



Introduction to AbilityNet

Who we are, and how we can help

Rob McLean – Digital Inclusion Programme Manager for AbilityNet in partnership with BT Group covering the UK

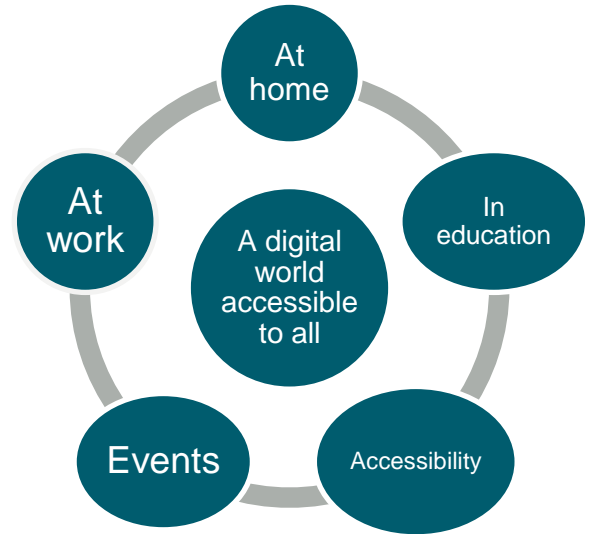
Robin Christopherson – MBE, Head of Digital Inclusion

Introducing AbilityNet

AbilityNet supports people of **any age**, living with **any disability** or impairment to use technology to achieve their goals **at home, at work and in education.**

- 25+ years' experience
- Services include workplace inclusivity and assessments, accessibility consultancy and training.

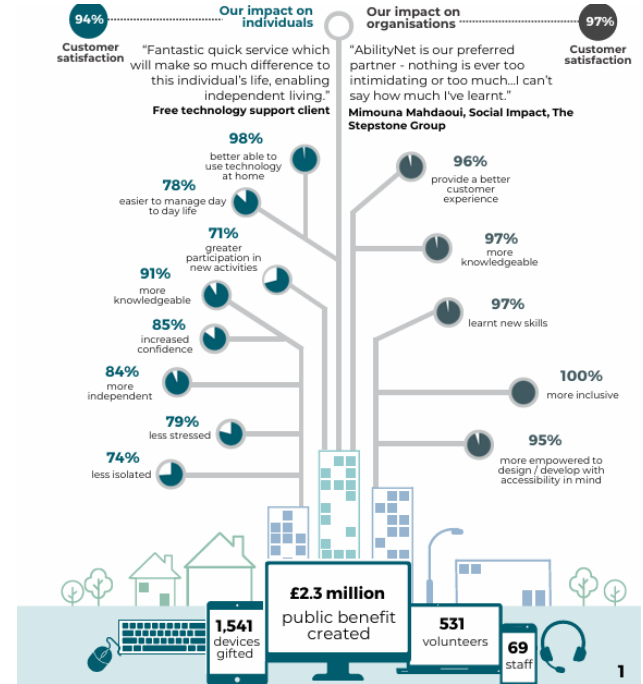
Our vision is a 'digital world accessible to all'




Our impact



[AbilityNet Impact Report 2024 | AbilityNet](#)

