

Smart Homes and Independent Living Commission

Background

This Commission will make recommendations to support the adoption of smart home technology in social care and for independent living. Our aim will be to ensure that disabled and older people can make use of these new tools to lead healthy, independent and socially rewarding domestic lives.

Smart home technology is the application of interconnected products, systems and services to living spaces. In the context of social care and independent living, smart home technology is an increasingly important part of disabled and older people's lives, offering unprecedented control over their immediate environment and the ability to connect more easily with family and friends as well as with public services, importantly but not solely the health and social care sector. It can also be integrated into social care services to meet a range of different personal needs and operational challenges.

However, these **opportunities have yet to be fully realised** for either disabled and older people themselves or the social care services that support them. As the Government prepares to publish a National Strategy for Disabled People in 2021, and with the focus on the operation of care homes and home-based caring during the pandemic potentially leading to a raft of post-Covid-19 reforms, we have a significant opportunity to **put smart homes at the centre of the social care policy making agenda** at the highest level.

Policy Connect therefore proposes a high-profile Commission building on our ways of working with senior parliamentarians across the main parties, and with civil servants and Ministers.

Focus

The Commission will address three key themes:

- **Social care commissioning:** how can government support local authorities and provide incentives in the commissioning of more innovative social care provision using smart home technology?
- **Social care service provision:** how can government, local authorities, regulators and industry support carers to develop the skills and practices necessary to help older and disabled people to benefit from smart technology?
- **Market shaping:** how can government ensure new and existing housing can support smart home technology, and work with industry to ensure smart home software, devices and services are designed to facilitate independence?

Structure

The Commission will be led by a steering group made up of politicians, industry, end-users, academia, and the third sector; it will be convened on a cross-party basis and chaired by the former leader of Kent County Council, Sir Paul Carter (Conservative), with the option of having either a co-chair or vice chair from another party.

Policy Connect will manage the Commission, organising evidence sessions, briefing chairs etc, conducting desk research, and drafting the report for resulting review by the steering group. The project will run during the first half of 2021 with a series of evidence-gathering roundtables and culminating in a published report, followed by further influencing activities undertaken by Policy Connect.