

**ace**  
**centre**  
*Giving people a Voice...*

Annual Review  
**2008-09**

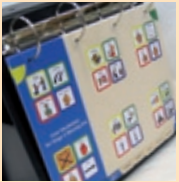
# Tamsin's Story



# Talking together

Tamsin is an engaging and bright young girl whose cerebral palsy severely affects all four of her limbs to the extent that she can't point with her hands or fingers. She can make sounds but hasn't yet gained any recognisable spoken words.

When she was three, Tamsin wore 'yes' and 'no' wristbands and began to respond to simple questions by looking at the appropriate band. She also started looking at things that she wanted around the room.



The ACE Centre worked with Tamsin and her mother to build up a special communication binder that contained symbols relating to her toys. We showed her mother techniques of using

the book in front of Tamsin to quickly work out which item she was 'eye-pointing' to. Tamsin was soon able to use her eyes to communicate, and her mother showed others how easy it was to read Tamsin's eye-pointing. Her family and friends were soon happily 'listening' to what Tamsin had to say as they played with her.

From these small beginnings Tamsin has continued to request her book to spontaneously communicate many things that four year-olds need to say – things that are worrying her, things she wants to do, questions she wants answered; and things she wants her little brother to do – and NOT to do!

Tamsin isn't totally reliant on her communication book. To ensure that her natural language continues to develop, her mum and dad carry on responding to her facial expressions and general eye-pointing, but they make sure that the book is available if she wants it.

Tamsin faces many challenges ahead, but at the age of three the most pressing was communication. Teaching her mother how to use symbol communication and how to read Tamsin's eyes confidently has enabled Tamsin to 'find her voice' - a voice not just to be used with her parents, but with all her family and friends. In short, Tamsin, with her mother's skilful example and guidance, has begun to talk through symbols.

“This place is completely invaluable - I don't know where we would be without it.”

- Tamsin's mother

# Our Mission

To provide personalised and independent assessment, research and development, advice and training services for people with severe physical and communication difficulties and those who support them. By doing this, we enable them to communicate, learn and participate in society.



### Who, where and what

We provide a service to children and young people with complex physical and communication disabilities, with an emphasis on early intervention and educational transition. We also work through research partnerships and liaison with local authority teams, with an emphasis on children and young people and enhanced access to education.

Geographically we are a national charity although currently our service delivery is primarily in Southern England. We are a not-for-profit independent organisation with charitable status.

### How we provide excellence

We employ qualified teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and assistive technologists with many years of experience in our field.

Users of our services are at the centre of everything we do. We involve the child and their family, local therapists, carers and teaching staff in the assessment process, and provide a platform for meeting and discussing issues concerning the welfare of the child face-to-face and in a relaxed yet focussed forum.

Our employees are involved in pioneering research and development programmes within both the UK and the EU, ensuring that new technology is tailored to the

user. This in turn ensures that our staff benefit from opportunities for continual professional development.

We operate a loan library of specialist equipment which means that any individual child, together with their parents and carers, can 'try before they buy' in their own home and school environment.

We provide a comprehensive range of professional training, consultancy and information services. In addition, we offer networking opportunities to carers and parents to support and inspire them, recognising that their input is an essential component in creating successful outcomes for the children.

**“The staff here do an amazing job with the children they help.” - Volunteer**



# From our Director

At the ACE Centre we don't pretend that we can wave a magic wand of technology to solve the communication problems encountered by the children and young people that we see. The path to effective communication involves innumerable hurdles that involve time, equipment, expense and a large circle of carers and professionals.

What we can say is that we offer our young people the best possible support for this journey towards education, learning and self-esteem.

In order to continue to do this, we have been working hard to develop and renew the organisation, with the goal of reinventing the charity and transforming it into a self-sustaining organisation. We have restructured and reorganised our operational management, making it more fit for purpose, and we now have a shared vision and a three-year strategic plan to steer us in a clear direction. These achievements would not have been possible without the commitment of all our staff and trustees.

This commitment is producing dividends. In 2008-09 the number of assessments carried out

increased by 33% compared to the previous year, and the number of people attending our training courses more than doubled. These increases have been won against a background of belt-tightening among local authorities and Primary Care Trusts.

There have been many highlights this year, including the inaugural ACE Centre Junior Golf Challenge which has boosted our profile far beyond the clubs that participated. There are already plans to extend the event in 2010.

Finally our thanks go to the support and encouragement of all our many supporters, donors and volunteers. They will continue to be vital to our organisation as we move towards sustainability, for without them we could not help the remarkable young people who continue to motivate and amaze us with their courage and determination to communicate.

Dr Ben Jabuni

“How ACE  
have changed  
these young  
people's lives is  
fantastic.”

- HRH The  
Princess Royal

# A year in focus



## Assessment

The cornerstone of our work is our effective and thorough assessment service for young people with complex physical and communication difficulties.

