This is my last Impact Report as I step down from my role as Chair of Trustees at the end of 2021.

It has been fantastic to be part of the Designability journey as a Trustee since 2011 and Chair of Trustees since 2015. I will miss working so closely with the charity. The impact of its work for individuals, families, communities and more is clear to see and I have relished being a part of its story.

As I say goodbye there is an opportunity to reflect on the successes of previous years, such as the Wizzybug Loan Scheme and products like the One Button Radio, designed for people living with dementia. It is also a good time to look forwards to what the future holds for Designability and how it can continue to shape the world to ensure greater accessibility and inclusion for all.

Two projects in particular have enormous scope: the project to ensure disabled people can access electric vehicles, and the innovative pushchair for wheelchair users. I am proud to have been involved with Designability as it continues to help disabled people with the products they want to live the life they choose.

I will end by wishing the charity all the best for the future. It is clear that everyone involved has a genuine desire to provide solutions to the challenges faced by disabled people, and it is fantastic to see a cohesive, happy and driven team all working towards the same goal.

Libby Gawith
Chair

Last year has been a year like no other. There has been no part of life untouched by the Covid-19 pandemic and that includes our work at Designability.

Like many others we were forced to adapt quickly to ensure we could continue our important work in enabling disabled people to live with greater independence. It was not an easy process and required our staff to adapt to new ways of working overnight, and there are more details below on how we did that. I am so proud of how everyone at Designability rose to the challenge, continuing to work with even more determination in the face of adversity.

Despite a vastly changed world, we have continued to grow this year. Our Wizzybug scheme is celebrating its 10th year and we have also launched exciting new projects which will have a significant impact, not just for families directly affected but also in terms of national accessibility infrastructure.

With a return to our office space at the Royal United Hospital in Bath on the horizon, we have plans to develop a new space for clinical appointments and research sessions so that we can extend our help to even more disabled people.

On another note I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to outgoing Chair of Trustees Libby Gawith who is stepping down after six years in the role. Thank you for your time, enthusiasm, experience and insights over the years.

Catharine Brown
Chief Executive
Achievements in numbers

**Bottom wipers** have provided 104,965 people with dignity in the bathroom.

**Wizzybugs** have given freedom and independence to nearly 5,000* children.

**Over 24,000** people living with dementia can still enjoy music thanks to our music players.

**Over 900** children of restricted growth helped by our school chair footrest.

The **Wizzybug Loan Scheme** began in 2011 and is celebrating its **10th anniversary** this year.

*Total including sales and loan scheme Wizzybugs

[Graphics created and donated by James Whatley]
Designability is a charity working throughout the UK to enable disabled people to live with greater independence.

We research, design, engineer and create products that give children and adults the opportunity to live the life that they choose.

Product design with, rather than for, disabled people

Our expertise is in human-centred design. We work closely with disabled people, in focus groups and research sessions, to understand their needs. From this standpoint of informed knowledge we are able to deliver tangible solutions to problems, making products and setting standards for improved accessibility and independence for all.

This is not just about products people need, but products they want to use.

As a charity, our mission is get the right products into the hands of those who need them and to help inform best practice in terms of accessibility. We build prototypes, develop new products and offer expertise in response to specific needs, in the hope that our work will inspire new markets to grow.

Shaping the disability landscape since 1968

Designability was established as the Bath Institute of Medical Engineering (BIME) in 1968 and has been based in Bath ever since. Although our heritage is in the south west of England, our reach is across the whole of the UK and beyond.

We create great looking, easy-to-use products that go beyond basic functionality and we partner with industry to help as many people as we can. We’ve transformed over 300,000 lives to date.

Our human-centred design process:
The Covid-19 Pandemic

Offices, Workshop & Clinical Space

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected every child, adult, family and organisation across the world this year, and Designability was no exception. But thanks to the dedication of our staff and volunteers, and the patience of our service users, we have continued to provide our services whenever possible throughout the year.

We had just opened our new workshop facility when the pandemic struck. The new facility where we make and refurbish Wizzybugs, and develop new assistive technologies, opened in January 2020. Sadly, it then closed for two months from March 2020 as the first national lockdown was announced. And at this point, we also had to suspend offering Wizzybugs to children joining the scheme.

Our priority throughout the pandemic has been to minimise the risk of transmission to both staff and service users, by following Government and NHS guidelines. We created strict ‘covid-secure’ procedures and conducted frequent risk assessments as the situation changed, to ensure our protocols remained effective.

In this way we were able to reopen the workshop in May 2020. A new site in Bath was taken on a short term lease in order to meet families away from our main offices in the Royal United Hospital in Bath. Then, following significant changes to our clinical protocols, we were able to start providing Wizzybugs again to new children joining the Loan Scheme in August 2020.

