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13th Edition
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Living with Disability



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From us to you...

AFTER SO MANY months dominated by Covid-19 it's great that we've reached the light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel.

On behalf of us all at Living with Disability, a big thank you to everybody who worked so tirelessly on the frontline to care for people in need and of course support staff working behind the scenes, in the fight against Coronavirus.

The effects of the pandemic lockdowns have been particularly devastating on so many disabled people, their carers and the charities and organisations that support them.

So it has been great to finally put together our 13th edition and to write the stories and report the news that will once again inspire, support and encourage disabled people to live independent lives.

Whether your aspiration is to go climbing or simply cook a meal we've got some great lifestyle features in this edition.

Although the honour of being the first above the knee amputee to climb the Matterhorn has gone to Neil Heritage, there's probably still some challenging climbs to tackle!

If keeping fit and staying healthy is your thing, we've got news of Parallel Windsor's virtual mass disability inclusion event. There's also an inspiring article on how wheelchair users have been celebrating the freedom and movement of dance classes online.

Entertainment news includes a feature on disabled singer songwriter Kieron Kneafsey on his mission to inspire more disabled people to break into the music industry.

There's an update on how the UK's rail operators are improving the experience of travelling by train for disabled people. Although you don't need to travel to see a virtual 3D exhibition to raise awareness of Chronic Kidney Disease.

You could however want to let the train take the strain and be in the crowd for the Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup. It all kicks-off in London on November 11. Or maybe you would like to support our Special Olympics GB team at the World Winter Games in Russia – we name the lucky athletes chosen to represent GB in January 2022.

We've got news on a company developing products to improve everyday living for people with arthritis and details of revolutionary glasses that give blind people the means to literally see what's written in front of them.

Plus, as our front cover shows, an interview with Mike Adams OBE on the importance of the Purple Pound.

If you've got a story to tell then email me at clive@livingwithdisability.org.uk or get in touch via our twitter [@livingwithDisa1](https://twitter.com/livingwithDisa1)

Clive Davis
Editor



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It's all about Support



Captain' Tobias Weller joined in with a 480-mile 'virtual' bike ride (left) staff at the Converse Store near Alfreton, north Derbyshire, to raise funds for Paces Centre in Sheffield.

“Every day, Jenx and Jiraffe support children all over the world who face challenges of living with conditions like Cerebral Palsy, so we're proud to support an organisation which truly understands our vision.”

POSTURAL SUPPORT SPECIALIST Jenx is backing a Sheffield based school for conductive education to raise £3.5m for a new state-of-the-art site.

Jenx – alongside its UK distribution, Jiraffe – will work with Paces School on fundraising activities and events after selecting the school as the company's charity of the year 2021.

The partnership will provide Jenx staff with the opportunity to personally support children with special needs by volunteering for activities and initiatives. Funds raised by the partnership will contribute to the multi-million pound development of a new school that will enable Paces to support up to three times as many families as now.

Paces specialises in supporting

children and adults living with neurological conditions, such as cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis (MS), which affect their physical and learning ability.

The partnership announcement followed Jiraffe's donation of a specialist 'Rifton Tricycle' to 10-year-old fundraising hero 'Captain' Tobias Weller, who used the bike to complete a 480-mile virtual bike ride to raise funds for Paces.

Tobias was crowned Young Unsung Hero at last year's Sports Personality of the Year awards.

“There are few more appropriate 2021 charity partners for us as a business than Paces School, a charity which does so much to support children with specialised and often complex needs,” said Jenx Director Holly Jenkins.



Tobias with mum Ruth and Chris Saunby from Jiraffe.

Jenx was founded by a paediatric physiotherapist and a product designer in 1982, with the aim of enriching lives and changing perceptions about disability. Ever since, it has been researching, designing and manufacturing ground-breaking developmental postural equipment to support children with specific postural needs.

For more information visit www.jiraffe.org.uk ●

Touching Time



THE ROYAL NATIONAL Institute of Blind People (RNIB) has developed its own range of tactile watches for people with sight loss.

RNIB has designed the high-quality tactile watches with robust stainless-steel hands and a Swiss movement to ensure the best accuracy and a longer product life. The watches come with a two-year warranty.

Available in two sizes and two case colours, the watches have a brushed stainless-steel case and a genuine leather strap. Each watch has two raised bars indicating 12 o'clock, a single raised bar indicating three, six and nine o'clock, and one dot to indicate each hour in between. The even numbered hours are also printed in black on the face and the case lid opens at the six o'clock position.

"We started developing our own range of tactile watches after customers told us that they wanted high-quality time-pieces that offered accuracy and functionality, without compromising on style," said RNIB Director of Services David Clarke.

"We're thrilled with the look and finish of these products, which are also built to last longer than traditional tactile watches. They are available in various sizes and colours so there should be something to suit all tastes."

The watches are available to buy from RNIB's online shop <https://shop.rnib.org.uk/house/clocks-and-watches> and prices start from £85 ex VAT. ●



Harvey Price in the Spotlight

THE SON OF celebrity Katie Price has announced that he will be taking up a new role as Ambassador for the UK's leading learning disability charity Mencap.

Harvey plans to use his new position as Mencap Ambassador to act as a role model to young people with a learning disability and educate the general public about learning disability to help tackle stigma and online bullying.



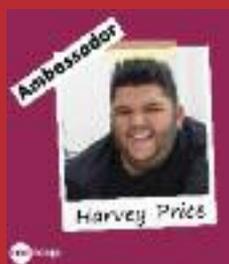
Harvey Price and Katie Price, photo Glenn Gratton

The announcement follows the success of the BBC documentary *Katie Price: Harvey and Me*, which follows Harvey and his mum during a crucial year in his life as he turns 18-years-old.

"I am so happy to be a Mencap ambassador," said Harvey, who was born with Septic Optic Dysplasia, Prader-Willi syndrome, autism and a learning disability. "I want to do good things with the charity like stop online trolling and be a voice for young people like me. I can't wait!"

There are 1.5 million people in the UK who have a learning disability, who are often not treated like equals and face stigma and discrimination every day of their lives. People with a learning disability are seven times more likely to feel lonely, are twice as likely to be inactive and die on average two decades younger than the general population.

"We are delighted to welcome Harvey Price as our Ambassador," said Edel Harris, Chief Executive of Mencap. "Harvey is already doing some great work to tackle online bullying and raise awareness of what life is like when you have a learning disability.



"We are pleased to be working with him to help increase the visibility of people with a learning disability across the media and society to help transform attitudes and to do our bit to ensure that the UK is the best place in the world to live for people with a learning disability." ● ▶



RIDI Award Winners

THE LATEST WINNERS of the Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative (RIDI) Awards have been announced.

The RIDI Awards celebrate the latest pioneering employers and recruiters who are breaking down barriers to help people with disabilities into employment.

RIDI is a unique initiative to drive change in recruitment and remove the barriers faced by the millions of people with disabilities who are entering or progressing through the job market.

It believes more needs to be done to build disability confidence into recruitment and employment strategies and actively campaigns to achieve this.

The RIDI Awards are the recruitment industry's only disability awards and form a key part of RIDI's work.

The 2020 awards received a record-breaking number of over 100 entries across eight categories.

