

NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR CARE AT HOME

New technology could soon be available to enable elderly and disabled people to continue to live independently. The Universities of Stirling, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow have today been awarded £1.3 million by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council towards technologies to support care at home. The four-year project, led by the University of Stirling, will also involve professionals from the fields of social work, healthcare, housing provision and technology development.

Project Technical Director, **Professor Ken Turner** said: “The percentage of older people in the population is gradually increasing. It is therefore desirable to extend the period during which they, as well as those with a disability, can live in their own homes. Our goal is to develop advanced technologies to allow them to remain at home in a familiar environment, close to family and friends. The project will help to maintain their independence, improve their quality of life, enhance the care they receive at home, and ease the burden on their carers and services.”

The research team will create home networks to link various devices in the home. For example, movement sensors will be linked to lights so that a path through the house is properly illuminated at night. Lifestyle monitoring will also allow carers to remotely check someone’s living patterns for abnormal situations.

Professor Turner explained: “Suppose someone normally rises at 8am and goes to the kitchen to make breakfast. If that does not happen, the system could alert a carer in case the person is ill.”

The project will also be looking at developing speech communication. For example, someone could ask for lights to be switched on or to be reminded verbally about appointments. Other assistive technologies include a gas monitoring system that could trigger a verbal warning if a cooker has been

turned on but not lit. If the problem is not attended to, a carer might be notified by mobile phone that the user could need urgent help.

The project will combine its results in a new demonstration centre that will showcase what can be done to care for people at home.

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Notes to editors:

The grant will support the MATCH project: Mobilising Advanced Technologies for Care at Home. The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council will contribute £1.3million to the £2.1 million project over four years.