

NEWS RELEASE

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Products and services for older adults need urgent innovation

The Technology Strategy Board and partners urge the UK to innovate so we can live independently for longer

79 per cent of Britons want increased innovation to improve quality of life in older age, according to new findings released today by the UK's innovation agency, The Technology Strategy Board. More innovation is needed to enable us to live independently for longer and today sees the launch of Tomorrow Together, a new campaign that aims to spark a national conversation about the future needs of older adults. People can take part in the discussion at tomorrowtogether.innovateuk.org.

Key findings

- 90 per cent of people in the UK are not looking forward to older age
- Nearly half of people (43 per cent) think that better products and services to sustain independence would change this
- 79 per cent of people in the UK want more innovation in products and services for older age

A need for better products

A worrying 90 per cent of people in the UK are not looking forward to older age, the survey of over 2000 adults found, with concerns about health, mobility, wealth and social interaction ranking highly. Nearly half of people (43 per cent) think that better market products that sustain independence would change this.

With 80 per cent of wealth in the UK resting in the hands of over 50s¹, the poll highlights a notable market opportunity. Mike Biddle, Leader of the Assisted Living Innovation Platform at the Technology Strategy Board said: "There is an open goal for innovators, while the new parent market is flooded, consideration of the older adult market is distinctly lacking, despite their much greater comparative wealth."

"People should be demanding better products and services for later life. A lot of technology around us is purely functional – it's based on a need, not on desirability and relevance – and older life shouldn't just be about surviving, it should be about thriving and enjoying yourself as much as any other time in your life. The Tomorrow Together website is about encouraging people to talk about what they want in their later life."

Demand for social innovation

According to the survey, 41 per cent of people in the UK cite a lack of social interaction and new opportunities as their greatest concern in older age. Many saw later life as an opportunity for self

improvement, with over a third (41 per cent) seeing later life as a time they would like to engage with others either through continued employment or volunteering.

Worries about remaining included within society are reflected in current UK findings on this matter; half of people aged 75 years and over live aloneⁱⁱ while 3.1 million of over 65's do not see someone they know at least once a weekⁱⁱⁱ. Additionally, the Technology Strategy Board poll found that 40 per cent of people said being provided with access to more things to do and experience would improve their quality of life in older age.

These findings are particularly significant following the Department for Work and Pensions announcement of a "staggering" rise in life expectancy, predicting that a fifth of Britons alive today will celebrate their 100th birthday^{iv}.

Making change happen

The Technology Strategy Board is working through its Assisted Living Innovation Platform to become a catalyst for an innovation revolution for later life and is working in collaboration with a range of partner organisations including the Design Council, the Department of Health and the Research Councils, to develop technologies and services that will enable individuals to live more independently in the way that they choose.

People are being invited to join the conversation at tomorrowtogether.innovateuk.org or on Twitter by following @TomorrowTogethr or the hashtag #innovateforage.

Jackie Marshall-Cyrus Lead Specialist on the Technology Strategy Board's Assisted Living Innovation Platform said: "We need urgent innovation. It's time for the talented, passionate brains of today to re-imagine and rethink for the future and work on tomorrow, together."

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- tomorrowtogether.innovateuk.org is a place for anyone and everyone to take part in a national conversation that will help to shape a better future for later life in the UK and discover the exciting things that are already happening to improve the lives of older adults.
- All research from Populus. Populus interviewed 2,061 GB adults online between 9th and 11th December. Results have been weighted to be representative of all GB adults. Populus is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. For more information see www.populus.co.uk.
- The Technology Strategy Board is the UK's national innovation agency. Our goal is to accelerate economic growth by stimulating and supporting business-led innovation. Sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Technology Strategy Board brings together business, research and the public sector, supporting and accelerating the development

of innovative products and services to meet market needs, tackle major societal challenges and help build the future economy www.innovateuk.org

- The Technology Strategy Board is working with the Department of Health (DH), the Research Councils, the Design Council, local authorities, academia, industry and third-sector organisations to develop technologies and services that will enable individuals to live more independently in the way that they choose.
- The Technology Strategy Board's Assisted Living Innovation Platform (ALIP), is responding to the challenge of significant future demographic shift – in essence promoting independence by making technology better, cheaper and more desirable. The ALIP aims to significantly advance technology to meet the demand for independent living from the expected increase in the numbers of people suffering from long term conditions and age-related disability. By 2021 half of the UK's adult population will be over 50 and by 2025 almost 1.5 million people will be living with an age-related disability.
- The Technology Strategy Board launched the Assisted Living Innovation Platform (ALIP) in November 2007, with additional funding from the National Institute for Health Research, the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Ambient Assisted Living Association. <https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/assisted-living-innovation-platform-alip> .
- Through the Assisted Living Innovation Platform, The Technology Strategy Board also works with a range of other partners, including the Design Council, who have worked with Technology Strategy Board to run a series of projects called Independence Matters. <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/Communities/Independence-Matters/>

ⁱ Carrigan M, and Smigin, I (2000) in Food for thought – Some material to provoke, inspire and stimulate thinking about 'keeping connected'- The Technology Strategy Board / The Design Council http://www.innovateuk.org/_assets/0511/foodforthought.pdf

ⁱⁱ General Lifestyle Survey, ONS, 2009, in Food for thought – Some material to provoke, inspire and stimulate thinking about 'keeping connected'- The Technology Strategy Board / The Design Council http://www.innovateuk.org/_assets/0511/foodforthought.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Participle <http://www.participle.net/projects/view/5/37/> and A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People, Social Exclusion Unit, Deputy Prime Ministers Office, 2006 in Food for thought – Some material to provoke, inspire and stimulate thinking about 'keeping connected'- The Technology Strategy Board / The Design Council http://www.innovateuk.org/_assets/0511/foodforthought.pdf

^{iv} Department of Work and Pensions, 30 December 2010 – Over ten million people to live to 100 <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2010/dec-2010/dwp186-10-301210.shtml>