Information Technology

Computers have become essential for many of us, but they can be invaluable for people with a muscular dystrophy or related neuromuscular disorder, who may rely on them for leisure and communication.

Computers can offer independence; users can communicate via email and search the web to get information. There are a large number of devices and adaptations to enable even the most disabled user to operate a computer independently.

For example:

- a larger keyboard on your computer may help;
- devices are available that take the place of keyboards but are smaller and need less effort to press the keys;
- an 'on-screen keyboard' means the user only needs a mouse to select characters on the screen;
- alternatives to using a standard mouse include joysticks or trackerballs, which can be easier to control and use;
- pointers and sticks are available that can be attached to the head and used to press keys on a keyboard;
- as with mobile phones, predictive text can help increase the rate of typing - after typing two or three letters, the user is given a selection of words to choose from;
- voice recognition software can convert speech to text and so means that you talk to your computer rather than type.

Further information on information communication technology solutions is available in our publication ‘Inclusive Education for Children with Muscular Dystrophy and other Neuromuscular Conditions. Guidance for primary and secondary schools’ (Appendix 1 – Materials for Teachers). It is available on our website (www.muscular-dystrophy.org) as ‘ICT guidelines’.

Organisations that provide assessment

It is strongly recommended that an assessment is carried out prior to purchasing a computer as an individual person’s requirements can vary significantly. Also the aim is for the technology to be as supportive as possible which can mean that different hardware adaptations are required or maybe specific software packages.

Some organisations provide services in particular regions of the UK and some restrict their services to younger people in education. See individual entries for further details.

AbilityNet

Helps disabled adults and children use computers and the Internet by adapting and adjusting their information and communications technology. Also provides free information and advice, individual assessment of technology needs, the supply of assistive technology with free support, a programme of awareness education, and consultancy for employers on system and workstation adaptations and web accessibility.
ACE Centre Advisory Trust
An independent charity whose role is to be a centre of information, support, and training for parents and professionals in the use of technology for young people in education who have communication difficulties, both in speaking and/or writing.

There are two centres that cover particular regions of the UK - ACE Centre Advisory Trust (serving the south of England, excluding Greater London, South and Mid-Wales, the Isle of Wight, the Scilly Isles and the Channel Islands) and ACE Centre North (serving the north of England, North Wales, the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland).

ACE Centre Advisory Trust
92 Windmill Road
Headington
Oxford
OX3 7DR
Tel: 01865 759800
Fax: 01865 759810
Email: info@ace-centre.org.uk
Web: www.ace-centre.org.uk

ACE Centre North
Hollinwood Business Centre
Albert Street
Hollinwood
Oldham 0L8 3QL
Tel: 0161 358 0151
Fax: 0161 358 0152
Email: enquiries@ace-north.org.uk
Web: www.ace-north.org.uk

Access to Communication and Technology (ACT)
Deals with alternative methods of communicating and with different ways of using electronic equipment for people with physical disabilities in the West Midlands. Provides assessment, training and review of progress.

Access to Communication and Technology (ACT)
West Midlands Rehabilitation Centre
Oak Tree Lane Centre
91 Oak Tree Lane
Selly Oak
Birmingham B29 6JA
Tel: 0121 627 8235
Fax: 0121 627 8892
Email: act@sbpct.nhs.uk
Web: www.actwmids.nhs.uk

Adapt-IT
Their focus is to help disabled people make full use of computers. They provide assessment and training.

Adapt-IT
Churchill House
Stirling Way
Borehamwood
Hertfordshire
WD6 2HP
Tel: 0845 644 1712
Fax: 0845 644 1742
Email: info@adapt-it.org.uk
Web: www.adapt-it.org.uk

Aidis Trust
Aidis works to improve the lives of people with disabilities through communication aids, computers, and the special assistive technology that people with disabilities need to use. They provide assessment, advice, training and support. See also Aidis Shop in Suppliers section below.

Aidis Trust
3 Gunthorpe Street
London
E1 7RQ
Tel: 020 7426 2130
Fax: 020 7377 5738
Email: info@aidis.org
Web: www.aidis.org
CALL Centre (Communication Aids for Language and Learning)
Provides specialist expertise in technology for children who have speech, communication and/or writing difficulties in schools across Scotland.

