uk/icandme

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