"I'm thrilled to say we were overwhelmed with the quality, variety and total number of entries," said Jane Hatton, RIDI Awards Chair of Judges.

"As ever, the RIDI Awards are the perfect place for inclusive employers and recruiters to share stories of success to inspire others and gain the recognition they deserve." ●

The winners, who received their awards at a virtual ceremony were:

Getting Started

Winner: GTI RPO

Highly Commended: Manchester Airports Group

Best Inclusive Recruitment Campaign

Winner: Financial Conduct Authority

Highly Commended: Guidant Global

Best Candidate Experience

Winner: DWF

Highly Commended: Pension Protection Fund

Making a Difference – Public Sector

Winner: Civil Service Talent Schemes Team, Civil Service HR

Highly Commended: Essex County Council with Capita Resourcing

Making a Difference – Private Sector

Winner: Saxton Bampfylde

Highly Commended: Balfour Beatty

Recruitment Team

Winner: HS2 Recruitment Team

Highly Commended: Civil Service Fast Stream and Early Talent

Disability Confident

Winner: Heathrow

Highly Commended: Channel 4

Disability Specialist

Winner: Diversity and Ability

Highly Commended: EmployAbility

Greatest Impact Award

Winner: Diversity and Ability

Walk On, Walk On With Hope in Your Heart

THE CEO OF Muscular Dystrophy UK has taken on the toughest physical challenge of her career.

Catherine Woodhead is attempting a virtual challenge to walk the distance of Land's End to John O'Groats to raise money for people living with muscle-wasting conditions.

LEJOG 2021 allows people to complete the iconic road trip from the comfort of their own surroundings. Whether it's running or walking they can clock up the 874 iconic miles at their own pace.

But Catherine's not stopping there. To boost her mileage count she's added two further challenges – to walk the Royal Parks Half Marathon (13.1 miles) and a further 26.2 miles on the same day as the official London Marathon in October.

"These are the biggest physical challenges I have asked of myself in over 20 years in the charity sector," said Catherine, who gets up a 6am most days to walk before work.

"Walking - rather than jogging - helps me manage my pace in life. The past year has demanded so much of everyone working in the sector to ensure that charities coped and responded to the needs of our community. It's been important to remember that working through the effects of the pandemic is a marathon - not a race."

Muscular Dystrophy UK is the charity for the 70,000 people living with muscle-wasting conditions in the UK. It brings together and supports people affected by more

than 60 rare and very rare progressive muscle-weakening and wasting conditions.

With the loss of half of its forecast fundraised income (£2.8m) during the Covid pandemic the charity is facing its biggest threat in more than 60 years, just when its help is most critically needed by those it serves.



Catherine says that taking part in LEJOG provides her with an opportunity to appreciate the efforts of her MDUK colleagues and the support from those with muscle-wasting conditions.

"I'm incredibly proud of the team and how they have adapted to

these ongoing challenges," she said.

"We must remember our incredible community who have been there with us, all the way through this. The resilience of individuals and families living with muscle-wasting conditions, the families who are managing a new diagnosis, the researchers finding ways to continue with their commitment to find new treatments, and clinicians supporting families on clinical trials, have been extraordinary."

You can help raise funds to support essential research and services available to those who live with a muscle-wasting condition by supporting Catherine at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/catwoodhead3> ● ▶



Learning Disability Week

THIS HIGH-PROFILE Mencap event takes place every summer and celebrates the amazing impact of people with a learning disability in our society and shines a light on the issues many people still face.

This year Learning Disability Week will take place June 14-21 and the theme will be arts and creativity.

Mencap's vision is a world where people with a learning disability are valued equally, listened to and included.

The challenge, alongside people with a learning disability and their families, is to make this world a reality. Learning Disability Week is an important time when people are encouraged to come together and celebrate the positive stories and progress and reflect on what still needs to be better. To find out more about Learning Disability Week and how to get involved go to www.mencap.org.uk ●





“ The Visual Temperature Indicator has shown its worth in protecting our care community!

The VTI temperature indicators have been successfully trialled in care settings in the north of England, and staff have praised the discs for helping them to monitor and respond to illnesses quickly from a safe distance, enhancing delivery of care quality.

Marie Robson, head of care at Elan Care Whitethorn, a home health care service based in Hartlepool, County Durham, said the VTI has proven itself to be effective for monitoring temperature on a large scale for both staff and clients - especially in supporting those who may not otherwise be able to fully communicate their symptoms.

She said: “The VTI has shown its worth in protecting our community. It makes the complicated task of large-scale temperature health monitoring simple and that is very helpful in care. The camaraderie and everyone looking out for each other has been wonderful.



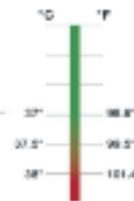
It means the VTI disc effectively buys ‘Golden Time’, and this simple technology is an essential for any care companies First Aid kit!”



Green indicates a Normal Temperature range.



Red indicates a High Temperature.



VTi brings added protection and efficiencies to care communities!

A revolutionary adhesive disc applied to the forehead, neck or wrist which changes colour if the wearer develops a high temperature is proving to offer greater efficiencies to one of the most basic methods of checking for illness.

The new, innovative Visual Temperature Indicator (VTi) changes from a green cross symbol for a normal body temperature of around 37° to reveal a red cross symbol to indicate 38° or higher - providing an easy and accurate way to monitor for symptoms of coronaviruses, flu, and other health conditions.

The VTI disc is the result of intensive development by a UK firm, and uses thermoreactive technology where colour accurately indicates the wearers temperature.

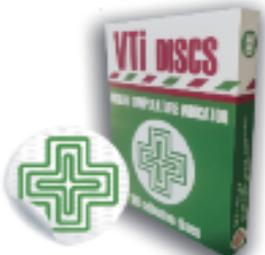
The VTI offers instant and continuous monitoring and warns of a high temperature symptom developing, alerting the wearer and those surrounding them to their increased body temperature - one of four key vital signs of determining the state of an individual's health.

Traditionally temperature is taken by a thermometer requiring intimate interaction and normally only after an individual has developed an illness, which at times such as we are currently living through have serious implications, particularly because of the increasing prevalence of, and exposure to Coronavirus.

