

Requiem for a trail blazer

The Oxford ACE Centre is to close this summer unless there is a change in government policy or an investor comes forward. The ACE Centre Oxford was a pioneer in assistive technology for children and young people who need computer support to help them speak, study and lead their lives with dignity.



If Oxford ACE closes,
who will help her?

Oxford ACE has been in the forefront of research, developmental projects, assessments and technology provision since it was set up under a Tory government 28 years ago.

Many young people have benefited from their expertise. One example is Alice who is now 19. She was born with athetoid cerebral palsy. She was a very bright girl but when she started school she could not a pencil or make herself understood. When Alice was six years old she received her first computer. Even so, typing was laborious. She typed very slowly, using just her left hand.

When Alice started her GCSEs she was assessed by the Oxford ACE Centre to see what technology she would need to fulfil her academic potential. She got a laptop with Internet access and voice recognition. This marked a turning point as she could produce work much more quickly and accurately and found the whole process of composition much less tiring. Now she no longer needed a scribe so the school saved money too. Alice is now studying for a degree in Environmental Sciences.

The Oxford ACE Centre was the first organisation of its kind in England and set a very high standard. Its research always focused on the leading edge technologies, most recently eye gaze technology for those who cannot use their hands to

navigate a mouse.



Becta was a victim of
governemtn cuts, now
Oxford ACE

Chris Stevens, formerly Head of Inclusion at Becta, itself a victim of government cuts, commented, "This is very sad news. Oxford ACE was a trail blazer and set very high standards with its assessments and research. It made such a difference to the lives of so many young people. I worry that the next generation of youngsters with disabilities will not get the same rigorous assessments and decisions about technology support will be made purely on the basis of cost"

[Oxford ACE](#)