



Information Technology (IT)

This factsheet covers all there is to know about information technology available for disabled people. It is divided into several sections:

- Computer Equipment - special aids to help disabled people use a computer
- Low-cost Computers - companies that enable disabled people to obtain a computer at low cost
- Advice Agencies - organisations that will assist people in using a computer
- Assessment Organisations - places that will provide an assessment to see what adaptive equipment may help a disabled person use a computer.
- Computer Based Equipment - explains equipment available to disabled people that can operate household objects like lights via a computer

Computer Equipment

There are a huge variety of adaptations to enable people to use a computer easily, especially if they have a disability.

Keyboards

There are several different types of keyboard available:

- keyboard with larger keys,
- in an ABC format rather than the traditional QWERTY format
- multicoloured keys
- intellikeys keyboards.

The intellikeys keyboard is a keyboard that can be changed to suit any need or software program. It is a large flat touchpad that is adapted by having several different designs of keyboard overlays. The type of overlay used depends upon which application you are using. Designs include a traditional keyboard, number keyboard and picture keyboard. It is also possible to design your own keyboard with the OverlayMaker program if you have a unique need as. This keyboard is particularly good for people with motor skills problems, who are visually impaired or those with a learning disability.

If you have a hand tremor it is possible to get a keyguard which goes over a

normal or big key keyboard. This enables you to press keys without pressing the ones adjacent to them.

There are also keyboards that are designed to be used with one hand only, one finger only or a mouth stick and ones designed to prevent Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). Also available are braille stickers to put on a standard keyboard or a big key keyboard for blind or partially sighted people.

Mice

There are several types of mice available, the most well known ones being the standard mouse and the trackball. The trackball is ideal for people who have limited hand function as you can use two hands to operate it. You can also obtain an optic mouse which uses a light rather than a ball to move the pointer across the screen. A few of these mice are available in shapes designed to prevent or alleviate RSI.

There are now touchpads available for desktop computers (these are usually found on laptops) which allow you to run your finger along it to move the pointer.

There is also a new type of mouse on the market that is ideal for people who are blind or partially sighted. This mouse enables you to feel the icons on the screen when the pointer runs across them. It is called the Feedback Mouse.

Software

There are many different types of software to enable disabled people to use computers effortlessly and can also be useful for non-disabled people. The most popular ones are:

Voice Recognition Software

If you are unable to use a mouse or keyboard or just find typing difficult and slow, this software could be the solution. It enables you to operate a computer by talking to it. The latest versions allow a writing speed of up to 160 words per minute.

Text to speech reading system

This will read any text on the screen and enables

Ability Magazine

This magazine focuses on IT and disability and how technology can create an inclusive environment.

The magazine includes valuable case studies, discussions of technical issues, product reviews and analyses of trends in accessibility

It keeps readers up to date on the latest product releases, regulatory changes and company news impacting on the lives of disabled and non-disabled people

The magazine is available in paper format or as digital format sent via e-mail.

2 Dairy Cottages
Wolterton

Norfolk NR11 7LX
Tel: **01263 768 572**

E-mail:
john.lamb@ability
magazine.org.uk

Website:

www.ability
magazine.org.uk

Remap

This charity will make one-off aids to disabled people that are not available to buy.

The aids are given free of charge to the user and are made by volunteers. These volunteers are made up of engineers, technicians, craftspeople and medical staff.

If you need something to enable you to do a particular task and cannot find anything suitable then you need to contact your local Remap panel.

To find your local panel contact:
Tel: **0845 130 0456**
E-mail:
mary-ann.mitchell@remap.org.uk
Website:
www.remap.org.uk

people to hear what is written or being written on the computer. This can help visually impaired people and can also allow a person to type and not have to look at the screen as they can tell if a mistake has been made by listening. Many of the programs will automatically correct typing errors or phonetic spelling mistakes. This means it is also very useful for people with dyslexia.

Screen Keyboards

These programs are useful for people who do not have the dexterity to type on the keyboard. It places a keyboard on the screen which is controlled by the mouse. All the features on the keyboard, for example the shift button, are present and in addition many offer predictive text making typing faster.

