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This guide was written to support the Assistive Technology for Daily Living webinar which is the first in a series of five sessions made created by DATTN (Digital and Assistive Technology Training Network) about the Assistive Technology (AT). Each webinar looks at how AT can support different parts of everyday life.

Introduction

According to the World Health Organisation, Assistive Technology (AT) refers to any product or system that helps individuals improve their functioning and independence, promoting well-being. A fundamental principle of AT is that it must be person-centred, meaning it should be selected based on the user's unique goals, strengths, and environment. This selection often uses a method called feature matching, where you examine exactly what you need the technology to do and then match those requirements to the specific features of various tools. Digital AT, specifically, includes accessibility features built into mainstream phones, tablets, laptops, as well as specialised apps and smart home devices that help manage daily life. Daily life considerations could include things like travelling, controlling the temperature in a room, anything that is a part of a daily routine. This guide covers five categories of digital assistive tools: Digital Assistants, Navigation Tools, Smart Home Controls, Digital "Passport" Tools, and Health and Wellbeing Mobile Apps.

Digital Assistants



Digital assistants are voice-activated tools, that allow users to control devices and find information using simple voice commands. They help manage time by setting medication reminders, scheduling appointments, and providing spoken summaries of daily schedules. They can also support memory by managing shopping lists, setting cooking timers, and other reminders. Digital assistants can also enable better planning by providing real-time updates on weather, news, and traffic. This can be especially useful for people with limited mobility, vision impairments, or difficulty using keyboards or touchscreens. Speech assistants can also connect with smart home technology so users can control lights, heating, or appliances hands-free. By making everyday communication and tasks easier, these tools help people stay connected, organised, and more independent.

Tools like Amazon Alexa (IOS), Siri (Apple) and Google Assistant lets users control devices, set reminders, make calls, send messages, and find information using simple voice commands.

Read more [about Accessibility for Alexa.](#)

Navigation Tools



Navigation tools promote independence by helping individuals with mobility, visual, or cognitive challenges plan journeys and navigate the world with more confidence. Whether you're orientating yourself or deciding on the best route, users can activate the accessibility features which suit them best. Users can filter routes to find wheelchair-accessible options that avoid stairs and prioritise lifts. Features like "Street View" allow for photos of landmarks and entrances before traveling, while "Live View" uses augmented reality to overlay directional arrows on the phone's camera view. Other features include voice-guided directions and real-time location sharing for safety.

[NaviLens](#) is an example of digital assistive technology. It is a navigation app that helps people find their way, especially in places where Google Maps doesn't work well, like inside buildings. It uses colourful QR-style codes that can be scanned to give directions using sound, text, and vibrations. This makes it easier for users to move around independently.

Each code also shares helpful information, such as what a service does, its opening hours, contact details, and useful links. The app works in the language set on your phone and includes accessibility features, so people can get information in the way that suits them best.

Read more about accessibility settings in Google Maps for [Android](#) and for [iPhone](#).

Smart Home Controls



Smart home technology allows users to control their environment remotely or by voice, creating a safer and more responsive home. Smart home technology enables you to easily control your lights, heating, and locks using simple voice commands or an app on your phone. These tools help you live more safely and independently by allowing you to manage appliances remotely, see visitors through video doorbells, and set up automatic routines for daily tasks.

Smart Plugs and Appliances allow everyday devices (like kettles, fans, or washing machines) to be turned on or off remotely. This assists individuals with limited dexterity, fatigue, or cognitive impairments who benefit from simplified routines.

Voice Controlled Lights: smart lighting allows users to turn lights on or off using a phone or voice command. This is helpful for people with limited mobility because it removes the need to reach for physical light switches.

Video Doorbells: allow users to see and communicate with visitors through their phone. This is identified as a valuable tool for those who may feel vulnerable answering the door or have hearing impairments.

Smart Thermostats: control heating and keep the home comfortable. They allow users to adjust temperature remotely or according to a pre-planned schedule. This could support individuals with chronic pain, temperature sensitivities or memory difficulties.

Digital “Passport” Tools



Photo of webinar presenter Feabhra Mullaly in front of a poster showing what the HSE Health Passport looks like on a phone. Find out more news about what St.Michael’s House is up to at the moment [here](#).

