

The National eWell-Being Awards 2008

**Celebrating
information and
communication
technologies that
benefit people and
the environment**



www.sustainit.org

brother
At your side.

BT

**PC
PRO**



Produced by

THE INDEPENDENT

for SustainIT's eWell-Being Awards



A simple, winning answer

Thousands of older and disabled people will benefit from the DLF's website, Ask Sara

For older people, and those living with a disability, new healthcare equipment can make an enormous difference to quality of life. But for those dependent on such equipment, their families and their carers, the choices can be baffling, and knowing which sources to trust for impartial advice can be difficult.

The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF) is a national charity with 40 years' experience in delivering high-quality advice and information for older and disabled people. It promotes independence, empowerment and freedom of choice for those who rely upon healthcare equipment and technology.

"Ask SARA" (SARA stands for Self Assessment, Rapid Access) is the DLF's specially developed online assessment tool to help older and disabled people and their families obtain advice about healthcare equipment that could help them get the most out of their daily lives.

It asks users simple questions about their disability or difficulty, the problem this poses, and their environment. It then provides a detailed report, based on their answers, which offers useful advice from healthcare professionals, and suggests products that might be of help. It is simple and easy to use, and can make an enormous difference to the lives of those affected by disability. There are currently around 1,600 people a month using Ask SARA to carry out assessments.

The system was originally developed in collaboration with professionals, users, and the Department of Health, as a way for people to self-assess which

Supported by



equipment would best help them. Hugh Dobie, DLF marketing manager, explained: "With an increasingly ageing population, people may wait longer to receive social care.

"Self-assessment is a way to empower people to make informed choices. Ask SARA reduces the pressure on local authorities and social services by enabling people to help themselves, thus reducing waiting lists."

Ask SARA was formally launched in September 2007 after an eight-month trial period of intensive user testing to ensure ease of accessibility. It was made more visually stimulating, and refined for a wider audience, through a partnership with Home Farm Trust, a leading charity in the field of long-term support and care for people with learning disabilities.

Ongoing funding for Ask SARA will be secured through licensing to local authorities and retailers. Local authorities can tailor Ask SARA to suit the equipment they have available locally. Current partners include the London Borough of Croydon, Birmingham City Council and Brighton and Hove City Council. Similarly, retailers can map Ask SARA's recommendations to their own product catalogue. Two retailers currently license the system this way. DLF is also piloting the use of Ask SARA over the telephone, to ensure the service can be ac-

cessible to those without internet facilities.

One of those who has seen the benefits of Ask SARA at first hand is Diane Fazackerley of Brighton and Hove Federation of Disabled People. "Ask SARA is an excellent facility to enable people with disabilities to find the right bit of equipment without the hassle of going into shops or being pushed into something you really don't want or need," she said.

DLF has long promoted new technologies that help create solutions to meet the needs of disabled and older people. There are more than 10 million adults registered with disabilities in the UK, and over 15 million aged 65 and over. DLF reaches these groups by responding directly to thousands of enquiries from the general public each year. Its information also goes out to millions of people through its online services and work with partners in the healthcare and voluntary sectors.

"For the first time ever, there are more people over 60 than there are children," said Dobie. "This change in demographics is placing an increasing strain on the social care system, and the growing expectation is that as we age we will have to make our own arrangements to manage our health. The need for DLF's advice will grow as the population continues to age, expectations rise, and technological and medical sciences advance."



Question time: Ask Sara helps users find out what healthcare equipment would make their life easier

COMMENDED

Just Checking Ltd Project: Just Checking

The anxiety, worry and stress experienced by the carers of dementia sufferers inspired the creators of Just Checking, a system designed to alleviate some of the pressure and make caring for dementia sufferers easier.

There are 700,000 people with dementia in the UK, of which a surprising 250,000 live alone. Contrary to expectation, however, people with dementia often successfully maintain daily routines when they are in their own homes, where familiar surroundings provide cues and reminders.

The Just Checking system developed by engineer Simon Price and gerontologist Celia Price (pictured) is designed to monitor dementia sufferers in their home, using automatic sensors to record their movement and activities. The data from the sensors is used to create a 24-hour chart of activity which is accessible over the internet. Because the chart is available - securely -



online, it allows family members to remotely monitor when a person gets up and goes to bed, whether they have a disturbed night, and any other activities they perform. They can track when their relative goes to the

kitchen to prepare meals, and when they leave the house and for how long.

With a clearer understanding of the capabilities of the person with dementia, who may no longer communicate reliably, family, carers

and care professionals can better organise and implement their support plan, potentially delaying or avoiding residential care, which can be distressing to the sufferer and their family.

Just Checking's director, Celia Price, said, "Most people want to stay in their own home for as long as possible. Indeed, confusion can progress more quickly if they make a move."

The system also helps councils allocate spending where it is most needed. By using Just Checking, Staffordshire County Council has been able to reduce care packages, making cost savings of up to £500 per month, by showing many service users to be more capable of looking after themselves in their own homes than was expected. It's a win-win situation as the council is able to spend its limited resources more efficiently, while the individual users are able to maintain their independence for as long as possible.