

Assistive Technology

This factsheet is designed to signpost you to organisations and resources that provide information about making the best use of assistive technology.

Assistive technologies are products and services that empower disabled people to become more independent. Under the Equality Act 2010, assistive technology is recognised as a 'reasonable adjustment' which should be made available to prevent discrimination in a wide variety of contexts.

The term covers a diverse range of technologies from wheelchairs and walking sticks to environmental controls which enable users to operate door openers, computers and other household appliances with a single accessible device.

The growth in the use of computers and the internet has dramatically reduced the cost of some types of assistive technology. The advent of smartphones and tablets has provided disabled consumers with libraries of low-cost assistive technology apps designed to help with daily tasks and activities. However some products remain relatively expensive. Specialist equipment such as electric wheelchairs and communication aids for people with speech impairments often come with high price tags and can be difficult to evaluate without help from experts.

Finding that the right device – or combination of devices – can be hugely beneficial, enabling young people to live more independent and socially active lives as well as sometimes paving the way to opportunities in education and employment.

We hope that the organisations listed below will help you find the assistive technology-related services and resources that you need.



Government schemes that provide assistive technology

The government runs a number of services and programmes that run assistive technology schemes. In most cases they provide access to expert assessors and finance both the acquisition and maintenance of the equipment supplied.

Access to Work

The Access to Work Programme provides grants to finance any additional support or equipment that an employee may need as a result of their disability or health condition. The grant is intended to help recipients secure and stay in employment. Applications can be made directly to the Access to Work Centre or through local job centres.

www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview

Tel: 0345 268 8489

Textphone: 0345 608 8753

Email: atwosu.london@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are administered by local councils and aim to finance changes to a disabled person's home to make the residence more accessible. This can include widening doors and improving access to rooms, installing ramps and adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to operate. The DFG is means-tested, based on household income and savings for adults but children under 18 can get a grant without their parents' income being taken into account. The maximum amount of funding available varies by region. It is not available in Scotland.

www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants/overview

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) covers the extra disability-related costs students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties incur while studying in higher education. Students can access the DSA by applying to the relevant student financing agency, depending on whether they live in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

www.yourdsa.com



The National Health Service (NHS)

The National Health Service (NHS) is required by statute to ensure that disabled people throughout the country have access to certain assistive technologies, including wheelchair services, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) aid services, specialist environmental controls services and prosthetics services. Referrals are usually via your GP or other health professional. The eligibility criteria relate to the nature of the person's disability and do not take their financial status into account.

Navigating the assistive technology market

Assistive technology can also be purchased directly from suppliers. However, it can be difficult to choose between products or even know what is available. The following websites have been designed to provide buyers with a starting place in their search for suitable products.

Independent Living

Independent Living provides a website and a catalogue containing a full range of aids to support daily living, mobility and independence. It also offers a free weekly newsletter on the latest developments in independent living.

www.independentliving.co.uk

Living Made Easy

Living Made Easy is an advice and information website maintained by the Disabled Living Foundation. The website aims to provide comprehensive and impartial information about daily living equipment.

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

Helpline: 0300 999 0004

Useful charities

AbilityNet

AbilityNet is a charity dedicated to helping disabled people access digital technology at home and in education and the workplace. It provides a range of free services to disabled people and their families, friends, carers and employers.

www.abilitynet.org.uk

Helpline: 0800 269 545

Email: enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk

The Aidis Trust

The Aidis Trust is a charity that provides free and impartial support on technology to disabled people living across the UK.

www.aidis.org

Tel: 0808 800 0009

Email: info@aidis.org

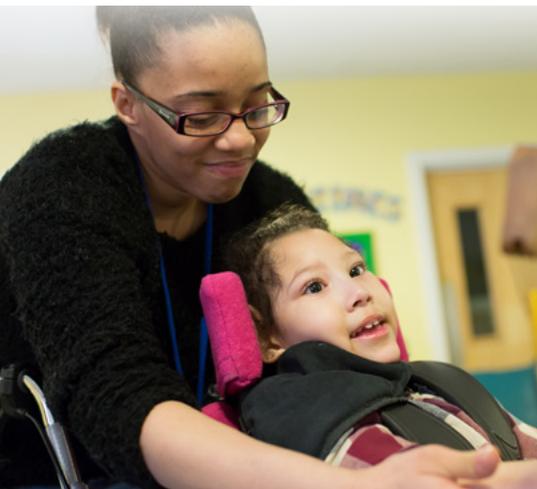
Disabled Living

Disabled Living is a charity which provides impartial information about equipment (assistive technology) and services for disabled adults, children, older people and the professionals who support them.

www.disabledliving.co.uk

Tel: 0161 607 8200

Email: info@disabledliving.co.uk



The Disabled Living Foundation

The Disabled Living Foundation is a national charity that provides impartial advice, information and training on independent living. Its website hosts a range of factsheets on different types of equipment, assistive technology suppliers and sources of funding.

www.dlf.org.uk

Helpline: 0300 999 0003

Email: helpline@dlf.org.uk

Useful commercial providers

The British Healthcare Trade Association (BHTA)

The BHTA is the UK's largest association of companies that manufacture and sell assistive technology. Its members work in a wide variety of assistive technology fields including wheelchairs, stairlifts, orthotics and communication aids. Companies registered with the association can be found on the 'Find Member' section of its website, which can be a useful way of locating reputable suppliers.

www.bhta.net

Tel: 0207 702 2141

Email: bhta@bhta.com

Inclusive Technology

Inclusive Technology is an online retailer that specialises in providing computer access equipment and software for disabled users. Its catalogue includes switches and other computer access devices, communication aids, eyegaze, and educational assistive technology for people with physical, sensory and learning impairments.

www.inclusive.co.uk

Tel: 01457 819 790

Email: inclusive@inclusive.co.uk



Together for Families Helpline
10am-4pm, Monday-Friday

0808 8088 100

info@togetherforshortlives.org.uk

www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk

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