During 2008-09 we established lasting links with 17 local authorities through Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and carried out over 70 assessments and follow-up activities. Assessment referrals for individuals who live in locations that do not have SLAs increased to 18.

Our assessments are supported by our loan library of communication equipment. This library allows individuals to trial software, communication aids and other access resources to feed into the assessment recommendations and ensure lasting success. We received several generous donations last year that enabled us to update our loan library to include one of the widest selections of eye-gaze equipment under one roof.



## Training

In 2008-09 we delivered a varied programme of day courses in assistive and communication technology to a total of 260 people. Our courses cover a wide range of topics including the latest high-tech and low-tech developments, plus access technologies such as switches and specialist software. These courses are meeting the needs of staff working with and supporting children with complex communication and physical difficulties.

We also delivered seven accredited training units in 2008-09 to 90 people in total. These courses included all of our current four unit titles and three additional assistive technology units, which we delivered for local authorities in Southern England and South Wales.

Our free monthly information day sessions (when staff are available to discuss and advise on a range of issues) are maintaining their popularity.

# A year in focus



## Information

With the rapid pace of technological change, one of our key roles is to provide independent information about services, suppliers and solutions.

2008-09 saw major development advances towards our most ambitious information project to date – the creation of a unique website that will contain comprehensive details of all aspects of the communication aids available in the UK. The website, called SpeechBubble, is due to launch in 2010 and is already causing excitement in the field of assistive technology. We will be using the website as an information point and as a platform for spreading the word about our core services.

Our existing website continues to attract visitors at the rate of 5,000 per month, and is our frontline point of contact for national and international enquiries. We also had 10,000 people visit our site via our charity Google Adwords service – giving us the equivalent of £4,000 of free advertising.



## Research

We have been heavily involved in two major European projects during the year – COGAIN and AEGIS – both of them in our capacity as champions of people with communication disabilities.

In the former we have the responsibility of representing and including the perspective of people with communication needs in the development of cutting-edge eye-gaze technology, and in the latter we are helping to pioneer new methods of controlling communication aids and computers, and making technology more accessible for all to use.

We've also been developing a new version of our Talk Together vocabulary (onscreen grids of words, phrases and symbols that aid efficient communication). This new version is optimised for control via eye-gaze, and will complement our existing suite of communication products.

We have been lucky again this year to have such fantastic supporters who have gone all-out to promote our work and raise vital funds.



July saw keen athletes participate in the British 10k run in London. Sarah Pierpoint (pictured left) raised £760 for our ChatterBox club, and runners Katy Lysley and Jo Giles between them raised an amazing £1,800.

2009 saw the ACE Centre celebrate 25 years of service provision, and as part of our commemorations we launched the ACE Centre Junior Golf Challenge. This competition was open to junior golfers across Oxfordshire and culminated in a fantastic final held at Frilford Health Golf Club. In total 114 junior golfers from 14 Oxfordshire golf clubs took part and raised £2,400 in sponsorship. We will be expanding the event next year to encompass the surrounding regions.

Our loan library appeal was well supported with a £10,000 donation from Awards for All, £3,000 from the Sadler's Company and £2,500 from The Baily Thomas Charitable Trust, amongst others.

Thanks also to The Tolkien Trust and the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre League of Friends for supporting our ChatterBox club which is so valued by the children and families that we help.

# Fundraising

Without support from our payroll donors, corporate supporters, foundation and trust support and the willingness of individuals to raise money on our behalf we would not be here today.

Our 'Keep us Talking' campaign which supports information provision and the running of our website and free consultation service was also well supported with donations of £5,000 from The Fuserna Foundation and £5,000 from Mrs A G Scouler Charitable Settlement amongst others.

Our payroll and direct debit donors continue to support us monthly providing us with much needed general funds of £8,700 per year.



Left: The winners of the inaugural ACE Centre Junior Golf Challenge



## *In focus: Volunteering*

When Damian Mitchell registered as a volunteer with us, he soon found himself relying on his outgoing personality. He was working at the Centre on the day we assessed Katriona, a girl whose complex physical difficulties made it extremely difficult for her to speak or use a computer. Katriona was tiring and struggling to motivate herself. Damian takes up the story;

“Before I knew it, the assessment team had clapped an orange wig and pair of ridiculously huge plastic glasses onto my head and I was dancing to a Take That CD in front of a room full of people I’d never met before. But it worked. Katriona’s eyes lit up and soon she was turning the CD player on and off with switches that she operated with her head and her elbow.”

Hats (or wigs) off to Damian for stepping into the spotlight to help. Thankfully his regular volunteering work here is less hair-raising. “I was initially brought in as a research assistant, but I found myself helping out with a bit of everything. ACE have provided a fantastic way for me to keep myself active and put something interesting and unique on my CV. For anyone interested in volunteering here, I would highly recommend it.”

