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Innovative teams receive funding to develop ideas for helping older adults stay socially connected

Today sees the announcement of the winners of a national innovation challenge to develop services to help older adults stay socially connected. The Technology Strategy Board and the Design Council have awarded each of the winning teams from the Keeping Connected Business Challenge a share of £450,000 to develop their ideas over the next five months.

The aim of the Keeping Connected Business challenge is to stimulate the development of business ideas that address the desire and need of older adults for maintaining and developing their social connections. Teams of designers and enterprises were encouraged to enter their ideas that tapped into the commercial opportunity of a growing older consumer market and the social opportunity of developing services to promote social interaction and prevent isolation and loneliness.

The winning teams are:

- **The Big League – Keeping men connected through sport**
The idea: to create a championship activity league for men who are about to retire or have retired which allows them to connect through fitness and sporting activities.
The team: Fitness Industry Association and thinkpublic
- **The Amazings – Creating a generation of micro-entrepreneurs**
The idea: to create a movement of passionate and enabled older people who keep active and connected by trading their skills, knowledge and passion with their local community.
The team: The Amazings, Sidekick Studios, AgeUK East London
- **Gusto – Radically rethinking approaches to adult social care**
The idea: to help older people reignite their passions and interests through a 'self-help cooperative' that provides mentoring and coaching.
The team: Shropshire Council, People2People, Friday
- **Room for Tea – Stimulating interactions between young and old**
The idea: to connect interns looking for affordable accommodation with older people who have spare rooms through a moderated home sharing network.
The team: Future Gov and The Settlement

Those aged over 50 currently account for 44% of all household spending and this figure is set to grow over the next twenty years. 1 in 10 older adults say they feel 'severely' or 'always'

lonely and an estimated third of older adults live alone. This need in a growing market offers service providers an unprecedented business opportunity.

Jackie Marshall-Cyrus, of the Technology Strategy Board, said "I am very excited about the positive outlook for older adults that lies at the heart of each of the winning team's ideas. These are all really innovative service propositions and I look forward to watching the teams' progress as their ideas are developed and turned into reality over the next five months."

Mat Hunter, Chief Design Officer of the Design Council said: "The winning projects all show that integrating design, technology and business is a powerful means for developing new and creative approaches to help older adults keep connected. These are imaginative ideas from great collaborations of partners who have demonstrated a deep understanding of what it means to be connected."

The challenge is part of the Independence Matters programme run by the Technology Strategy Board and the Design Council, which aims to stimulate business innovation to meet the needs of an ageing population and challenge stereotypes and perceptions about later life.

Ends

Editor's notes

1. **Keeping Connected Business Challenge** is a national challenge for UK business to develop innovative services that keep older adults better connected. Teams of businesses and designers were invited to submit proposals for a share of £495,000 of funding to develop their ideas for connecting older adults. For full details visit www.keepingconnected.co.uk
2. **Independence Matters** – the Keeping Connected Business Challenge is part of a wider programme of work called Independence Matters. Independence Matters is a joint design-led programme undertaken by the Technology Strategy Board and the Design Council. The Independence Matters programme aims to promote technological and business innovation, for both economic and social good. It focuses on the theme of ensuring independence for older adults, through the following individual issues: Keeping Connected, Mobility and Nutrition.
3. **Assisted Living Innovation Platform (ALIP)** - ALIP is a five (5) year programme created to respond to the requirements of population ageing and the expected increase in the numbers of older adults who will be living with a long term condition(s) in the future. The aim of the ALIP is to significantly advance business innovation and the application of technology to meet the demand for independent living. By 2021 half of the UK's adult population will be over 50 and by 2025 almost 1.5 million people will be living with an age-related disability. [Click here to find out more.](#)
4. **The Design Council** places good design at the heart of social and economic renewal. As a centre of new thinking and insight into the role of design in innovation, it is one of the world's leading design organisations. For more than 60 years, it has sought to provide evidence and demonstrate how design can help build a stronger economy and improve everyday life through

practical projects with industry, public services and education. The Design Council is a charity, incorporated by Royal Charter, that promotes design and architecture for the public good. For more information please visit: www.designcouncil.org.uk

5. **The Technology Strategy Board** is a business-led government body which works to create economic growth by ensuring that the UK is a global leader in innovation. Sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Technology Strategy Board brings together business, research and the public sector, supporting and accelerating the development of innovative products and services to meet market needs, tackle major societal challenges and help build the future economy. For more information please visit <http://www.innovateuk.org>

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