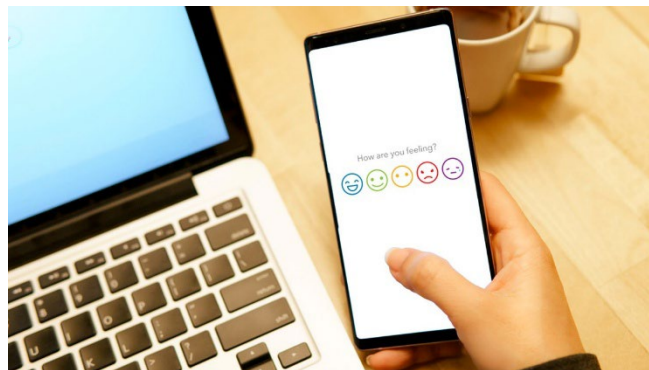
A Digital Passport is a tool that helps people share and store important information about their health, needs, and preferences with different services.

A Digital Passport is held and owned by the AT user, promoting autonomy and moving away from models where equipment is "owned" by a school or employer. Instead a user can have control of their information and bring it with them as they move between places like school, college, work, or healthcare settings. The passport is intended to travel with the person across different life stages, such as transitioning from school to college or moving into the workplace, without the fear of losing funding or AT supports. It acts as the "central connector" for a wider ecosystem of supports, linking together information provision, assessment, training, and innovation.

The [Assistive Technology \(AT\) Passport](#) is a digital record of a person's AT needs which has been developed as a proof of concept by 4 service providers, funded by the HSE's CREATE fund. It is not yet available for general use. It places the AT user at the centre of their own journey, providing them with a central accessible repository where all their AT-related data is stored, and available for them to share with whomever they choose.

The [HSE Health Passport](#) is another highly versatile tool, used in settings ranging from dental offices to hospitals, and can be presented as either a digital app or a printed paper copy. Beyond immediate needs, it helps healthcare staff understand a person's behaviours when in pain or afraid and documents their preferences regarding future healthcare decisions. Digital Passports allow for easy sharing of information in advance, which ensures more personalised, respectful, and accessible care.

Health and Wellbeing Apps



Health and Wellbeing apps provide on-demand emotional support and are often used to help manage anxiety, stress, or emotional regulation challenges. Many apps include a daily emotion check-in using a visual mood meter and descriptive tags to track how factors like sleep or exercise affect mood over time. They offer guided activities for breathing, mindfulness, and reframing anxious thoughts, as well as body sensation mapping to help users connect physical feelings with their emotional state. The "[How We Feel](#)" app is a free tool designed to help people understand and manage

their emotions. Developed with the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence, the app allows users to check in daily using a simple mood meter and descriptive tags to record how they feel. Over time, it can show patterns in how factors like sleep, exercise, or social interactions affect mood. The app also provides short guided activities such as breathing exercises, movement, and ways to reframe anxious thoughts. "[Calm](#)" is a mental health app designed to help you manage stress, sleep better, and live a happier, healthier life. It is an example of digital assistive technology because it provides research-based tools that help you build life-changing habits to support your mental health. Calm can help lower stress levels, manage chronic pain, and decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression. By using features like "**Sleep Check-In**," you can track your nightly sleep quality to identify patterns and build better health habits. This on-demand support is especially helpful for managing common daily stressors.

"[Headspace](#)" acts as a guide to better mental health, using evidence-based tools to help you find more joy and less stress. A subscription provides access to exercises, including mood-boosting meditations and stress-relieving tools for any situation. It also offers specialised sleep resources like "sleepcasts" and "wind downs" to help you rest. For those who need extra guidance, mental health coaching can be added to the plan. Tools like this can help people build self-awareness and support their emotional wellbeing.

Overall, apps like **How We Feel**, **Calm** and **Headspace** function as digital assistive technology by documenting emotional patterns and triggers . They provide guided strategies such as mindfulness, breathing routines, and reframing thoughts to help you regulate your feelings and improve your overall quality of life.

Please check out our upcoming webinars [here](#).