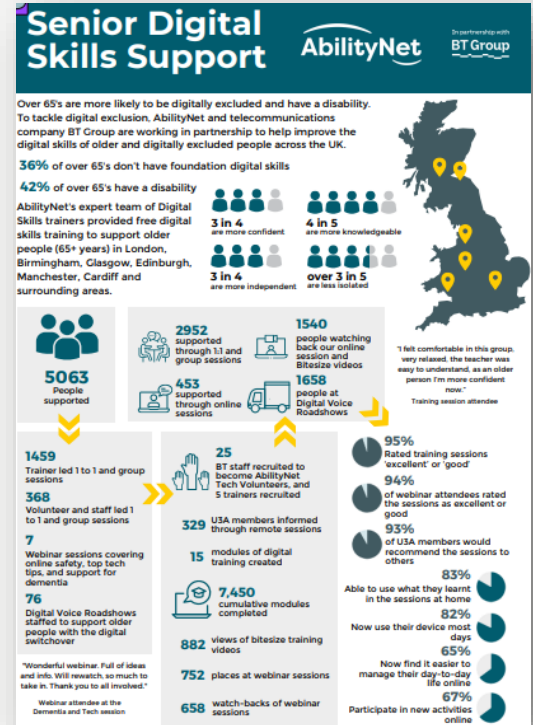


Free services overview

 A decorative graphic on the left side of the table, consisting of three overlapping semi-circles of varying shades of teal and white, arranged in a vertical stack.	<p>Tech Volunteers (450+) Request <u>support at home</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free helpline: 0300 180 0028• In-person support• Remote support (TeamViewer)
	<p>Online support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Step-by-step guides for simple adjustments• Blogs and Factsheets• Free webinars
	<p>Community projects & partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital Inclusion projects• Charity partnerships e.g. Parkinson's• Corporate relationships e.g. BT

BT: Senior Digital Skills training

- Commissioned by BT Group to support people aged 65+
- In person skills training in key locations across the UK
- Group sessions and 1-2-1 training on basic digital skills
- Webinars and events at BT Group Offices
- Over 5000 people supported in year 1



Further information

- Year 2 we have been commissioned by BT Group to support people aged 65+ and disabled adults
- In person skills training in key locations across the UK
- Group sessions and 121 training on basic digital skills
- Webinars with U3A nationally from January every 2 weeks
- Aim is to help over 7000 people supported in year 2
- We have trainers in the following areas:
 - NE Scotland, Glasgow, Edinburgh and the central belt, Newcastle, Birmingham, London, and Cardiff, with Stoke and Preston coming very soon.

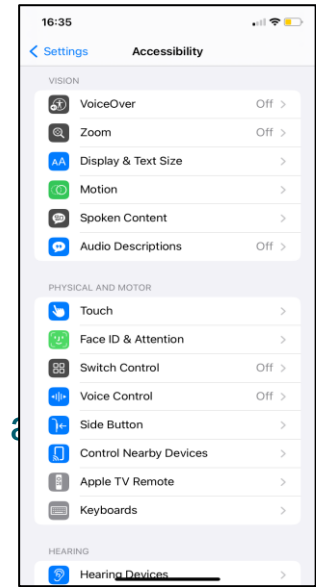
Future lives: Embracing technology for tomorrow's opportunities

- We all need to prepare for the possibilities of gradually-developing sight, hearing, and mobility needs.
- Let's look at how modern technology, and what's just round the corner, has the promise of enhancing our lives regardless of the challenges we may face.



Accessibility features in mainstream tech

- The benefits of in-built accessibility – let's look at mainstream devices and their potential to empower everyone:
 - Vision – text resizing, voiceover, talk-back, zoom and high-contrast settings
 - Mobility – voice commands, customisable gestures and switch or eye-gaze control
 - Hearing – hearing accommodations, adaptive noise control, hearing aid compatibility, and live listen.



Mainstream and specialist devices – today and tomorrow

- There will always be a need for specialist devices, but increasingly, mainstream tech is meeting our needs, and this may only evolve going forward.
- Today's mainstream devices – smartphones, smart speakers, wearables (like the Meta Ray-Bans)
- Today's specialist devices – hearing aids, eSight AR headset, white cane
- Tomorrow's mainstream devices promise to be even more inclusive as smarts are built-in
- Tomorrow's specialist devices – Glide, NeuroLink, robotic exoskeletons



Smart speakers – your gateway to the world

- We have some significant smarts in our homes today in the form of smart speakers:
- Choice of functionality and affordability – Amazon Echo, Google Home, Apple's Home Pods
- Connecting to services – weather, news, reminders, home automation
- Range of 'apps' – Wikipedia, NHS, Netflix, YouTube, BBC Sounds, Zoom
- Facilitating support, social interaction, and connectivity



