

UK Government Backs £2 Million Dementia Tech Project Led by Scottish Consortium

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Government bodies operating under the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have allocated £2 million in funding to support a groundbreaking project aimed at developing technology to enhance independent living for individuals with dementia. The initiative will be spearheaded by the Consolidate network, a collaborative effort involving prominent Scottish universities, NHS boards, and charitable organizations.

The three-year program, led by Heriot-Watt University, the University of Strathclyde, and Age Scotland, will focus on creating technology-driven solutions to support individuals at various stages of dementia. This includes developing tools to improve functional abilities, anticipate changing needs, and address declining skills. The project emphasizes co-creation with individuals living with dementia to ensure the technology is geographically and financially accessible.

This project is one of four selected for funding by UK Research and Innovation's Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, highlighting the government's commitment to addressing the growing challenges posed by dementia.

Professor Alan Gow of Heriot-Watt University highlighted the potential of technology, stating, "Technology has immense potential to support people living with dementia, from virtual assistants promoting social, mental, and physical engagement, smart sensors to monitor activity, and even robots that aid with daily tasks – the tools exist."

Professor Mario Parra Rodriguez of the University of Strathclyde added, "By equipping emerging

technologies with knowledge contributed by relevant disciplines and mapping such developments to the needs and preferences of those who will benefit from them, we can achieve unprecedented levels of personalised care. Consolidate moves away from the 'one-size-fits-all' approach as it aims to support the development of new technologies that can adapt to the changing needs of diverse populations living with dementia."

With approximately one million people in the UK currently living with dementia, and projections indicating a rise to 1.4 million by 2040, the project aims to address the increasing demand for innovative solutions. Professor Charlotte Deane, EPSRC Executive Chair, emphasized the importance of this research, stating, "As people are living longer, the number of people living with dementia is increasing. With most people wishing to remain at home, we are investing in research that could lead to new technologies and innovations that will help keep people safe and independent."