The CALL Centre
University of Edinburgh
Paterson’s Land
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh
EH8 8AQ

Tel: 0131 651 6235 / 6236
Fax: 0131 651 6234
Email: info@callcentrescotland.org.uk
Web: www.callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk

CENMAC (Centre for Micro-Assisted Communication)
A team of advisory teachers who assess and review the progress of pupils in the Greater London area who have been referred to the service because their physical disability hinders their access to the curriculum.

CENMAC
Charlton School
Charlton Park Road
London
SE7 8JB

Tel: 020 8854 1019
Fax: 020 8854 1143
Email: mail@cenmac.com
Web: www.cenmac.com

National Network of Assessment Centres (NNAC)
UK-wide network of specialist services that work together to facilitate access for disabled people to education, training, employment and personal development. Assessment Centre services include quality assessment and support in the use of assistive technology and/or specialised learning strategies.

NNAC Administration Centre
The Royal National College
Venns Lane
Hereford, Herefordshire
HR1 1DT

Tel: 01432 376635
Fax: 01432 376630
Email: access@nnac.org
Web: www.nnac.org

Sources of funding

British Association of Health Services in Higher Education - Student Disability Assistance Fund
Helps students with disabilities to keep up with their studies. The maximum amount of each award is £500 and students must be involved in higher education on a full-time or nearly full-time basis.

Sandra Furmston
Administrative Secretary
BAHSHE Office
35 Hazelwood Road
Bush Hill Park
Enfield EN1 1JG

Tel: 020 8482 2412
Fax: 020 8482 2412
Email: s.furmston@mdx.ac.uk
Web: www.bahshe.co.uk

Ecas
Voluntary organisation dedicated to giving friendly and practical help to physically disabled people in Edinburgh and the Lothians. The Access Fund considers applications for computer equipment.

Tel: 0131 475 2344
Email: contact form on website
Web: www.ecas-edinburgh.org
Family Fund
Provides grants to families with severely disabled or seriously ill children, based on families' views and needs.

Family Fund
Unit 4 Alpha Court
Monks Cross Drive
Huntington
York YO32 9WN

Tel: 0845 130 4542
Email: info@familyfund.org.uk
Web: www.familyfundtrust.org.uk

Jonathan Young Memorial Trust
Provides computer equipment by giving grants towards the cost of new computers and by making grants of refurbished (second-hand) computer systems. For people in the East Midlands.

Jonathan Young Memorial Trust
10 Huntingdon Drive
The Park
Nottingham
NG7 1BW

Tel: 0115 947 0493
Email: info@jonathan-young-trust.co.uk
Web: www.jonathan-young-trust.co.uk

Joseph Patrick Trust
Provides grants to people with muscular dystrophy or associated neuromuscular conditions towards specialist equipment to help promote mobility and independence such as powered wheelchairs, electric beds and specially adapted computers.

Joseph Patrick Trust
4th Floor
61 Southwark Street
London
SE1 0HL

Tel: 020 7803 4814
Fax: 020 7401 3495
Email: jptgrants@muscular-dystrophy.org
Web: www.muscular-dystrophy.org

Lawrence Atwell’s Charity
Assists young people (aged 16-26) with grants for vocational training.

Lawrence Atwell’s Charity
The Skinners’ Company
8 Dowgate Hill
London
EC4R 2SP

Tel: 020 7236 5629
Email: beadle@skinners.org.uk
Web: www.skninershall.co.uk/lawrence_atwell.charity.htm

Lions Clubs International
Local Lions Clubs gives priority to the needs of their local community, providing support and maybe equipment.

Multiple District 105 (British Isles & Ireland)
257 Alcester Road South
Kings Heath
Birmingham
B14 6DT

Tel: 0845 833 9502
Fax: 0121 441 4510
Email: contact form on website
Web: www.lions.org.uk

Lord Ashdown Charitable Trust
Grants to disabled students.

C/o Clive Marks & Co
44a New Cavendish Street
London
W1M 7LG

Tel: 020 7486 4663

The Sequal Trust
Although The Sequal Trust does not provide cash grants, it does provide communication equipment. This can be in the form of a specialised computer system, voice synthesiser to relay pre-recorded messages, and many other items of communication equipment, to people with speech and/or movement difficulties.

In most instances they arrange professional assessments to establish individual needs.
Snowdon Award Scheme
Provides funds to help cover the additional costs of disability for students in further and higher education or training leading towards employment, including computer equipment.

