

Aspire Assistive Technology

Keeping you connected



Aspire

Supporting people with spinal injury

Incurring a spinal cord injury can be life changing, but you can still lead a full and rewarding life.

Over the last 25 years Aspire has worked with thousands of people throughout the UK and Ireland – creating independence, choice and opportunity.

We provide a number of services to people and families affected by a spinal cord injury.

This brochure explains how you can benefit from Assistive Technology.

About Aspire

Aspire is a national charity that works with people with spinal cord injuries, providing practical support and advice to help them regain their independence.

We provide the following key services:

Aspire's **Human Needs Fund** offers grants to people with spinal cord injuries to help them buy the specialist equipment needed to live a more independent life.

We provide a number of specially adapted **Houses** which serve as accommodation for patients newly discharged from hospital, and their families, while permanent, accessible accommodation is being arranged.

Aspire's **Independent Living Advisors** give practical support to people by sharing advice on how to live a more independent life. We work with patients in Spinal Injury Centres around the country, providing accurate information and 'signposting' patients and their families to the best services and information for their needs.

We also provide **Assistive Technology** facilities at Spinal Injury Centres which help people use computers, regardless of their level of injury.

Aspire's head office is the **Aspire National Training Centre (ANTC)** in Stanmore, Middlesex. The ANTC is a leading innovator in accessible and inclusive fitness and sporting activities.

Many of our British paralympians and national squads train at the ANTC, and we are delighted that the ANTC has been chosen as one of the training venues for the 2012 London Paralympics.

Our research at the **Aspire Centre for Disability Sciences** has led to groundbreaking work on relief of pressure sores, fertility services and the development of technologies which can greatly assist independent living.

Through our **Campaigning** we have developed links with Westminster, Whitehall and the media on a range of important issues including wheelchair provision and accessible housing. We continue to act as advocates for positive change and improvement in these and other areas.

All of Aspire's services are paid for entirely through charitable income and project-based funding. We run a number of exciting fundraising activities throughout the year so there are lots of opportunities for friends and families to get involved.

Please see the other brochures in this series for further information about our services: Human Needs Fund, Aspire Housing Programme and Independent Living Advice.

Please see page 7 for our contact details.



“Through our campaigning we have developed links with Westminster, Whitehall and the media on a range of important issues including wheelchair provision and accessible housing”



About our Assistive Technology Facilities

For most people, using a computer is a part of everyday life - whether for work, communicating with friends and family, or simply enjoying news and entertainment.

Aspire's Assistive Technology Facilities are based in Spinal Injury Centres throughout the UK to help people with spinal cord injuries use computers regardless of the level of their injury.

Patients with spinal cord injuries can be in hospital for a considerable length of time and we recognise that having access to a computer during this period is invaluable. Whether the facilities are used for keeping in touch with friends, doing online shopping or even pursuing business interests, they go a long way towards keeping you connected to the world outside hospital.

Having sustained a spinal cord injury, you may not have the dexterity needed to use standard computer equipment. With funding from the Ian Karten Charitable Trust and the James Tudor

Foundation, Aspire has been able to provide computer and IT facilities that come complete with assistive technology. This enables anyone, regardless of the level of their injury or paralysis, independent computer access.

The technology includes a range of specialist software and hardware, such as voice recognition programmes, head controls and mouth-operated mice. As part of your rehabilitation, you will be given full training by one of our trained volunteers – many of whom are ex-patients and who have used the facilities themselves when in the Spinal Injury Centre.

The facilities are usually situated in the Occupational Therapy departments in Spinal Injury Centres. We also have wireless-enabled PCs and laptops on the wards so patients can access the internet whilst on bed rest.

If you would like to gain access to any of these facilities, please speak to your Occupational Therapist or Ward Manager. If you have any questions about the technology you can also speak to an Aspire Independent Living Advisor.

“This technology enables anyone, regardless of the level of their injury or paralysis, independent computer access”



Kirsty's story

Kirsty sustained a spinal injury that limited her arm and hand movements. While in hospital, and a long way from home, friends and family, Kirsty soon realised that the internet would provide an important link with the outside world.

Aspire volunteers at the Spinal Injury Centre worked with the Occupational Therapists to assess her needs. Kirsty was shown a voice control software programme that allowed her

to use every aspect of the computer when accompanied with a head controlled mouse.

Soon she was doing everything from opening and producing documents, to surfing the internet and video conferencing. Kirsty then applied for online banking so that now, not only does she control her own finances again, but she also operates an Ebay shop and is writing a book about her experience.



Dave's story

Dave had an accident in 1991 and soon found that using assistive computer technology had massive benefits.

“Since my accident I have found that computers have been a huge asset to me – instantly I was able to keep in touch with friends and family through email which is so much easier for me than writing letters due to the nature of my injury.

Computers also mean that I don't fall into the trap of just watching daytime TV all the time; I use a computer to find information on the internet as well as to play strategy games, all of which mean that my brain is kept active rather than just having me sitting around doing nothing all day.

There's also a real practical advantage thanks to online shopping and banking – it gives me

so much more independence to be able to manage my affairs from home.”

With plenty of experience of using computers, Dave is now an Aspire volunteer IT trainer at one of our Assistive Technology facilities.

“When I found out about the Aspire programme I felt it was time to use my skills to assist other people. It's great to be able to show people with new injuries that if you look at problems in a different light there are means and ways in which to solve them. I can prove that with a little bit of trial and error things can be done just as easily as before. Even better, by socialising with the other volunteers and patients we can all share tips and ideas and I've found that even with all my years of experience, I've been learning new ways of doing things.”



“All the equipment that we provide is available commercially so you can replicate the system you use in hospital when you get home or back to work”

FAQs

What is Assistive Technology?

High level spinal cord injuries can restrict the use of your arms and hands, and often standard computer equipment is difficult to use. Our Assistive Technology Facilities include a range of devices and software packages that enable anyone, regardless of their level of injury, to use a computer independently.

Where are your Centres?

We have facilities in most of the Spinal Injury Centres in the UK and Ireland. They are usually based on the Occupational Therapy department and we also have mobile units on the wards.

How do I get assessed for my needs?

The Occupational Therapists will work with our volunteer trainers to find the best solution for you. These needs may change over time and we will continue to work with you to find the best option.

Can I use this equipment at home?

All the equipment that we provide is available commercially so you can replicate the system you use in hospital when you get home or back to work. Our Human Needs Fund often provides grants for such equipment.

I've never used a computer before but I need one to go back to work. Can you help?

Yes. Once we have determined what type of equipment or software you need, we will teach you the basics of computing. Once you are familiar with the use of the technology, you can then take further courses at college, in the community or online.

Can I use my own laptop on the wards?

Yes. Most wards have WIFI broadband; others require you to sign up to mobile broadband with your mobile carrier. We can let you use our facilities until you decide what you will eventually need.

How to contact us?

Telephone

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|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Aspire Housing | 020 8420 8950 |
| Aspire Human Needs Fund | 020 8420 6707 |
| Aspire Independent Living | 020 8420 6735 |
| Aspire Assistive Technology | 020 8420 6735 |

Email

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Aspire Housing | housing@aspire.org.uk |
| Aspire Human Needs Fund | humanneeds@aspire.org.uk |
| Aspire Independent Living | advice@aspire.org.uk |
| Aspire Assistive Technology | technology@aspire.org.uk |

Support Aspire

If you would like to make a donation to Aspire or find out how else you can support us please call 020 8420 6703 or visit www.aspire.org.uk

This programme is generously supported by



Supporting people with spinal injury

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