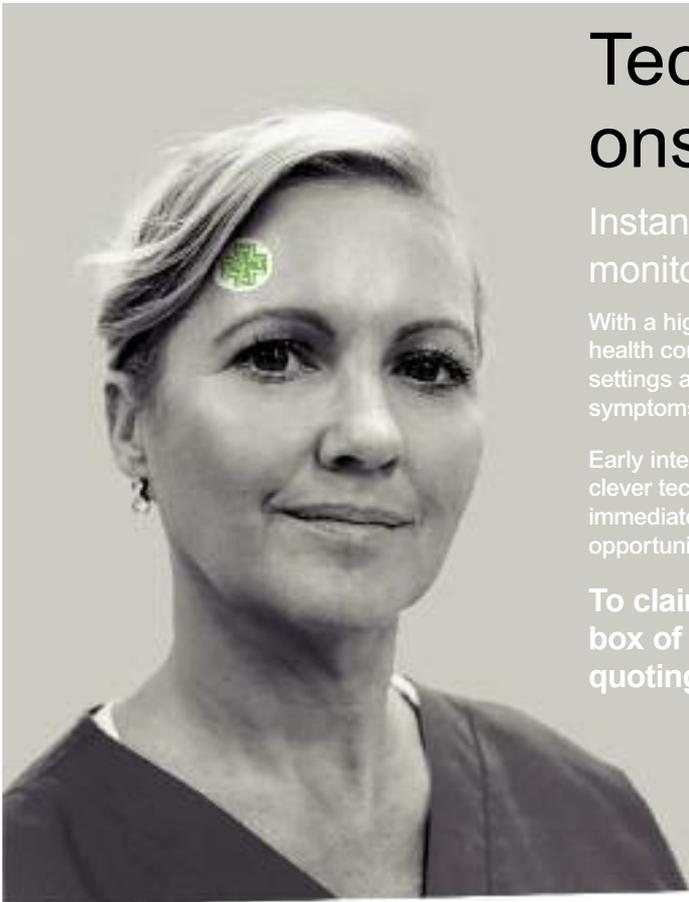
The importance of social distancing and isolation is paramount during these challenging times and early intervention is key when looking to minimise the spread of infections. The greater the levels of intimacy between patients, carers, nurses, doctors, work colleagues and families, the greater the risk of viral infections spreading and the VTI can help to reduce that risk.

Early intervention is key, and this clever technology allows for high body temperature to be spotted immediately or anytime throughout the day or night, awarding a real-time opportunity to get to the right support faster regardless of the illness.

Claim your FREE samples!



To find out more information or to claim your samples, please visit www.VTi.care or call 01787 471 454.



Tech to detect the onset of fever!

Instant and continuous high temperature monitoring helping to protect care communities.

With a high temperature being one of the first symptoms of a number of health concerns. The VTI, Visual Temperature Indicator is helping care settings add an additional layer of protection through early detection of the symptoms of a fever.

Early intervention is key with any deteriorating health condition and this clever technology allows for high body temperature to be spotted immediately or anytime throughout the day or night, awarding a real-time opportunity to get to the right support faster regardless of the illness.

To claim your free sample box of VTI's simply email us quoting: Ref: LWD2021



To find out more information or to claim your samples, please visit www.VTi.care or call 01787 471 454.



46 Naidex Is Back (Hopefully)

FOLLOWING A SERIES of postponements the organisers of Naidex have announced the show will now take place in September.

Europe's most established event dedicated to the independent living and healthcare industries was cancelled three times as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid 19). It is now scheduled for September 15 and 16 at the NEC Birmingham.

This includes all events co-located with Naidex, including Smart Home for Assisted Living, Dementia, Care & Nursing Home, Home Care Expo, Care Tech Live, European Neuro Convention, Medical Imaging Convention, European Oncology Convention and AI&ML Convention.

Naidex will showcase the latest innovations in mobility, care assistive technology, moving and handling, accessible design, inclusive sport, travel and movement - bringing together trade and healthcare professionals and members of the public for two days of innovation, discovery and education.

Hundreds of exhibitors and speakers will attend the show and be on hand with information and advice across a wide range of issues.

All tickets bought for the previous postponed dates will be valid.

To find out more www.naidex.co.uk ●

LOOK BACK WITH PRIDE

THE UK PARLIAMENT has launched a new educational resource celebrating disability history.

Illustrated by Ananya Rao-Middleton, the downloadable book includes six stories exploring the lives of people who have influenced disability laws and rights in the UK. The resource is suitable for teachers, home educators and parents to share with children aged seven to 11.

Among those featured are Dame Anne Begg, one of the first wheelchair users in the House of Commons and Ben Purse, whose activism led to the first law in the world to support the working rights of people with a disability.

Other people included are the artist and diversity champion Deborah Williams, disabled suffragette Rosa May Billinghurst, Lord Alf Morris and Baroness Jane Campbell. Their stories are complimented by activities which encourage children to think about how to make the games they play more inclusive.

"As an illustrator and chronic illness activist, working with Parliament on the Your Story, Our History book has enabled me to delve into the exciting, varied and powerful lives of UK figures who have stood out in making a difference in the lives of disabled people," said Ananya Rao-Middleton

"As someone living with chronic conditions myself, working on this book has fortified my belief

that change is possible and that as disabled people we are powerful and capable of being change-makers. Whilst we still have a lot of work to do to make our society disability-friendly in all areas, I feel determined that by inspiring young people with books like Your Story, Our History we can create the changes needed to reach this vision."

This is the latest in a series of educational resources provided by Parliament. Last year, as part of Black History Month Parliament

launched a resource containing stories of influential black Britons who have impacted UK laws and equal rights. Similar resources are also being developed on LGBT and Women's history.

"These innovative resources are a

brilliant way for young people to learn about and celebrate the valuable contributions of people who have impacted disability rights and laws in the UK," said Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the House of Commons.

"It is so important that we not only recognise these achievements, but also strive to make Parliament a more inclusive and accessible space for those with disabilities."

UK Parliament has worked alongside the Shaw Trust to produce the pack and some of the stories also feature people who are part of the Shaw Trust Foundation Power 100 list.

To find out more go to learning.parliament.uk/en/resources/disability-illustrated-book/ ●





Photo taken prior to any Covid-19 restrictions of Diana Saunders (Can Do project co-ordinator), Cicely Taylor (Can Do manager), Lucy Kershaw (Head of training at Pets Corner with her Jack Russell Tess), Danny Yeoman (Pets Corner) and Lucy Marcham (Pets Corner).

Charity's Pawesome New Partnership

YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE have benefitted from an exciting new partnership between Pets Corner and leading disability charity Leonard Cheshire.

As part of the collaboration, funding from Pets Corner has enabled young disabled people in the South of England to take part in the charity's Can Do programme, where participants learn new skills to help build their confidence while also giving back to their communities.

Despite the challenges of Covid, Pets Corner Trainers have managed to deliver unique bespoke pet care programmes virtually to Can Do participants, with further sessions now planned in other locations. Young people taking part will gain essential

experience and skills in pet care.

It's hoped that in addition to the funding, Pets Corner trainers will eventually be able to work closely with the initiative's coordinators on a unique project to develop a bespoke pet care programme. Young people taking part will be able to gain essential experience and skills in pet management while working towards a City and Guilds certificate.

"Giving back to the community is an extremely important element of the ethos of Pets Corner," explained Dean Richmond, founder of Pets Corner.

"Our partnership with Leonard Cheshire provides us with a brilliant opportunity to support young disabled people in learning

new skills and potentially opening up new career pathways for them."

While the programme will benefit young people, it will also give Pets Corner staff the chance to engage with the charity's 'disability means business' team to learn more about what it means to be a disability inclusive employer.

"We are delighted that Pets Corner have become a Charity Partner," said Neil Heslop, Leonard Cheshire's Chief Executive.

"Sharing in our vision of greater inclusivity and opportunity for disabled people, this partnership will play a key role in providing new confidence building opportunities for young disabled people." ●



Tune In to Accessible TV

FREEVIEW PLAY AT Channel 555 is rolling out its award-winning Accessible TV Guide.

The innovative guide will make it simpler for viewers with accessibility needs, such as visual impairments or hearing loss, to discover and find content more easily.

