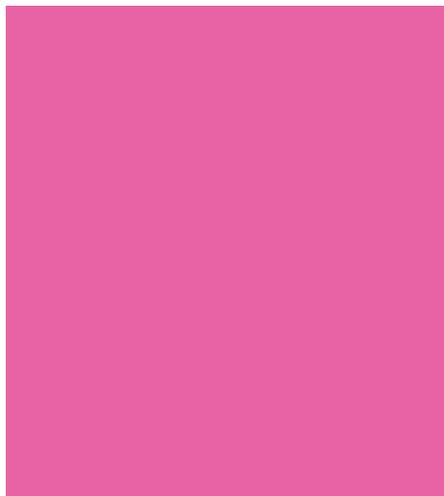


# Possum – company profile



# Possum – core values



- 
- **Equality:** Everyone has the right to be or become independent
  - **Empowerment:** Possum solutions allow disabled and elderly people to carry out everyday tasks themselves and provide support through technology
  - **Excellence:** Possum sets the highest standards in terms of product development and service
  - **Innovation:** Possum designs pioneering products by listening to their customers and by using the latest technologies
  - **Dedication:** Possum's staff are dedicated to making life easier for their clients and carers
  - **Humanity:** Possum's ethical approach to supplying person-centred solutions ensures that the technology provided precisely meets the needs of each individual.





# Possum – Queen's Award: Innovation



Sir Henry Egerton Aubrey-Fletcher (The Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire), Presenting the award to Mr Philip Robinson (Managing Director Possum Ltd)

Possum Ltd has received one of the most prestigious business awards in the UK, the Queen's Award for Enterprise in the Innovation category, for their Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) products.

Possum Ltd won its Queen's Award in the Innovation category in April 2009. The company specialises in the design, manufacture and installation of electronic devices which work together to enable disabled or elderly users to control their immediate environment and was commended for achieving the Queen's Award.

Possum applied for an Award in the Innovation category with a range of assistive technology products including the Primo! and Vivo! easy-to-use wire-free remote control units. Dependent upon the ability of the user, the Primo! can be operated either directly from the touch screen or via a specialist switch activated by various means including moving a hand, head, elbow or foot or puffing into a mouth piece. In addition to the home control units, Possum submitted the Freedom remote control telephone/intercom system and the Guarded Plate Switch.

All of these proprietary Possum products are designed and manufactured in Britain and each is highly innovative. It was also necessary to demonstrate that the products had provided cost savings and other benefits for users over previous and competing products and were commercially successful.





# Possum commitment

– helping independence emerge



People with disabilities are often dependent on carers for help with activities which others take for granted: opening a window, switching on the TV, or answering the door. For some individuals even communication may be difficult, and they depend on other people to interpret their needs.

However, modern technology can offer people with disabilities more independence, enabling them to carry out everyday tasks without assistance, and even giving them a voice by providing synthesised speech or text. This technology can be life-changing for people with little or no mobility. Instead of asking for help, they can control their own home environment, answer the telephone or use a computer unaided.

Possum was the first company in the world to develop these home automation and communication systems. The company has consistently led the world in research and development, and in setting up the training, service and support infrastructure to deliver these benefits to people with special needs. Today Possum supports thousands of users throughout the UK, giving freedom, independence and empowerment to people of all ages and with a wide range of needs.

*“MND made me feel very isolated but I no longer feel that way with other people within easy access”*

Sarah Ezekiel  
Possum EZ Keys User

# Possum – the story



## **The beginning**

Possum was founded in 1961 by an engineer called Reginald Maling. Volunteering at the National Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, he encountered a young man who had been injured in a water-skiing accident. Totally paralysed from the neck down, and with very little voice, he could only signal to nurses by blowing on a whistle hung near his mouth. Maling designed a device which could be operated by sucking or blowing on a mouthpiece, enabling the patient to activate mechanisms for turning on the light or TV; later versions could even operate an electric typewriter. He called his invention Patient Operated Selector Mechanism, or POSM. Based on this, the word Possum – Latin for 'I can' was chosen as the name for the Company.

## **The present**

Possum's mission is to harness modern technology to empower people with disabilities and increase their independence. This vision is achieved by two means: through a business, Possum Limited, and a charity, the Possum Trust.

