Helping older people live independently for longer

HIVE

A major government priority is to help older, vulnerable people stay independent for longer. Not only is this the only way the nation's health and care systems will be able to cope in future, it is also what older people themselves want.

Hive, best known for its smart heating controls, identified this problem as one it could help address through its expertise in smart-home technology, while also realising a commercial opportunity.
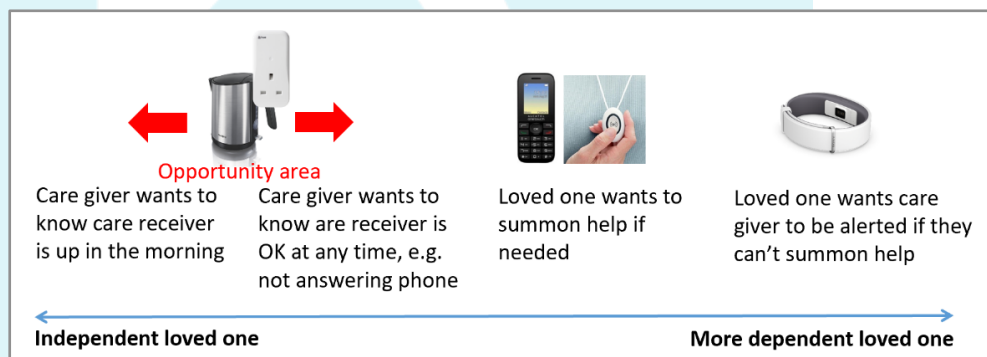
The company commissioned new experience to conduct UX research around an early concept based on detection of domestic activity, such as use of a kettle or TV, with AI to interpret unusual patterns that might imply something was amiss.

Workshops with caregivers, ethnography with loved ones, app usability testing

The area is fascinating from a UX point of view as the experience involves multiple users: one or more caregivers and the loved-ones themselves. To understand differing user requirements and explore the concept we started by conducting workshops with caregivers, then we visited their older loved-ones at home, and much later we got involved in usability testing of the app.

Key insight: the activity-monitoring continuum

From our research we observed that loved-ones could be more or less

Opportunity area

Care giver wants to know care receiver is up in the morning

Care giver wants to know are receiver is OK at any time, e.g. not answering phone

Loved one wants to summon help if needed

Loved one wants care giver to be alerted if they can't summon help

Independent loved one ⟷ **More dependent loved one**

dependent in their outlook as well as their physical needs. For the more independent older people, concerns around wellbeing rested mainly with the caregivers. But for the more dependent ones the concerns rested with both parties, with the loved-ones especially anxious that they would be able to summon help if needed. These days mobiles offer an excellent means of calling for help, as long as they are carried on the person, but pendants provide a wearable alternative. To guard against the extreme case where the loved-one is incapacitated and unable to summon help wristbands with accelerometers that sense a fall and automatically send out an alert are also an option.

Hive had developed its concept with the more independent loved-ones in mind and our research confirmed the opportunity here to address what are primarily the concerns of their caregivers. While mobiles provide a lifeline for both parties they also create worry when loved-ones don't answer a call, perhaps because they left the phone out of earshot. So an important feature of the service would need to be the option, not only to be alerted due to a lack of activity in the morning, but also for caregivers to be able to look at recent activity – and reassure themselves that their loved-one was fine, even when not answering their phone. This key feature known as *Timeline* was duly incorporated and the service was successfully launched at the end of 2018 as Hive Link.
https://www.hivehome.com/services/connected-care-hive-link