Developed with insight from viewers, advocacy groups, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Scope and the Digital Accessibility Centre, the Accessible TV Guide won Gold at the 2020 Connected TV Awards for 'Advancing the User Experience'.

The first dedicated accessibility solution to launch on a UK TV platform, the guide is easy to find via Channel 555 on Freeview Play televisions and has been designed to be simple to navigate for viewers with visual impairments, with a high contrast UI, screen magnification, and a text-to-speech functionality.

Upon selecting Channel 555 on a supported device, viewers will be asked for their preferred

accessibility settings from the below options -

- Use Text to Speech for on screen navigation.
- Show only programmes with audio description.
- Show only programmes with subtitles.
- Show only programmes with sign language

Following this, viewers can choose to watch a demo of how the guide works or head straight to the guide. The guide will launch a filtered version of the linear TV schedule showing the content coming up that fits the viewer's own accessibility criteria. From here viewers can browse the available content and select what they want to watch.

"This new guide is a truly innovative step forward in TV accessibility for blind and partially sighted people," said John Paton, Innovation and Technology Officer at RNIB.



"Once the roll out is complete the guide will be available to anyone with a Freeview Play television or set-top box, and the channel number 555 is easy to find due to the tactile dot on the five button. This will make a huge difference in TV viewing for millions of people with sight loss across the UK."

Watched in over 17 million homes, Freeview is the UK's biggest TV platform. Its connected TV service, Freeview Play, brings together live and on-demand content including BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub, All 4, My5, UKTV Play, CBS Catchup Channels UK, Horror Bites and STV Player.

To find out more www.freeview.co.uk/get-freeview-play/channels/accessible-tv-guide ●



Craft Rum Club, The UK's Leading Rum Subscription Service

Embark on a worldwide journey of virtual discovery each month.

We work closely with rum producers to fill our boxes with a choice of premium craft or spiced rum, and hand select bespoke cocktail ingredients, artisan snacks and a copy of the UK's only dedicated rum magazine, Rumspiration.

www.craftrumclub.co

Craft Rum Club, the U.K's leading rum subscription service, is on a mission to take people on a worldwide journey of virtual discovery each month. Working closely with craft rum producers, each box contains a choice of premium or spiced rum, bespoke cocktail ingredients, artisan snacks and a copy of the UK's only dedicated rum magazine, Rumspiration.

Founded in 2016, by a husband and wife team, with a shared passion for rum, frustrated at the lack of choice and education around the category, and wanting to change that. The Craft Rum Club champions one of the world's fastest growing spirit categories, sharing knowledge and history about the unique brands as well as delicious ways to enjoy them.

The club prides itself on only including unique brands that are rarely seen on supermarket shelves, in addition to brand-new rums to the UK, giving subscribers a front-line seat in rum discovery. Perfect to order for home or buy as a gift to virtually share many evenings of rum-laced enjoyment with friends.

Working a month in advance, you can subscribe now and receive a **10% discount** on your first surprise rum box in June, use exclusive discount code **FUN10** at checkout. You will receive a full size bottle of rum or spiced rum along with ingredients to make the cocktail of the month, mixers and a snack.

Customer testimonials

"I love that it's not just a bottle of rum a month, you get mixers and cocktail ingredients and a magazine to learn more about the rum, it's creators and the area it's from..."

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A FORMER SOLDIER who lost both of his legs in Iraq has become the first above-the-knee double amputee to reach the summit of the Matterhorn.

Neil Heritage, who runs the charity Climb2Recovery for injured veterans, scaled the iconic peak after two previous attempts failed due to bad weather.

He made the 14,692 feet climb with an able-bodied friend and three mountain guides. But the 40-year-old is no stranger to taking on a challenge, having been a member of the Row2Recovery team that became the first disabled crew to complete an unsupported 3,000 mile

crossing of the Atlantic in 2011-12.

“I wanted to do something that nobody else with my disability had done and that also fitted in with my love of climbing,” said Neil. “We had made two failed attempts to ascend the Matterhorn in 2016 and 2018 but of course we had learnt a lot and re-designed my prosthetics to better suit the challenge.

“It was of course gruelling and painful. We climbed 10 hours a day for four days. My stumps were sore and bleeding and 100 metres from the summit one of my prosthetic legs fell off. It took more than 20 minutes to recover and reattach it. But we made it up and we made it down.” ▶

Neil was in the British Army for 11 years, serving as part of a bomb disposal team in Bosnia, Northern Ireland & Iraq. In November 2004 Neil was in Iraq clearing a route for IEDs and was the victim of a suicide bomber.

Neil had to have both of his legs amputated above the knee and at the time was the most seriously injured soldier to survive from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Despite being told that he would never walk again, Neil endured a period of five years rehabilitation and remarkably was able to learn to walk. He took on triathlons, learned to ski and rowed the Atlantic. Then climb!

Peak Performance

“I don’t take on these sporting challenges because I feel that as a disabled person I have something to prove to myself or anybody else,” explained Neil, who lives in Poole, Dorset. “I believe they are all challenges I would have taken on as an able-bodied person, so it’s no big deal.

“When I got back on my feet, so to speak, I just looked for sports and hobbies that I could enjoy,” explained Neil. “I had done a bit of climbing during my army days so went along to my local indoor climbing wall.

“I got the bug pretty quickly and after helping to design a specialised prosthetic climbing foot to make things easier I began climbing seriously. I soon realised the opportunity that climbing and mountaineering gave for wounded, injured and sick (WIS) veterans to enhance their rehabilitation.”

Not long after taking a small group of veterans climbing in the Alps, Climb2Recovery was established.

“As a veteran myself, I fully understand the issues relating to rehabilitation and the importance of rediscovering your identity post military service,” explained Neil.

“In 2016 when we established Climb2Recovery, I felt that on a personal level my own rehabilitation was at an advanced stage. My own involvement in ►



Don't look down! Neil makes his way up the Matterhorn





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Neil (Second from left back row) and colleagues take in the view after climbing one of the world's most iconic mountains.

sports activities, outdoor pursuits and physical challenges had been fundamental in my own recovery and I wanted to use that experience to assist other wounded veterans in their recovery both mental and physical.”

Climb2Recovery aims to make the sport more accessible to both beginners and experienced climbers, whatever their current abilities.

Much more than that though, climbing builds all-important support networks. Many of the veterans that climb with Climb2Recovery have stayed on as part of our community, taking part in multiple courses, and the hope is that the friendships and contacts they make will lead to them finding

lifelong climbing partners as well as peer mentoring and training opportunities.

The charity has created a whole range of free courses and activities for the WIS community, from Alpine training in Chamonix to beginners' sessions in the UK and sports climbing expeditions in Spain. Through its UK course, veterans can also go on to develop a fulfilling career in climbing with the chance to qualify as rock climbing instructors themselves.

Since its formation Climb2Recovery has engaged with more than 50 veterans, many of which remain on the program, and helped eight veterans qualify as Rock Climbing Instructors.

Amazon Challenge

The charity is funded by veteran grant giving bodies and donations and Neil's trip up the Matterhorn raised more than £7,000.

So what's next for the passionate adventurer who has already been up a mountain and across an ocean? Kayak down a river of course.