Keeping in touch

Throughout the pandemic, and in particular during lockdowns, we remained open to help families with a Wizzybug or any other product with any technical or clinical questions they had. We are very proud that the feedback we have received from families is that they felt supported, and appreciated the increased level of contact during this difficult time.

“Our priority throughout the pandemic has been to minimise the risk of covid transmission and to keep our staff and service users safe, while continuing our work as much as possible.”

Catharine Brown, Chief Executive

Our amazing staff

The Designability staff team has been amazing during the pandemic, suddenly adapting to working from home in the first lockdown, then responding to the challenges of introducing new ways of working, at a time of anxiety for their friends and families. Those with young children in particular faced the challenge of juggling important work commitments with home schooling and childcare.

As we look to the future, we will be reflecting on what has worked well during this year of change, and introducing hybrid working so that staff can continue to enjoy the flexibility of home working, combined with working with their colleagues in our offices in the Royal United Hospital in Bath and in our workshop facility.
Enabling independence worldwide

Below are the numbers relating to our products as of 31st March 2021. Designability continues to enable thousands of disabled people to live with greater independence year on year. We have now sold over 100,000 Bottom Wipers, proving that a simple solution can have a significant impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wizzybug Fleet</td>
<td>Early years mobility (loan scheme)</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wizzybug</td>
<td>Early years mobility</td>
<td>476 units sold*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom Wiper</td>
<td>Daily living</td>
<td>104,965 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Reinforcement Audiometry</td>
<td>Medical diagnostic system</td>
<td>145 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Button Digital Radio</td>
<td>People living with dementia</td>
<td>2,811 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Music Player</td>
<td>People living with dementia</td>
<td>24,009 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bud Sensory Cushion</td>
<td>People living with dementia</td>
<td>69 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blys Night Light Tray</td>
<td>Daily living</td>
<td>462 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet Handles</td>
<td>Children with restricted growth</td>
<td>665 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Chair Foot Rest</td>
<td>Children with restricted growth</td>
<td>905 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPS Safer Walking Location Device</td>
<td></td>
<td>66 units sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosebud Reminder Clock</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,608 units sold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A charity that sells products?**

We are a charity, so all of our work is not-for-profit. However, in order to reach as many people who could benefit from our designs as possible, we form partnerships with commercial companies who have the ability and capacity to get the products into the hands of those that need them. Every small royalty we receive from sales is used to fund new projects to enable more people to live with greater independence.

*denotes number of Wizzybugs sold overseas via commercial partners
The UK Government has announced that from 2030 all sales of new petrol and diesel cars will cease as we transition over to electric cars.

This has significant implications, with research showing that current public charge points are largely inaccessible to disabled people*.

We wanted to use our design expertise to address this issue and so in 2021 Designability announced our partnership with national disability charity Motability to increase the accessibility of public electric vehicle (EV) charging points.

Through our human-centred design approach, our in-depth research and discussions with disabled people will ensure that disabled people can say how charge point design needs to change.

**Supporting 1.35m disabled drivers**

Motability’s research** estimates that there will be 2.7 million disabled drivers or passengers by 2035, with 1.35 million expected to be partially or wholly reliant on public charging infrastructure.

Informing best-practice design for EV charge points will make them more accessible for all. It is hoped that the design guidance shared from this project will have influence throughout the globe as the UK sets the recognised standards in EV charger accessibility.

**Our Research**

Designability’s initial research highlighted a range of specific design challenges around existing EV charging.

From the management of heavy and cumbersome cables, charging units often being located on raised kerbs with limited space around them to the lack of good clear signage and information – there has been very little consideration around usability and accessibility, which disproportionately affects disabled people.

**Next Phase**

We will be running a series of online group workshops and interviews, as well as in-person observational research to understand people’s experiences of parking, fuelling and EV charging, highlighting key barriers for disabled people in accessing existing EV public charging products and services.

The opportunities identified from this direct user research will be carried forward into a concept design phase where we will explore and develop user-friendly solutions for public EV charging. We will also be developing prototypes to demonstrate our designs and will contribute towards a Standard with the British Standards Institute which will provide design guidance and recommendations for stakeholders in the EV charging market.

* Inaccessible Charging is Barrier to Electric for Disabled and Older Drivers | Research Institute for Disabled Consumers

**Motability’s research with Ricardo Energy and Environment is available via motability.org.uk
In 2021 our flagship free Wizzybug Loan Scheme turned 10 years old. Designability is close to helping our 1,000th family through the scheme, having given a first taste of independence to 955 children across the UK as of March 2021.

In 2011 we had a clear ambition for what the Wizzybug Loan Scheme would become but we couldn’t have imagined that it would grow to the size it is today.