Braille Translation Software

This will convert any text in to Braille. It is not necessary to know Braille to use the program. This software is compatible with most word processors and is even able to deal with graphics.

Lifeskills

This is a range of programs that help young people or people with learning difficulties learn about everyday life. Topics can range from understanding the value of money to booking holidays.

Organisations Selling Computer Equipment

Keytools

They provide computer equipment for people who are disabled and those who suffer from Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). They supply equipment such as one-handed keyboards, ergonomic mice to help with RSI and voice recognition software.

FREEPOST, Southampton, SO17 1YA

Tel: **023 8058 4314** Fax: **023 8058 4320**

E-mail: info@keytools.com

Website: www.keytools.com

Adapt-IT

They provide computer equipment, software and services for people with disabilities. These include

products for people with mobility and dexterity problems, visual impairments, learning disabilities and dyslexia.

Churchill House, Stirling Way, Borehamwood,
Herts, WD6 2HP

Tel: **0845 644 1712** Fax: **0845 644 1742**

E-mail: info@adapt-IT.org.uk

Website: www.adapt-IT.org.uk

CVIP Ltd (Consultancy for Visually Impaired Persons Ltd)

They supply computer software and hardware with advice on how to use them to people with visual impairments.

30 St Thomas Drive, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 4SS

Tel: **020 8420 1338** Fax: **020 8420 2472**

E-mail: iki-cvip@co.uk

Aidis Trust

This trust supplies computers and communication aids to individuals with severe physical disabilities.

First Floor, 54 Commercial Street, London, E1 6LT

Tel: **01202 695244**

E-mail: info@aidis.org

Website: www.aidis.org

Enabling Computer Supplies Ltd

This company aims to provide solutions which offer people with physical disabilities, learning difficulties and visual impairment increased access to computers for education, business and private use.

Castlefields, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST16 1BU

Tel: **01785 785522** Fax: **01785 785526**

E-mail: enquiry@enablingcomputers.com

Website: www.enablingcomputers.com

Low Cost Computers

There are some organisations that are able to provide computers to disabled people at an affordable price. The computers will not be top of the range and many will be second hand but they will have been serviced and are sufficient for everyday use.

Recycle-IT! Ltd

This is the UK's largest community computer re-use

UK Online Centres

These centres aim to provide everyone in the UK with access to computers in the area they live in.

There are local centres across the UK, many situated in libraries, community centres and schools. There are also a few mobile ones.

They are staffed by friendly and experienced people who will be able to offer all the help and advice you need. This includes learning the Internet and E-mail and also showing you how to do things like shop online, book holidays with ease or even enter chat rooms.

Some offer adaptive technologies to help disabled people but check beforehand. Please also check if you need to make an appointment.

To find your local centre contact UK Online

Tel: **0800 771234**

Website:

www.ufi.com

Silver Surfers Day

This is a national day where many organisations offer free Internet training to the over 50's. It was set up to encourage them to learn and use the Internet.

It is usually held on the Friday of Adult Learner's Week in May.

It is run by a training company Digital Unite (previously Hairnet).

For more information contact them on:
Tel: **0870 241 5091**
Website:
www.hairnet.org

Department for Education and Skills

They produce a free booklet called 'Money to Learn for Free' which provides details of available grants to pay for training courses. For a copy telephone
0845 6022260

project. It supplies second-user systems, at very low cost, from equipment donated by major corporate organisations.

Sundon Park Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU3 3BL

Tel: **01582 492436** Fax: **01582 597778**

E-mail: george@recycle-it.ltd.uk

Website: www.recycle-it.ltd.uk

Computers for the Disabled

This charity builds and supplies refurbished Internet-ready PCs with many new parts at a very low cost to individual disabled people, day centres, schools, colleges and charities.

41 New Waverley Rd, Noak Bridge, Laindon
Essex, SS15 4BJ

Tel: **01268 284834** Fax: **01268 479028**

E-mail: BigPaulh@blueyonder.co.uk

Website: www.cftd.co.uk

Recommit Ltd

They are a company selling secondhand, recycled computer equipment, including PC's, monitors and laptops.