“I'm one of nine injured veterans who will be kayaking down 3,800km of the longest and most dangerous rivers in the world, the Amazon,” said Neil. “It was due to happen last year but because of the pandemic it was postponed. We're just hoping it can take place this summer.”

Before that Neil will back out on the rocks and mountains. If you are a WIS veteran and would like to join him you can find out more on the website www.c2r.org ●

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Successful Communication is a two-way Street



Photo credit: DannyPayne.

A NEW DISABILITY symbol has been launched to make life easier for millions of people in the UK who have difficulty communicating.

The Communication Access Symbol has been developed by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) in partnership with charities and organisations that want to improve the lives of people with additional communication needs.

Communication disability in the UK affects millions of people. Up to 20% of the UK's population experience communication difficulty at some point in their lives and more than 10% (1.4 million) of all children have a long-term communication need.

Some people may find it hard to ask a question, name an object or ask for help, while others may have speech difficulties that make them difficult to understand. Others may have problems processing information and difficulties

with reading and writing. Some may use communication devices and require time to create their message.

We rely on communication with our customers and our colleagues

Now, with the launch of the Communication Access Symbol, businesses and organisations have an opportunity to support people struggling to communicate. By signing up for free online training on accessible face-to-face, telephone and online customer service they will earn the right to display the Communication Access Symbol.

“People who have communication difficulties often feel marginalised by society because their needs can be hidden in a way that other disabilities are not,” said Nick Hewer, RCSLT President.



“If they receive poor customer service as a result of businesses not understanding how to support their needs – whether it’s a bank, building society, gym, hotel, pub, restaurant or shop – they are likely to feel twice as frustrated as the average person and with good reason.

“Achieving the Communication Access UK standards and displaying the symbol will be a great way for organisations to show they value all their customers by being keen and able to communicate inclusively with people who currently have difficulties accessing their services. It’s a lifeline for millions of people.”

As LWD went to press, 740 organisations and over 1,400 individuals had signed up for the training and those achieving the Communication Access UK standard include B&B’s, celebrants, cafes, complex care providers, housing associations, mobility furniture installation companies and Skipton Building Society, the first financial provider to sign up to the initiative.

“Communication is key for any organisation,” explained David Cutter, Group Chief Executive of Skipton. “We rely on communication with our

customers and our colleagues. They are the key to success – which is why it’s incredibly important to ensure that all our people are able to communicate effectively together and ensure that we continue to create a society where nobody is left out.”

Who Can Sign Up?

Anyone can sign up to Communication Access UK and complete the training package.

Individuals will receive certificates confirming that they have completed the training, while organisations will receive accreditation as Communication Accessible once they have committed to deliver the training and adhere to the standards.

Organisations will then be placed on a national directory and can then display the Communication Access Symbol.

Both certificates and accreditation are valid for 12 months and will need to be renewed annually.

To find out more and to sign-up go to www.communication-access.co.uk



Dr Laura MacCulloch.

If Pictures Could Talk

A RENOWNED UNIVERSITY art collection can now be enjoyed by partially-sighted people as part of a new online tour.

The free audio-description tour has been created at Royal Holloway, University of London, to make the university's galleries accessible to partially-sighted people across the world.

Audio description expert Professor Hannah Thompson, from the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at Royal Holloway, who describes herself as 'partially blind', teamed up with the university's art collections team to produce the first audio-described tour of paintings displayed in the famous Picture Gallery on the campus in Egham.

Professor Thompson and Dr Laura MacCulloch, Curator at Royal Holloway, wanted to explore an innovative way of making the collection of works more accessible to everyone, and thus came up with the creative idea of using Professor Thompson's theory of 'blindness gain'.

This research uses a crowd-sourced audio-description project with volunteers from across the university community who have been trained in the art of Creative Audio Description (CAD).

Now, thanks to museum and gallery app Smartify, the audio-described tour is available online.

These creative audio descriptions give both blind and sighted visitors a new way of experiencing art.

The tour includes a short description by Professor Thompson, followed by creative audio descriptions of 15 paintings from the Picture Gallery, including favourites such as 'Man Disposes, God Proposes' and 'Princess Elizabeth in Prison at St James'. The descriptions are given by current Royal Holloway students and staff.



Princess Elizabeth in prison at St James
by Sir John Everett Millais.

“Unlike traditional audio description, CAD does not claim to offer an objective description of an image,” explained Professor Thompson. “Instead, it recognises that each beholder will see things differently and it welcomes non-normative gazes and encourages individual and inventive responses to art.

“It celebrates diversity of interpretation and asks people to produce a subjective response using whatever words speak to them personally.

“These creative audio descriptions give both blind and sighted visitors a new way of experiencing art and they highlight the describer’s responses to each painting’s aesthetic and emotional aspects, as well as to its visual appearance and place in the gallery.”

Funding for the project came from donations in



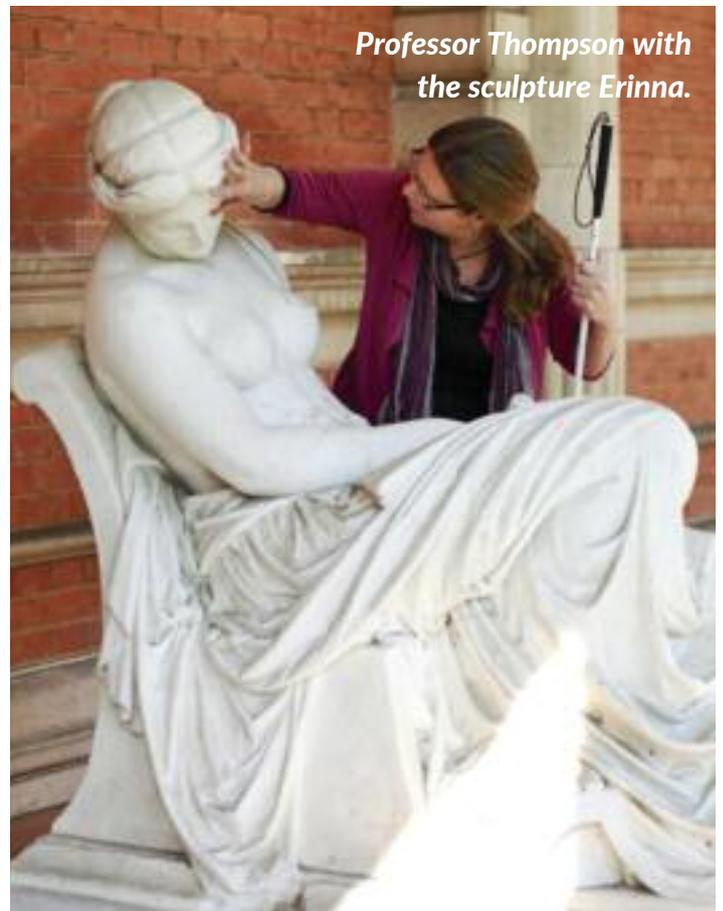
support of Royal Holloway’s art collection, which supported student employability through the creation of an internship and enabled Royal Holloway to share the collection online with audiences around the world.

Audio-description intern, Emma Hughes, a final-year, Comparative Literature and Culture student at Royal Holloway, recruited volunteers and managed the training and recording process for the project.

