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Conference Abstract

## The ATHENE Project: The importance of bricolage in personalising assisted living technologies

*Rob Procter, Warwick University, United Kingdom*

*Trish Greenhalgh, Queen Mary University London*

*Joe Wherton, Queen Mary University London*

*Paul Sugarhood, Barts Health NHS Trust*

*Mark Rouncefield, Lancaster University*

*Guy Dewsbury, [gdewsbury.com](http://gdewsbury.com)*

Correspondence to: **Rob Procter**, Warwick University, United Kingdom, E-mail: [ob.procter@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:ob.procter@warwick.ac.uk)

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** An aging population is fueling interest in assisted living technologies (ALTs) to support independence at home. Numerous ALTs have been developed and deployed, but uptake and use has fallen short of levels predicted by policymakers. A key reason is a lack of understanding of users' needs.

In this paper we report findings from the ATHENE (Assistive Technologies for Healthy Living in Elders: Needs Assessment by Ethnography) project, which is funded by the Technology Strategy Board under its Assisted Living Innovation Platform programme. The project aims to produce a richer understanding of the lived experiences and needs of older people and explore how ALT stakeholders – suppliers, health and social care providers – can work with users and carers to 'co-produce' ALTs.

We focus, in particular, on the role of 'bricolage' (pragmatic customisation, combining new with legacy devices) by informal carers, such as family members, in enabling ALTs to be personalised to individual needs. Bricolage allows users and family members to take the initiative in 'co-producing' ALTs. that making assisted living work relies on collaboration, involving not only formal carers, but also informal ones. We argue that a new research agenda is needed, focusing on solving challenges of involving users and their informal carers in the straightforward and dependable co-production of ALTs.

### Keywords:

**bricolage, personalisation, co-production, ethnography, dependability**

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