# Thank you

We're very grateful to everyone who has supported the ACE Centre in 2008-9

## **Trusts, foundations and major donors**

Awards for All (Big Lottery Fund)

Cherwell School

Chiddick Charitable Trust

Christine Moon Photography

Elsevier Ltd

Eric Morris Group

Garfield Weston Foundation

Gatsby Charitable Foundation

Grimsdell Parents Association

Grocers' Charity

Harapan Trust

Mrs A G Scouller Charitable Settlement

Mrs Relph and Friends

Ms Maureen De Pietro

Nettex Media

Newsquest Media

Nominet Charitable Foundation

Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre League  
of Friends

Sadler's Company

St Michael & All Saints

Stanton Ballard Charitable Trust

The Anson Charitable Trust

The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund

The Bartle Family Charitable Trust

The Fuserna Foundation

The Ian Karten Charitable Trust

The Leathersellers' Company

The Michael & Anna Wix Charitable Trust

The Milton Art Exhibition

The Royal College of Speech and  
Language Therapists

The Sobell Foundation

The Tolkein Trust

Waitrose Ltd

**Thanks also to our volunteers,  
numerous payroll and anonymous  
donors, as well as everyone who has  
supported our work by:**

Sponsoring friends, family or work  
colleagues

Buying from our Ebay auction site

Making a one off donation

Signing a gift aid declaration

Responding to our appeals

# Financial activities

For the year ended 31 August 2009

The financial statement opposite is for the year ended 31 August 2009. A full financial report, prepared in accordance with the current statutory requirements, the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Statement of Recommended Practice, is available on application.

The full name of the charity is The ACE Centre Advisory Trust and the charity registration number is 1040868. The charity is also a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, registered in England under company number 2961300.

The governing document is the Memorandum and Articles of Association incorporated 23 August 1994 and amended by special resolution at a General Meeting of the company on 18 September 1996. There are no specific restrictions on the Charity's operations which impact on the workings of the ACE Centre.

The registered address of the Trust is 92 Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7DR. The Secretary to the Trustees is Mrs D Battigelli, who on 2 June 2009 replaced Mr M Donegan, who resigned as Secretary in April 2008.

## Trustees

The Trustees who served during the year were:

### Chair

Ms C E Simmonds

### Other Trustees:

Mrs Anne Keating

Ms Ailsa Murdock

Mr David Porter

Mr Peter Zein

Mrs Anne Stead (resigned on 9 December 2008)

**Bankers:** National Westminster Bank plc,  
91 London Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 9AE

**Auditor:** Critchleys Chartered Accountants,  
Greyfriars Court, Paradise Square, Oxford OX1 1BE

**Solicitors:** Radcliffes, 5 Great College Street,  
Westminster, London SW1P 3SJ

# Financial activities

For the year ended 31 August 2009

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2009	Total Funds 2008
<b>Incoming resources</b>				
Incoming resources from generated funds:				
Voluntary income	207,260	503,186	710,446	658,079
Activities for generating funds	7,596	-	7,596	34,188
Incoming resources from charitable activities:				
Service level agreements	97,748	-	97,748	91,205
Assessment fees	50,621	-	50,621	28,875
Training fees	38,300	-	38,300	23,015
Consultancy fees	25,395	-	25,395	27,444
Sale of software and publications	24,999	-	24,999	9,534
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>451,919</b>	<b>503,186</b>	<b>955,105</b>	<b>872,340</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>				
Cost of generating funds	57,498	-	57,498	55,445
Charitable activities	288,621	581,015	869,636	832,838
Governance costs	32,834	-	32,834	33,907
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>378,953</b>	<b>581,015</b>	<b>959,968</b>	<b>922,190</b>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources:				
before transfers	72,966	(77,829)	(4,863)	(49,850)
Transfers between funds	(67,726)	67,726	-	-
Net movement in funds	5,230	(10,103)	(4,863)	(49,850)
Balance brought forward at 1 September 2008	661,968	543,692	1,205,660	1,255,510
<b>Balance carried forward at 31 August 2009</b>	<b>667,208</b>	<b>533,589</b>	<b>1,200,797</b>	<b>1,205,660</b>

*None of the Trust's activities were acquired or discontinued during the above two financial years.  
There were no recognised gains and losses in 2009 or 2008 other than the deficit for the year.*



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Registered Charity No 1040868  
Company Registration No 2961300  
VAT No 663587987

The ACE Centre Advisory Trust was founded in 1984 as part of a government initiative to introduce information technology into schools in England and Wales following the end of the Micro-Electronics Project (MEP). The idea to support pupils with severe language or physical disabilities came from staff at a special school in Oxford, and in May 1984 the ACE Centre began life in a corner of the school with just four employees.

Within a few years the ACE Centre expanded into temporary buildings in the school grounds and remained there until the current facilities were erected on the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre site in 1998. The current building was largely funded by the Wooden Spoon Society and was officially opened by The Princess Royal in April 1999.

In 1991 a second centre, ACE Centre North, was opened in Oldham.