The creative audio descriptions will be used in teaching in several courses in the department, as well as Professor Thompson’s ongoing research into the relationship between audio description, translation theory and creative responses to works of art.

Dr MacCulloch confirmed that she hoped to add many more of the paintings in the gallery to the audio tour soon and that eventually every painting will be accessible to those with visual impairment through audio descriptions.

To find out more go to www.royalholloway.ac.uk



Professor Thompson with the sculpture Erinna.



Invisible Talent Pool

WHEN A CHARITY had to make its annual London to Paris bike ride a virtual challenge last year it smashed its fundraising target by more than 200%.

Prevented from travel by the Covid pandemic, an army of global supporters swam, cycled, walked and ran the 196 miles over five days to raise more than £80,000 for Astriid, which supports people with long-term health issues to find meaningful work.

Astriid's Guiding Light

Now the charity is planning a hybrid event for 2021 – a physical ride to the French capital later in the year or a stay closer to home virtual challenge in June – to raise the funds to support its talent pool of more than 1,000 people keen to find a job or volunteering role.

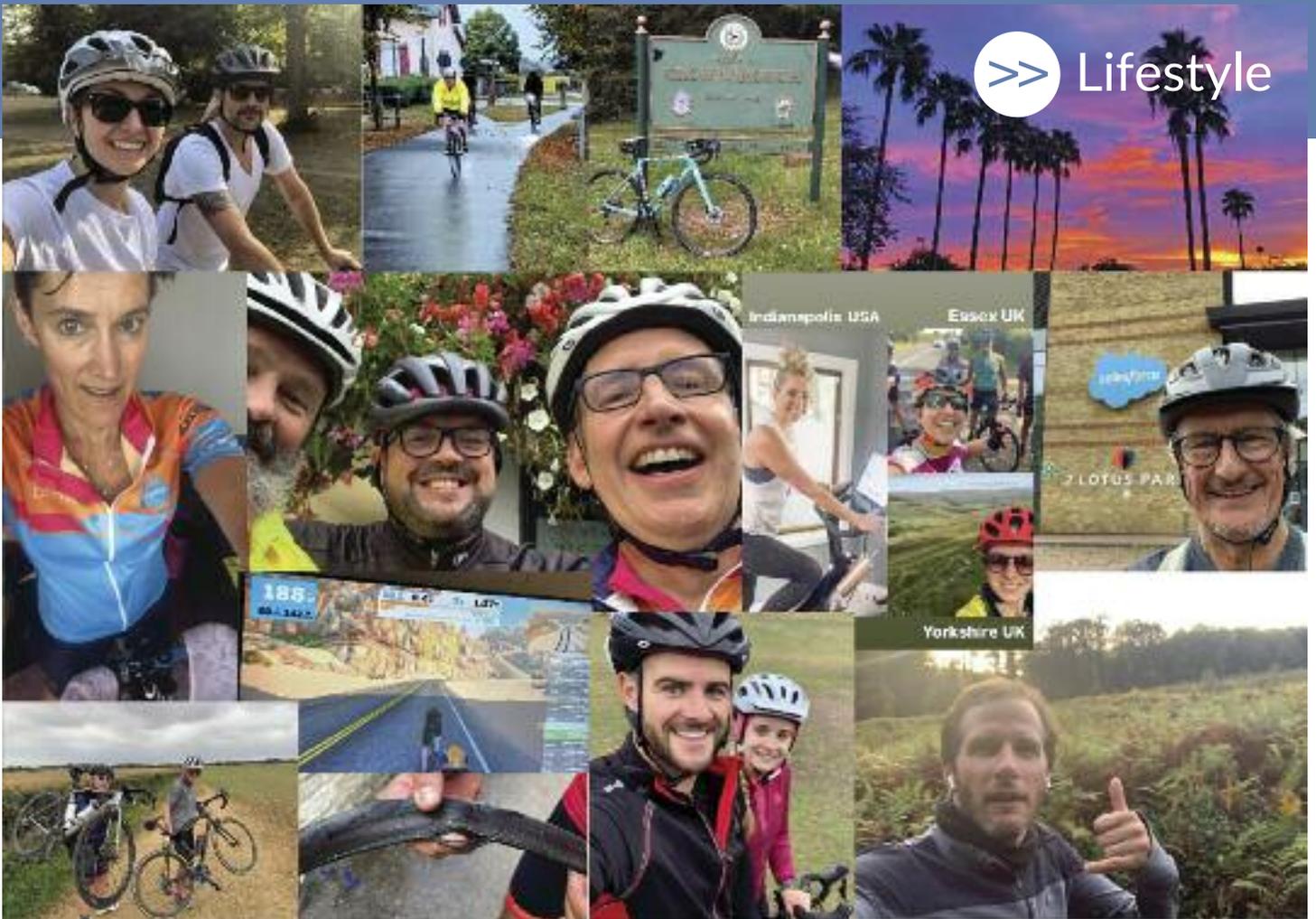
Astriid was founded by the late David Shutts, OBE, following a terminal stage four renal cancer diagnosis that left him feeling ignored and in his own

words, 'on the scrap heap'. David had been a Royal Navy Commander and a senior director of UK businesses during his career. The story is taken up by his brother and the CEO of Astriid, Steve Shutts, who talked to Living with Disability about David's legacy.

"My brother was a highly intelligent and driven individual who experienced a sense of real loss when the cancer prevented him from working as he had previously," explained Steve. "It drained him of confidence and he went from feeling valuable to valueless.

"Although suffering from a long-term health issue he felt very much that life should go on and that there was so much more he could do and contribute. It wasn't just about earning a living. Work provided a routine, normality and promoted a positive mental attitude.

"But connecting with employers who could see the benefits of addressing their skills gap by hiring a skilled professional, albeit with a long-term health issue, was difficult."



Coining the term ‘invisible talent pool’ – referring to the community of highly-skilled people with long-term illness who have dipped under the employment radar, David sought to help others in his situation.

Recognising Talent

Teaming up with Salesforce, a global leader in customer relationship management, he launched Astriid to accelerate diversity, equality and inclusivity in workplaces by providing a dynamic professional matchmaking platform. In short, to help and support people with chronic illness that, despite their academic record, their business achievement and their life skills, are unable to apply through the usual channels for work opportunities.

After becoming a registered charity in January 2018, hundreds of members boasting a variety of skills joined the unique community, which is inclusive to people with any health problem or disability – from cancer, MS or arthritis to sight loss, heart disease or recovery from stroke,

and their care-givers. Today it has more than 1,000 candidates on its books.

People like Tim Hitchings who was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a blood cancer, and underwent two years of stem cell transplant treatment and chemotherapy before going into remission in April 2018.

Despite over 20 years of experience, he felt that the gaps in his CV during his cancer treatment closed doors from prospective employers, but with Astriid’s support, Tim connected with insurance company Ageas and was offered a prestigious project manager role.

Similarly, Pippa Stacey lives with a neurological illness called ME/CFS. After completing her studies, she struggled to find graduate-level roles with flexible, part-time hours where she could pace herself and manage her condition appropriately.

Pippa now works as a freelance writer and blogger and is also part of the Astriid team, using her own experiences to inform employers and

Pippa Stacey.