Possum Limited is an independent, privately owned British company which develops, manufactures, supplies, installs and supports electronic assistive technology products and systems. Possum also assesses clients' needs and abilities, and trains and supports

them in the use of their Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) equipment.

The Possum Trust is an independent registered charity founded in 1984. It is a source of funds to provide Assistive Technology (AT) products and services from a wide number of different suppliers to people with special needs. Every year a proportion of the profits of Possum Limited is donated to the Possum Trust to support its important work.

## **The future**

Almost fifty years on, Possum is leading the development of new and innovative solutions to help people with a wider range of needs including the elderly and people with learning difficulties. As awareness of the benefits of AT increases, additional funds are becoming available from Government, charities and other sources to bring the benefits of AT to a greater number of people.





# Possum – person-centred solutions



Possum users may be affected by any of a number of disabilities: congenital conditions such as Cerebral Palsy or Spina Bifida, diseases such as Motor Neurone Disease, Multiple Sclerosis or Parkinson's, and spinal or head injuries. The degree of disability may vary widely. Possum's professional staff have the benefit of many decades of accumulated experience in dealing with the problems and issues which confront users.

Elderly people with limited strength and mobility are increasingly discovering that simple Possum systems, such as remotely operated doors, windows and curtains, can improve their safety and security. This can often enable people to remain living safely in their own homes and avoid the need for residential care.

Possum is also developing innovative solutions to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities, providing complex integrated systems for their support.

Possum systems are installed in:

## **Individuals' own homes**

Possum systems increase independence for users and ease the workload on other family members and carers.

## **Residential Homes**

Possum solutions improve the quality of life of residents and may reduce the cost of care.

## **Schools**

Life Skills are taught in special schools throughout the country, and Possum systems enable students to prepare for independent living by using assistive technology in the classroom.

## **Hospices**

Several hospices have now installed ROWAN Rooms (Room Operated Without Asking Nurses) to improve the quality of respite or palliative care.

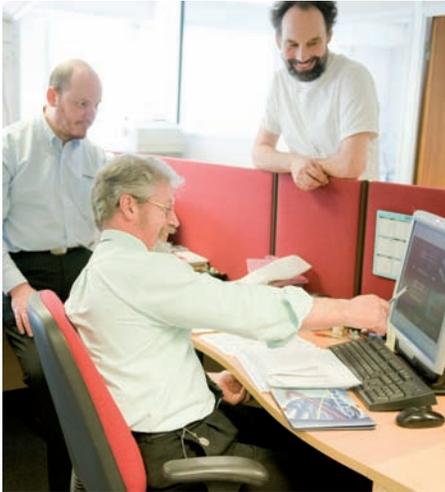
*“During the night, patients can often become quite anxious due to breathlessness. A T increases their confidence in being able to call a nurse, no matter how little movement they have remaining”*

Theresa Hopwood

Lead Occupational Therapist  
Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice



# Possum technology



Possum systems give people with disabilities new freedom and independence. These solutions include:

## **Environmental Control Systems (ECS)**

These can be integrated to control a wide range of appliances and equipment to meet needs for:

- Security (alarms, intercom systems and door locks)
- Communications (telephone operation, nurse/warden call systems, pagers)
- Comfort (power sockets, lights, curtains/blinds, multifunction beds and chairs)
- Entertainment (TV, satellite/digital TV, DVD, music systems, radio, page-turners)
- Access (door/window openers, lifts)
- Personal Computers (business, email, internet).

Possum offers the widest range of environmental control systems of any manufacturer in the UK. Many can be operated with minimal motor control – as little as the blink of an eye.

## **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)**

The loss of speech can be frustrating and isolating: AAC systems can remedy this by supplementing or replacing spoken communication. Possum's Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs) use either digitised voice recordings or synthesised speech.

## **Assistive Technology (AT)**

Possum also offers a range of AT solutions which meet the needs of elderly people and people with learning difficulties. These solutions include Automatic Environmental Control, LocalLink and extended Telecare systems which provide a reassuring support structure for dependent people.

## **Integrated solutions**

Where other companies supply separate systems, Possum is able to combine different elements to provide integrated systems, customised to meet the specific needs of the client and the location.

