

Computer Access in Schools – Starter Resource

Some students may find it difficult to access the standard computer keyboard and mouse because of a physical disability or learning difficulty. This brief document is designed as a starter resource to give you ideas about the sorts of equipment that may help, and also sources of support and advice.

The Barnsley Assistive Technology team provides specialised computer access equipment for people with severe physical disabilities at home, but we are not commissioned to provide assessments for accessing computers at school or work. The equipment and support discussed in this document is not provided by the AT team but may work alongside more specialised equipment.

Please note: the suppliers and organisations mentioned in this document are examples rather than an exhaustive list. Please let us know if you feel anything should be added or if any of the information is incorrect.

Contents

Ergonomics, positioning and seating.....	2
Improving the existing setup	2
Hardware	2
Switch access	3
Software.....	3
Other sources of advice.....	3
Useful websites.....	4

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Notes	
Actions	

Ergonomics positioning and seating

Changing the position of the person or the keyboard / mouse / screen can improve how well the student can use the equipment. A student may benefit from an Occupational Therapy Assessment to explore this.

Improving the existing setup

There are lots of accessibility settings built in to Windows, iOS and Android operating systems. For example its possible to change the speed of the mouse pointer, or make it easier to type with one hand, or magnify the screen. You can find these and many other enhancements within the accessibility settings of your device.

Resources:

My Computer My Way from Ability Net is a comprehensive guide to customising accessibility settings: <https://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/>

Hardware

There are many alternative keyboards and mice available which can be easier to operate for some pupils. For example, there are keyboards with larger or brightly coloured keys, or keyguards can be used to prevent pressing the wrong key by mistake. There are different sorts of mice, for example rollerballs or headmice or eyetracking for children who have difficulty controlling the movement in their hands.

See [the useful websites section](#) at the end of this document for some ideas.

Switch access

For some students, for example those with limited movement, the computer can be controlled by pressing one or more switches. This is often in conjunction with software that gives the user options to choose with their switch.

Resources:

Switch Access Guide

<https://acecentre.org.uk/resources/switch-access-technology/>

Switch Progression Road Map

<http://www.inclusive.co.uk/articles/switch-progression-road-map>

Software

Educational software is available which is designed to be accessed with a variety of input methods e.g. switch access, eye tracking. See the useful websites section at the end of this document for some ideas.

Other sources of advice

There are several independent Assistive Technology consultants who work in the Yorkshire and Humber Area. Some consultants are mentioned on the Communication Matters website:

<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/assessment/independent-services/>

The William Merritt Centre is a Disabled Living Centre in Leeds which gives impartial advice on a variety of equipment and the practical aspects of living with a disability.

<http://www.wmdlc.org/>

CALL Scotland have lots of experience and resources, e.g. webinars, around making the curriculum accessible:

<http://www.callscotland.org.uk/>

Useful websites

Ability World

AAC and assistive technology product supplier

<http://www.ability-world.com/>

Crick Software

Educational software, Clicker Communicator AAC app and Superkeys adaptive keyboard

<http://www.cricksoft.com/uk/home.aspx>

HelpKidzLearn

Educational games and games for access practice online (requires subscription)

www.helpkidzlearn.com

Inclusive Technology

A wide variety of alternative mice and keyboards, educational software and resources:

<http://www.inclusive.co.uk/>

Remap

Charity that custom makes solutions for those with disabilities

www.remap.org.uk

Barnsley Assistive Technology Team

<https://www.barnsleyhospital.nhs.uk/assistive-technology/resource/local-services-resource-pack/>

This pack is a handy go to guide for professionals working within the field of electronic Assistive Technology, containing one page profiles for AAC and Environmental Control products and resources. This includes; communications aids, switches, computer access peripherals, remote controls, mounting solutions, assessments, toolkits and software.

The products and resources within the pack are those which would usually fall within the remit of local services to provide.