

Case Study: Angela – Transforming Life Through Assistive Technology at a Leonard Cheshire Residence

Angela, a resident at a Leonard Cheshire care site, has experienced a remarkable transformation in daily life thanks to the introduction of assistive technology. With access to tools like Alexa (which she's renamed "Ziggy"), a smart TV, a smart lamp, and a wall-mounted fan she affectionately calls "Rainbow," Angela now enjoys more independence and a stronger connection to the world around her.

Before the technology was installed, Angela often struggled with everyday tasks and experienced social isolation. "I love [the assistive technologies]," she says. "I get a bit of me life back!" With these new devices, she can now listen to her favourite radio programmes, watch the news, and play music she enjoys—whenever she wants. This simple, on-demand access to sounds and entertainment has helped her "feel more connected with the world."

One of Angela's favourite shows is *The Archers*, which she previously had to wait for support in order to access. In the first week, she used the tech only to turn her light on and off. Then, she surprised support workers by discovering how to play her radio programme independently. At the time, she asked, "I hope you don't mind that I did that. I won't get into trouble, will I?"

Just days later, she was proudly sharing her tech adventures: "Guess what, I asked Ziggy what makes a rainbow!" and "I've asked Ziggy to give me French lessons!"

Angela finds joy not only in using the technology but also in discovering and learning new commands and features. She enjoys the process and approaches it with humour—even when things don't work perfectly. "It occasionally makes me laugh and I usually say please and thank you to it or I feel like I'm being impolite." She is happy to persevere and keep trying, has realistic expectations, and embraces any gains the technology offers as part of her daily routines.

As her fluency with the technology has grown, so too has her self-assurance. Angela's confidence using smart devices has increased dramatically. What began as cautious curiosity has evolved into enthusiastic exploration. The shift from tentative to confident user has been noticeable to everyone around her. As the Assistive Technology team members have reflected, "we can really see a massive difference in her growing confidence with using the technology." This confidence has unlocked new levels of independence, allowing Angela to take more control of her environment, make her own choices, and share those choices with others.

Changing the wake word from "Alexa" to "Ziggy" gave Angela a greater sense of ownership. Before, support workers and visitors would sometimes control the speaker without permission, adjusting music or making requests. Now that the device responds only to "Ziggy," Angela feels more in control—only she and a few trusted others know the wake word, giving her more privacy and autonomy over how her space is managed.

Ziggy has become more than just a tool—it's a social presence in Angela's room. "Although I know it's not a real person, I feel like I am talking to someone," she shares. This presence helps Angela feel less alone and more connected.

Her growing comfort and confidence with technology are also reflected in how she interacts with her environment. Angela's wall-mounted fan, "Rainbow," has made a big difference. With the simple voice command, "Ziggy, Rainbow on, please!" the fan switches on to keep her cool. These fans were selected because most residents at the Leonard Cheshire residence use wheelchairs and have limited floor space. Traditional fans were often inaccessible or easily damaged. By mounting the fans on the wall and connecting them to smart technology, residents like Angela now have safer and more consistent access to comfort independently.

Her blossoming confidence has extended beyond her room. Due to difficulty opening her bedroom door manually, Angela previously spent much of her time alone. But since the Echo Show 8 and accompanying smart tech were installed, she has begun to explore further afield and socialise more with other residents—especially those who also enjoy using the technology. Angela has now asked about a button-operated door so she can leave her room independently and spend more time with others.

When asked if she would recommend technology like this to others, Angela doesn't hesitate: "If they've never used it before, it's better than watching cartoons. Just give it a go, it won't bite you. It brings some shine to your day."

"Some people can't speak, and they should get to have tech for the opportunity to speak."

This case highlights the power of inclusive, accessible technology to promote real empowerment for disabled adults in care settings. Through creativity, humour, and curiosity, Angela has made assistive tech a natural and enjoyable part of her life—regaining control, building confidence, and using her voice to shape how she wants to live. Her story shows how increased confidence and fluency with technology can unlock new levels of independence, dignity, and participation in everyday life.

Angela is pictured laughing with Assistive Technologist, Nathan. ►



To find out about Leonard Cheshire's Assistive Technology programme, go to:

leonardcheshire.org/assistive-technology-leonard-cheshire