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organisations about the value of chronically ill candidates and how their needs can be met.

“I describe myself as an inbetweener because I’m in that group of people who aren’t ill enough not to work,” said Pippa. “I’m well enough to do something but not in a typical 9-5 occupation or travelling to an office every day.

“It discounted me from so many opportunities that were out there. When I came across Astriid I knew it was exactly what I was looking for. I actually experienced relief because it was like somebody had recognised the struggle me and so many other people had faced.”

Pedal Power Fundraiser

The charity has partnered with 230 companies of all sizes and in a variety of sectors, from nationwide organisations ranging from NHS Trusts to world-leading engineering consultancy firms, which benefit from Astriid’s unique route to recruitment. Advertised jobs span general management,

operations and finance, board level, legal services, people management and many more.

“Our free support covers reviewing their CV and preparing them for interviews to identifying the right opportunities and connecting them with employers,” explained Steve.

“We are looking to run more training programmes to improve specific skill sets such as cyber security, data analysis and project management, but for that we need funds and that’s why our London to Paris fundraising event is so important.

“We were blown away not only by the amount raised, but also by the excitement and buzz generated by our virtual event last year. We’re hoping this year’s event will attract even more teams and raise even more money.”

This year’s virtual event will take place June 7-11 and the physical on your bike challenge, Covid permitting, will take place September 23-25.

To find out more and to sign up go to www.astriid-l2p.org



Steve Shutts with brother David Shutts OBE - ASTRIID founder.



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Miranda Shows H(e)art

AWARD-WINNING COMEDIAN, writer and 'Call the Midwife' star, Miranda Hart has donated crucial funds to Astriid in her effort to raise awareness of the daily battles for chronically ill people.

Recognising that the UK's lockdowns in 2020 and earlier this year demonstrated what life can be like for those affected by chronic illness, Miranda seized the opportunity to showcase the issue to her huge social following.

At a time when the threat of Covid-19 forced millions of workers into isolation – showing how it feels to miss the normality, routine, challenges and rewards work brings – the actress took to her Facebook and Instagram pages with a video highlighting Astriid's work, after coming across its website through her own research.

Star Support

As the nation was urged to stay home and give up their usual social interactions, Miranda used her platforms to encourage people to use their experiences to better understand the desperate isolation the chronically ill feel.

"I've always had enormous empathy for anyone with chronic illness who may feel immobilised by their condition," said Miranda. Feeling a purpose, connection and following a passion are key for holistic well-being and anyone with chronic illness deserves and needs the opportunity to have them.

"When I heard about Astriid I knew I wanted to support their vital work. Lockdown has given an insight into what every day can be like for the chronically ill. Let's help them feel connected and part of something."



The generous contribution to Astriid came from Miranda's online shop, which sells books, stationery, clothing and items featuring her famous catchphrases like 'such fun!'.

"On behalf of our members and volunteers, I'd like to pass on our enormous gratitude to Miranda for her support during the pandemic," said Steve Shutts, CEO of the charity.

"This donation is not only hugely appreciated but much needed – thank you Miranda for championing Astriid and using your platform positively to put a national spotlight on our charity. Your support is invaluable."

Astriid will use most of Miranda's donation to establish its first chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) community, as many of its members and volunteers suffer with conditions including CFS and ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis). The dedicated community aims to bring them and others across the UK, together in a safe environment to creatively collaborate by sharing skills, advice and guidance to not only help with their job hunts, but to be a positive support network during times of stress, anxiety and successes.

Building Confidence

"This will be our first community, to be followed by additional illness groups, including for those suffering with cancer, multiple sclerosis and other health conditions," added Steve.

"The rest of the money will help to keep our charity doing what it does best – building relationships with employers to share career opportunities with our members, helping to shape the confidence of our members through CV refining, video CVs, interview techniques and training." ●

Wheelchair Users Zoom In for Dance Class

PEOPLE FROM AROUND the world have been tuning in to a charity's online wheelchair dance classes.

Liberate Dance took its studio classes online to keep its regular participants active during the Covid pandemic. But they soon attracted participants from all over the UK, Norway and the USA.

Now the founders of Liberate Dance, close friends Amanda Watkinson and Para hockey player Vickie Simmonds, have decided to continue the online classes post lockdown.

The famous opening line of the chorus from Lord of the Dance by The

Dubliners – 'Dance, then, wherever you may be' – springs to mind as Vickie talks passionately about keeping those at higher risk of isolation active and part of a community.

I was hooked at my first dance class. Until then I had spent my whole life feeling that I couldn't embrace my disability.

Vickie Simmonds (far left) and Amanda Watkinson (third from the left) feel the rhythm of the dance.



“The demand for our online Liberate wheelchair classes during lockdown was overwhelming, I get emotional when I think about how many people we’ve been able to help,” explained Vickie.

“We’re so pleased to have managed to expand our community during the lockdown period - having people tune in from around the world was one of the unexpected but fantastic outcomes of our online classes and it makes us really excited for the future of Liberate.”

The aim of Liberate is to make dance accessible for wheelchair users, celebrating the freedom and

movement a wheelchair brings to people with physical disabilities. A variety of styles of dance are taught from a wheelchair, from hip-hop to contemporary and all use the chair as a way to create new movements through dance.

Lizzie's Lifeline

One wheelchair user and passionate dancer who is grateful for Liberate Dance is 26-year-old Lizzie Sawyer. One of the first students to attend the studio classes in 2019, Lizzie suffers from Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus. For her the classes are a lifeline.

“I’ve always loved music but in terms of the creative arts there are few opportunities for wheelchair users to get involved in anything remotely creative,” she said. ▶



Lizzie Sawyer.



“It’s what drew me to Liberate Dance. They want to use the wheelchair as a celebration of movement rather than an obstacle.

“When you are confined to a wheelchair there is nobody who knows what you go through day in and day out other than another wheelchair user. It was just amazing to find people in the same circumstances as myself and with the same passion for music and dance.

“I was hooked at my first dance class. Until then I had spent my whole life feeling that I couldn’t embrace my disability. There was nothing for me to be proud about. I was simply just trying to get through. Liberate has made me proud.”

Even an 80-mile return car journey to get to the studio didn’t phase Lizzie, who now volunteers for the charity. Although she admits that when the classes went online it was a lot easier to be ready on time.

“The Zoom classes were great for those of us who were shielding because they lost none of the sense of togetherness and companionship,” she added.

32 Living with Disability

Vickie Simmonds and Amanda Watkinson.



Dancing Through Lockdown

Liberate Dance, which runs the UK’s only wheelchair user exclusive dance classes, is the most recent project to be set up by the Winchester based Move Momentum, a charity formed to deliver dance classes that are accessible, inclusive and affordable for everyone. Move Momentum also runs street dance academies and specialist classes for the over 65s.

“Lockdown emphasised the importance of looking after our mental and physical health - and the connection between the two”, said Move Momentum Project Manager Amanda Watkinson.

“It has been a difficult time for everyone, but these struggles can often be amplified for the target groups we support. It was paramount for us to continue delivering our classes during this time in



order for our regular and new participants to reap the social, mental and physical rewards from our programme, particularly at a time when they are needed most.”