Enhancing mobility – Ridesharing & Autonomous vehicles

- As we may become less confident in our abilities to get around, there are still plenty of choices and the list is growing:
 - Navigation solutions helped by Artificial Intelligence (AI) - vision – Seeing AI, GoodMaps Indoors and Glide
 - Next-gen mobility aids – self-driving scooters and exoskeletons
 - Ridesharing – Uber and Lift, and community car clubs for on-demand transportation
 - Fully self-driving vehicles – safe, convenient, and independent travel



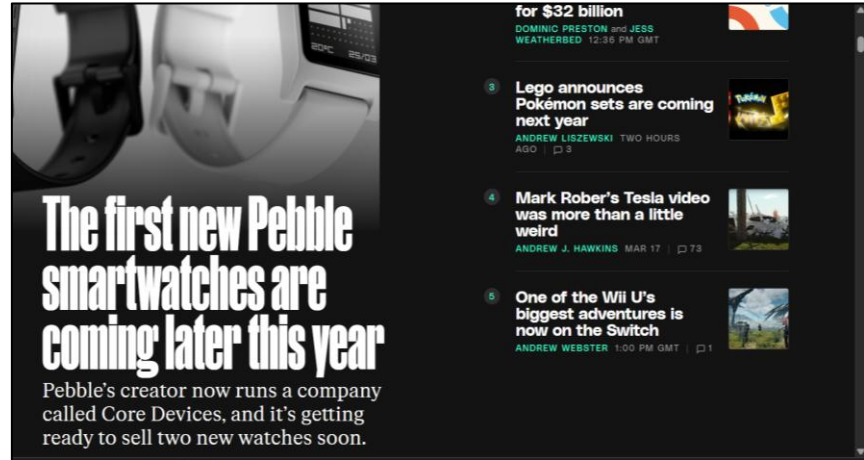
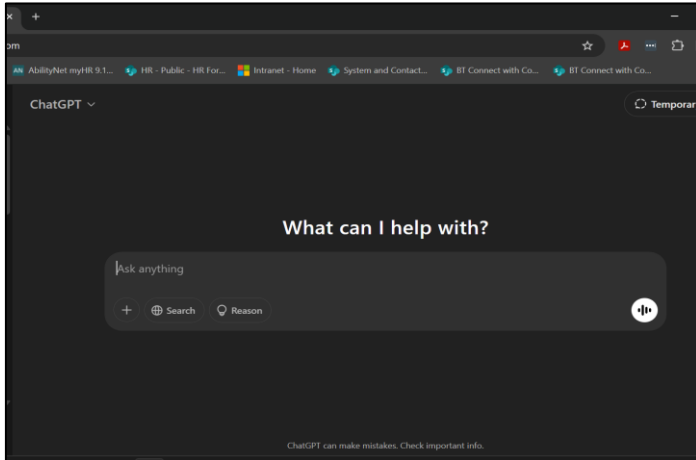
Practical applications of AI today

- AI in action, already enhancing our daily lives:
- Virtual assistants and chat-bots – for information, comprehension and content creation
- Personal health solutions – Blood Oxygen, AFib and fall detection (apple watches) and smart home cameras
- Medical applications – X-Ray and large dataset analysis, protein folding



Keeping it simple – user-friendly interfaces

- Conversation-based interfaces vs complex apps and websites



The promise of Agentic AI

- Soon AI will be able to do much more than just answer your questions, draft documents, create poetry, pictures, or music
- Definition: AI that autonomously performs tasks online
- Future capabilities: managing emails, scheduling, navigating complex websites
- Potential benefits – reduce complexity, increased independence and saving an awful lot of time!



Additional innovations & Future trends

- Let's finish off with some emerging tech and what might be coming next:
- Wearable health devices and smart home integrations
- Robotic companions and assistive robotics for caregiving
- Virtual reality and augmented reality for training and social interaction



Questions



Thank you, questions?

Contact information

- AbilityNet website: [abilitynet.org.uk](https://www.abilitynet.org.uk)
- My Computer My Way: [mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk](https://www.mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk)
- AbilityNet YouTube Bitesize basics:
<https://www.youtube.com/@abilitynet/playlists>
- **Requesting a training session:**
 - Telephone: 0300 180 0028
 - Email: digitalskills@abilitynet.org.uk
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