Snowdon Award Scheme
Unit 18
Oakhurst Business Park
Wilberforce Way
Southwater
West Sussex
RH13 9RT
Tel: 01403 732899
Fax: 01403 733538
Email: info@snowdonawardscheme.org.uk
Web: www.snowdonawardscheme.org.uk

Suppliers

Tekdata Distribution Ltd
Aim to make computers accessible and enjoyable to use for everyone, especially those people who do not have standard requirements. Stock a range of products.

Tekdata Distribution Ltd
Technology House
Festival Trade Park, Crown Road
Stoke on Trent
Staffordshire ST1 5NJ
Tel: 01782 665500
Email: sales@tekdata.co.uk
Web: www.able2use.com

Aidis Shop
Aidis Shop is part of the Aidis Trust (see entry in Organisations that provide assessment section above). Working with partners: Fujitsu Siemens, Maxi Million and Inclusive Technology (who share Aidis’ goals and support their work) they have negotiated significant discounts on computers, hardware adaptations and software. These discounts have been negotiated specifically for disabled people. In the case of software and adaptations they are exclusively for home use. These discounts are available to recipients of Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance only.

Aidis Trust
3 Gunthorpe Street
London
E1 7RQ
Tel: 0845 120 3719
Web: www.aidis.org/shop

Box 42
Supplies bespoke computer systems. Also installs, delivers everything and provides training and support.

Box 42
Freepost NWW5249
St Helens
WA10 3BR
Tel: 0151 426 9988
Fax: 0151 426 9994
Email: info@box42.com
Web: www.box42.co.uk

Computers for the Disabled
Their mission is to help disabled people communicate and participate in day-to-day activities most people take for granted. This is done by recycling computers, giving disabled people an alternative means of keeping in touch.

Computers for the Disabled
41 New Waverley Road
Noak Bridge
Laindon
Essex
SS15 4BJ
Tel: 01268 284834
Fax: 01268 479028
Email: bigpaulh@blueyonder.co.uk
Web: www.cftd.co.uk
Groundwork East Midlands (formerly Environ)
An independent charity which provides information, advice and practical help to encourage individuals and organisations to take practical steps towards a more sustainable future. One of their activities is the sale of a range of refurbished computers.

Groundwork East Midlands
Denman Street East
Nottingham
NG7 3GX
Tel: 0115 942 0448
Fax: 0115 978 6522
Web: www.eastmidlands.groundwork.org.uk

IT for Charities
They have a list of companies that supply reconditioned computers. Some supply to organisations, others supply to individuals.

Web: www.itforcharities.co.uk/pcs.htm

Keytools Ltd
Provides computer technology products and information.

Keytools Ltd
Abacus House
1 Spring Cresent
Southampton
SO17 2FZ
Tel: 023 8029 4500
Fax: 023 8029 4501
Web: www.keytools.com

Sims Recycling Solutions
Computer recycling service with products for sale.

Sims Recycling Solutions
4 The Dolphin Centre
Southampton Road
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP1 2NB
Tel: 0845 050 8470
Fax: 01722 339 611
Web: uk.simrecycling.com

Recycle-IT!
The largest national not-for-profit computer recycling company in the UK, providing a professional service to corporate organisations, local authorities and small businesses. Also provide a service to people with disabilities.

Recycle-IT
Gate/Unit 7, 8-118
Chorlton Road
Old Trafford
Manchester
M75 4AL
Tel: 0161 226 0637 or 07939 514 4661
Email: info@recycle-it.uk.com
Web: www.recycle-it.uk.com

Other support services

British Computer Society Disability Group
Focuses on the role of IT in giving disabled people a better quality of life.
Tel: 01793 417666
Email: bcs london@hq.bcs.org.uk
Web: www.disability.bcs.org.uk

Ability Magazine is a campaigning publication for people who have difficulty using IT. It is aimed at those who buy, run and use accessible systems. In each issue Ability Magazine provides vital insight into the products, techniques and skills required to deliver systems for users who find it difficult to use standard software and hardware.
Tel: 0800 269545
Email: enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk
Web: www.abilitymagazine.co.uk
IT Can Help Network (ITCH) is a network of volunteers who are able to offer free local computer assistance to disabled people.
Web: www.itcanhelp.org.uk

**U Can Do I.T.**
Computer training for blind deaf and disabled people in their own home.

U Can Do I.T.  
Highfield House  
4 Woodfull Sheet  
London  
SW3 4DJ

Tel: 020 7730 7766  
Fax: 020 7730 6822  
Email: info@ucandoit.org.uk  
Web: www.ucandoit.org.uk

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