The aim of this research is to explore the *domestication* of assistive technology by older people in the home. In this context, older people are those in the final segment of their lifespan, which is assumed, for pragmatic reasons, to begin at around 60 years of age [3]. This research is important because studies have shown that the majority of older people wish to remain in their own home. To support this, assistive technology has been championed as a means of reducing the burden on our national health service as well as increasing the independence of older people. Assistive technology is "an umbrella term for any device or system that allows an individual to perform a task they would otherwise be unable to do or increases the ease and safety with which the task can be performed" [2]. This includes ‘low-tech’ objects, such as walking sticks, bath seats and grab rails, as well as ‘high-tech’ objects, such as powered wheelchairs, electronic (communication) aids and environmental controls. This research has the potential to benefit older people by providing designers and providers of assistive technology with a detailed understanding of what makes an assistive technology in the home invaluable or alternatively abandoned.

### Practical

The practical dimension is about patterns of *usage* including whether daily routines and social relations are supported or inhibited by the use of assistive technology. It also includes how assistive technology is fitted into the home and the spaces it occupies.

### Symbolic

The symbolic dimension is about the production of *meaning* and the relationship between meaning, identity, and the public presentation of self. This includes what older people think about "home" and the spaces within it, how they feel about assistive technology and whether they speak about it to others.

### Cognitive

The cognitive dimension is about learning including whether particular strategies are employed to help remember how to use an assistive technology. This may, or may not, be of particular relevance to older people, especially at later stages of the life course.

### Bios

The bios dimension is about personality because older people are not a homogenous group. It pertains to the life course from a micro, meso and macro perspective. Regarding (assistive) technology, it also includes past experiences and future aspirations.

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**Domestication goes beyond the adoption and use of technologies to ask “what the technologies and services mean to people, how they experience them and the roles that these technologies can come to play in their lives” [3]. Domestication occurs across three dimensions*: practical, symbolic and cognitive [4]. Each dimension will be explored through an interpretive lens by interviewing and observing older people in their home. A fourth dimension, bios, has been included to incorporate the dynamic biomedical-institutional-societal model of the life course [5].

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* Traditionally, domestication comprises five non-discrete phases: commoditisation, appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion [6, 7]. These phases have been incorporated into the three dimensions.

### References


The images used in this poster are from a UK-wide photography competition, *Left To Our Own Devices*, on the subject of older people’s experiences with technology. For more information, visit *lefttourowndevices.org.uk*.