15-17 The Clarendon Centre, Dairy Meadow Lane
Southampton Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2TJ

Tel: **01722 339660** Fax: **01722 339611**

E-mail: chg@recommit.co.uk

Website: www.recommit.co.uk

Environ

They are a company selling Internet ready refurbished computers at low cost.

Western Park, Leicester, LE3 6HX

Tel: 0116 2220222 Fax: 0116 255 2343

E-mail: enquiries@environ.org.uk

Website: www.environ.org.uk

SNUG - Special Needs User Group

They sell a range of computer products including monitors, keyboards and computer programs at low cost.

PO Box 42, Rainhill, Merseyside, L35 4RG

Tel: **0151 426 9988** Fax: **0151 426 9994**

E-mail: info@box42.com

Website: www.box42.com

Computer Advice and Training

If you need help with using your computer or any of its software programs or have come across a problem, there are several organisations that may be able to help. Some are just for advice on using the computer whereas others run courses and training on any software or adaptive equipment that may be necessary.

Aspire

This is a local charity that, amongst other activities, runs IT training courses including Introduction to IT, Word, Publisher and Digital Photography. It runs courses for children called Technokids.

Wood Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex, HA7 4AP

Tel: **020 8420 6702/6735**

E-mail: mubinaa@aspire.org.uk/tharanar@aspire.org.uk

Website: www.aspire.org.uk

British Computer Association of the Blind

This is a national charity that arranges courses and workshops as well as monthly 'get together' conference calls. A quarterly newsletter is available in Braille, tape, disk or by e-mail. A members CD is circulated quarterly containing demonstration software, information from suppliers and MP3 recordings from the computer press.

c/o RNIB, 58-72 John Bright Street, Birmingham, B1 1BN

Tel: **0845 430 8628**

E-mail: info@bcab.org.uk

Website: www.bcab.org.uk

Computers for the Disabled

This national charity runs a help and advice line open 7 days a week from 9.00am to 9.00pm.

41 New Waverley Rd, Noak Bridge, Laindon, Essex, SS15 4BJ

Tel: **01268 284834** Fax: **01268 479028**

E-mail: BigPaulh@blueyonder.co.uk

Website: www.cftd.co.uk

CVIP Ltd (Consultancy for Visually Impaired Persons Ltd)

This organisation offers some training opportunities for visual impaired people.

30 St Thomas Drive, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 4SS

Tel: **020 8420 1338** Fax: **020 8420 2472**

E-mail: iki-cvip@co.uk

HAD (Harrow Association of Disabled People)

This is a local organisation that has a computer suite where they sometimes

Age Concern

150 of their local offices are UK Online centres to assist older people in using computers.

They also run the Silver Surfer's club which gives Internet training through their local offices. They are working together with BT to ensure that more of their local offices have the staff and volunteers to provide more Internet training.

They have a Booklet called the 'Beginners Guide to the Internet' which is available in English, Urdu and Punjabi.

To obtain this booklet or find out if your local Age Concern provides computer training:
Tel: **020 8765 7200**
Fax: **020 8765 7211**
Website:
www.ageconcern.org.uk

run training courses for disabled people.
Bentley House, Headstone Drive, Wealdstone, Harrow, HA3 5QX
Tel: **020 8861 9920** Fax: **020 8861 9926**
Minicom: **020 8861 4547**
Email: info@had.org.uk
Website: www.had.org.uk

ITCH Network

This is a network of volunteers who provide free local computer assistance to disabled people in their own homes and at other locations around Basingstoke such as day centres. It is part of the British Computer Society Disability Group.
PO Box 6163, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG23 7PB
Tel: **07985 779071**
E-mail: info@itcanhelp.org.uk
Website: www.itcanhelp.org.uk

U Can Do I.T.

This is a registered charity that enables blind, deaf and disabled people to learn how to use the Internet and email by giving one to one tuition in their own homes at affordable cost in London. Training consists of 10 one to one sessions over 4-6 weeks. A computer with Windows 95 or higher must be provided by the learner. They are sometimes able to provide disabled students with a computer and software along with basic computer and Internet training.
4 Woodfall St, London, SW3 4DJ
Tel: **020 7730 7766** Fax: **020 7730 6822**
E-mail: info@ucandoit.org.uk
Website: www.ucandoit.org.uk

Assessments

If you need an assessment to find out what adaptations you may need in order to use a computer, there are places that can help with this.