# Possum services



*“AT has the potential to help people with intellectual disabilities to become more independent while keeping them safe and reducing staff input”*

Dr. Stephen Beyer  
Dr. Jon Perry  
Andrea Meek

A Guide to Implementing Assistive Technology for People with Intellectual Disabilities – A product of the TATE Project  
Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities, School of Medicine, Cardiff University. Jan 2008

## **Research and development**

Every year a large proportion of revenue is invested in developing new products and solutions. Possum’s research engineers listen carefully to clients’ views on how they use the current products, in order to improve usability, and also on their specific problems, which regularly inspire new concepts. They also work together with teachers and trainers to design packages for learning and communication, so people with special needs can develop the key skills for independence and employment.

## **Assessment**

Possum’s highly experienced staff have particular expertise in assessing the needs of people with disabilities. Working with health professionals or carers they can advise on the appropriate systems, client interface and equipment location. People with special needs require flexible and responsive products, and those with progressive disorders may have rapidly changing requirements. Possum’s experienced staff are available for advice: as Possum systems are modular, they can be easily installed and changed.

## **Technical support**

All Possum-installed equipment is fully maintained and supported by a skilled customer support team and an extensive, efficient network of directly employed field service engineers. Together they ensure that every unit achieves its maximum useful life.

## **Training**

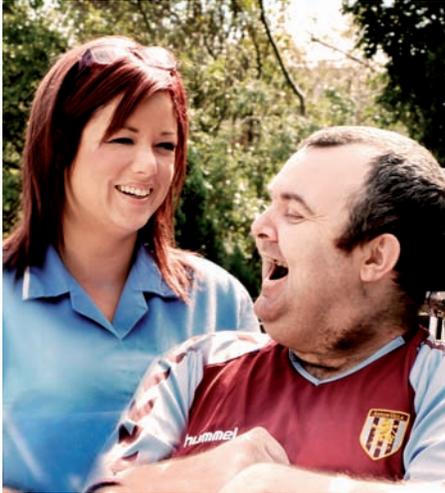
Possum employs a team of expert trainers to ensure that users fully understand how to get the best out of their system.

## **Quality Assurance**

Possum is an accredited company which meets International Quality Standard ISO 9001.



# Possum customers



Growing awareness of the potential of EAT for improving the lives of elderly and disabled people has revitalised government interest: new funding is now available for charities and other organisations, so more and more people can benefit in the future. Possum is a participating supplier for various government funding schemes in England, Wales and Scotland.

Possum has a wide range of regular purchasers. The National Health Service is the largest single purchaser of environmental control systems, which are provided free of charge to clients who meet the strict qualification criteria. Housing Associations are also making increasing use of environmental control systems, and local councils with Social Service responsibility are also utilising AT solutions.

Charities are increasingly realising the benefits which modern EAT systems can bring both for users and family carers. Additionally, EAT systems can reduce the operating costs of residential homes and ensure a higher standard of care. Possum's project management department provides a full planning and advisory service for architects, housing associations, housing authorities, charities and others who are building or refurbishing small or large-scale residential homes.

Local Education Authorities purchase VOCAs for students, and a growing number of schools are implementing the Life Skills concept by using EAT in the classroom. And, of course, private individuals are increasingly purchasing systems and equipment themselves to ensure that they get exactly the system they want.

# Possum – key partnerships



“Everyone at Possum is really proud of what we do and we look forward to supporting our clients for many years to come.”

Philip Robinson  
Managing Director

In order to meet the vast majority of specific needs, Possum has a number of key partnerships with major organisations. These include:

- **Leonard Cheshire Disability** One of the largest charities in the UK supporting elderly and disabled people. Possum is supporting its work to inform disabled people of the benefits of AT to increase their independence. EAT will form part of Leonard Cheshire Disability’s current investment in rebuilding and refurbishing its residential homes.
- **Home Farm Trust** Provides a varied range of services across the UK for people with learning disabilities.
- **TATE (Through Assistive Technology to Employment)** Implemented AT and life skills training to prepare adults with learning disabilities to live independently and enhance employability. The project was part-funded by the European Social Fund and had 18 partners including universities, charities and businesses. Possum worked with both Tunstall and HFT as a major contributor to the project.
- **Charities** Possum works closely with many other charities including Scope, the Motor Neurone Disease Association, Grooms-Shaftesbury, Communication Matters and a large number of local charitable organisations.
- **Trade Associations** Possum is a member of the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) and complies with its Code of Practice which has achieved Stage One of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) Consumer Codes Approval Scheme (CCAS). Possum is also a member of the Telecare Services Association (TSA).



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