We have a calendar of activity planned to mark this historic milestone throughout the year ahead, sharing the history and people behind the loan scheme, including the team and funders who helped to set it up and the families who have benefitted from it.

**Ambassador Families**

To help us mark the 10th anniversary and beyond, Designability has appointed seven Ambassador families throughout the UK who will help us to spread the word about Wizzybug through PR, social media, local communities and more!

**Ezra’s Story**

Ezra, now four years old, was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) type 1 when he was very young, affecting his muscles and severely limiting his mobility. His cognition and intelligence are not affected and as he started to grow and develop, the family looked into mobility options available to him.

“Wizzybug really was the only way Ezra was going to be able to get himself where he wants to go independently.

“He is a very clever little boy who would certainly get very frustrated if he did not have any mobility.

“It enhanced his life in so many ways, giving him independence and enabling him to have a better relationship with his sister; they could ‘run’ off together to play hide and seek.

“He started nursery and was able to get himself to his classroom, explore and play with his friends in the playground without being pushed everywhere.

“We are excited to take up the role as ambassadors for Designability as we wanted to give a bit back and help out the charity that gave us so much. The Wizzybug has been a wonderful training chair for bigger and faster powerchairs and Ezra is now well prepared for the next part of his journey towards independent mobility.”

Portia, Ezra’s Mum
This music box has really helped with my father’s move to a dementia care home. He has no interest in TV and he remembers the words and sings along.

They have started playing music in the care home now and it really lifts the mood. Simple to load music and very basic functions so easy to use.
We couldn’t do it without you

Colleagues, families and friends have not allowed the pandemic to curtail our enthusiasm for fundraising in support of Designability during the last 12 months.

Being in lockdown did not stop us! We asked colleagues to post online their Pancake Day flips (pictured), take part in beard-growing (pictured) and photography competitions, and join in several online quizzes. We look forward to people returning to offices and we hope and trust, with confidence that we may do more at events in person to support the wonderful charity that is Designability.

Paul Collins
Chair of the Charity Champions, Shepherd Global LTD

Support from the wider community has been as important as ever throughout a challenging year. Not only does it help to raise funds, it also raises the profile of Designability to a wider audience. All manner of fundraising activities take place and our supporters are brilliant at coming up with new and innovative events.

Pete, whose daughter Elara had a Wizzybug, embarked on a 24 hour Dungeons and Dragons gaming marathon to raise money to support Designability. In the summer of 2020 he ran a weekly three-hour session build-up, which was live-streamed on Twitch and uploaded to YouTube, followed by a full 24 hours straight session. He included a range of in-game benefits for sponsors and held prize draws throughout the event, raising over £1,500.

In August 2020 Designability challenged our friends and supporters to take on the Triple 8 Challenge – a reference to the 888 miles between our northernmost and southernmost Wizzybugs. We asked people to clock up the distances in whatever way they liked, to help us reach a combined total of 888 miles.

Wizzybug user Adnan and his family rose to the challenge exceptionally, taking part in a range of activities to raise a staggering £2,258 for the Wizzybug Loan Scheme. Even Adnan’s Great Grandma took part, completing eight laps of her garden every week for eight weeks!
Successful appeal for much needed funds

Unfortunately we had no choice but to put Wizzybug appointments on hold for months during lockdown. As soon as it was possible for us to restart, we launched the We don’t Want to Wait appeal to help us tackle the backlog created by Covid-19.

Thanks to your support, we were able to reduce swiftly the time families are waiting for their Wizzybug from 7 months to 4 months.

Our aim is to continue to reduce these times. We want to make sure that children don’t have to wait.

Looking forward

Designability’s experience and expertise keeps the charity in a strong position to continue to have a positive impact, working with and for disabled people.

Looking ahead, our aim is to continue to increase the capacity of the Wizzybug Loan Scheme to ensure that even more disabled children throughout the UK have access to independent mobility from an early age. Research has shown that powered mobility interventions are likely to have multiple benefits for children under 5 years*.

Another exciting project on the horizon for Designability is the development of our pushchair for wheelchair users. We want to help disabled parents be independently mobile with their baby or toddler, so we will be producing prototypes and engaging in research with disabled people to bring this product to fruition and to make it available through a free loan scheme. We hope that by the time of our next Impact Report designs will be finalised and funding for production secured.

As included in this Report, our work to ensure public electric vehicle charging facilities are fully accessible to disabled people will continue. We will be working closely with Motability The Charity to make sure the voices of disabled people are clearly heard and a blueprint for best practice is put in place as the UK forges ahead with EV infrastructure over the coming years.

As an organisation Designability will continue to move and adapt with the times, particularly in light of Covid-19. We are continually reviewing and improving our practices, technology and training to ensure that the charity can efficiently provide the best possible service and expertise in all areas.

*Powered mobility interventions for very young children