Abilitynet

AbilityNet is a national charity offering computer access assessments for disabled people and general information/advice regarding special access

technology. They can assess people in their home, place of employment or at a school, college or university.

PO Box 94, Warwick, Warwickshire, CV34 5WS

Freephone: **0800 269545** Fax: **01926 407425**

Minicom: **01926 312847** Voice/Minicom

E-mail: enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk

Website: www.abilitynet.org.uk

Adapt - IT

As well as providing computer equipment they can carry out assessments for disabled people to find out what adaptations could help. They can also train anyone, regardless of ability, to use any equipment or software that enables them to use a computer.

Churchill House, Stirling Way, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 2HP

Tel: **0845 644 1712** Fax: **0845 644 1742**

E-mail: info@adapt-IT.org.uk

Website: www.adapt-IT.org.uk

Aidis Trust

The trust offers specialist skills to people with less debilitating physical disabilities and people with cognitive disabilities, including an assessment of the most appropriate type of computer accessories to use. Assessments include talking to family members and school/place of employment to obtain a full picture of how the disabled person would use a computer.

Applications should be made in writing to:

First Floor, 54 Commercial Street, London, E1 6LT

Tel: **01202 695244**

E-mail: info@aidis.org

Website: www.aidis.org

Computer Based Equipment

Today computers are used for an enormous amount of functions and many can actually assist disabled people to control items in the home.

Environmental Control Systems

This system enables people to operate a wide range of household appliances, such as TV's, Hi-Fi's, intercoms,

Paying for Specialist Computer Based Equipment

It may be possible to obtain these systems through your local social services.

If you think you may need any specialist computer based equipment you should first ask your local social services for an assessment.

They will then send an occupational therapist to your home to assess whether any equipment will be beneficial to you.

At present there is still a 'postcode lottery' as to whether your local social services will provide you with specialist computer based equipment in your home.

**VAT on
Computers/
Specialist
Equipment**

It may be possible, when buying a computer or specialist equipment, to obtain it with no VAT added.

This is only valid if the equipment has been specifically designed for disabled people.

This could include Environmental Control Systems and the many different keyboards available.

The best way to ensure that you get all the eligible equipment zero rated is to buy from specialist companies like the ones listed throughout this factsheet.

For more information on what is exempt contact the VAT helpline on:
Tel: **0845 010 9000**

**The Disability Foundation
RNOH, Brockley Hill
Stanmore, Middlesex,
HA7 4LP
Tel: 020 8954 7373
Fax: 020 8954 7414
Minicom: 020 8954 7413
info@tdf.org.uk
www.tdf.org.uk**



lamps, curtains and can even open doors, via a remote control. The system can enhance the independence of disabled people and the elderly by reducing their reliance on a carer or family member. In short the system is run by a mini computer which is able to learn the different functions needed to operate any appliances. A person accesses a controller using an input switch which can be operated by hand, foot, head, arm, chin or even using a blow/suck system.

Suppliers of Environmental Control Systems

Amax Telecare

100 West Hendon Broadway, London, NW9 7AQ

Tel: **0800 385 3385**

E-mail: milton@amaxtelecare.co.uk

Website: www.amaxtelecare.co.uk

ESL Steeper Ltd

51 Riverside, Medway City Estate, Rochester, Kent ME2 4DP

Tel: **01634 297010**

Website: www.rslsteeper.com

Possum Controls Ltd

8 Farmbrough Close, Stocklake Park Industrial Estate, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP20 1DQ

Tel: **01296 461000** Fax: **01296 461001**

E-mail: unit8@possum.co.uk

Website: www.possum.co.uk

SRS Technology Ltd

105 Brickyard Rd, Aldridge, West Midlands, WS9 8SX

Tel: **01922 456882** Fax: **01922 456883**

E-mail: enquiries@srstechnology.co.uk

Website: www.srstechnology.co.uk

GEWA UK Ltd

8 Farmbrough Close, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1DQ

Tel: **01296 461003** Fax: **01296 461107**

E-mail: sales@gewa.co.uk

For information on other systems such as community alarms please see our Equipment factsheet.