Liberate Dance is currently crowdfunding to buy its own wheelchair – costing between £2K and £3K. Not everyone with a physical disability has their own wheelchair, so having its own wheelchair for classes will make them more accessible. It also means participants can invite their able-bodied friends to come and experience a class with them.

To support the appeal www.crowdfunder.co.uk/liberate-dance-wheelchair or for more information on the classes www.movemomentum.co.uk



Lockdown emphasised the importance of looking after our mental and physical health - and the connection between the two.

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Star Girl Vickie Shines



along with co-founder Amanda Watkinson.

Liberate Dance is all about connecting a community of people and breaking down barriers and stigmas through dance.

Vickie grew up with a passion for dance and performance until her health declined. She was later diagnosed with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and in 2017, sustained a spinal cord injury, causing her to lose movement in her legs and become a full-time wheelchair user.

No Barrier to Dance

She plays a lot of para-sport including Wheelchair Basketball and Para Ice Hockey but still felt something was missing. After being inspired by Chelsie Hill of The L.A. Rollettes Wheelchair Dance Troop, Vickie's creative side reawakened and her passion to learn to dance again became overwhelming.

Vickie got together in the studio with close friend Amanda and they spent a year exploring how Vickie could learn to dance again using her wheelchair.

"It was so liberating, that between us we decided this was an opportunity to bring dance to all wheelchair users across the UK in a more accessible way," explained Vickie, accepting her award at a glittering (virtual) evening of celebration.

"Thank you so much for this award, it means the whole world to me and I can't thank my Liberate Dance and Move Momentum family enough for surprising me with the nomination. Because of you all, Liberate Dance isn't just a dream in my head but a reality for all of us. Thank you for being part of this movement where we can all grow, learn and encourage each other - this award is for you all." ●

VICKIE SIMMONDS OF wheelchair dance company Liberate Dance has been awarded the Rising Star Award from One Dance UK.

The One Dance UK Awards are an annual celebration to champion, acknowledge and reward the people who have made the most impact on the vibrant dance landscape across the UK – something that Vickie embodies.

Making a Difference

The Rising Star Award celebrates someone who is at the start of their career and already making a significant positive difference in their area of work. Vickie won the award thanks to her tireless work setting up and running Liberate Dance,



PARALLEL WINDSOR VIRTUAL will be a national celebration of disability inclusion for all ages and abilities.

Run, walk or push, you can choose from five distances - 100m, 1k, 5k, 10k or the unique Sensory360 1K - in a mass participation online event that encourages participants to start together and finish whenever from the comfort of their own home or local area.

The eagerly anticipated event was due to take place in Windsor Great Park on June 27. Due to

the restrictions in place to combat Covid-19 it will now take place remotely.

The brainchild of international events creator and organiser Andrew Douglass, Parallel is an innovative social enterprise, designed to shine a light on disability inclusion.

Living with Disability caught up with Andrew at his events-based agency, Innovision, in London on the day details of Parallel Windsor Virtual and a



Start Together, Finish Whenever

Digital Festival of Inclusivity were announced.

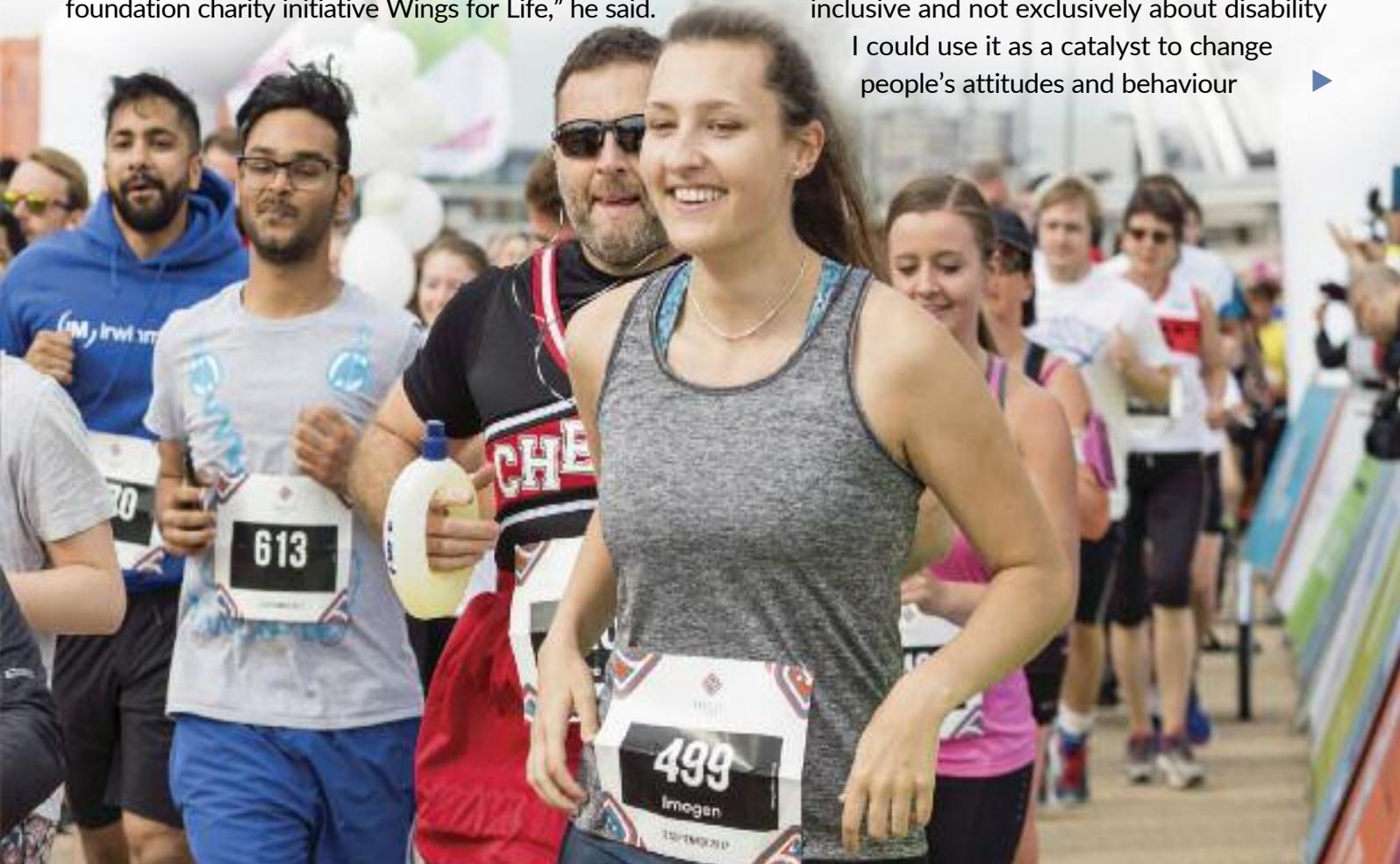
Having outgrown its former venue at the Olympic Park in 2016 and 2017, the event has been on hold for three years – last year’s event in Windsor Great Park was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. But, as Andrew explained, there was never any doubt that it would be back.

“The seed for the Parallel idea came when we were asked to get involved with Redbull’s foundation charity initiative Wings for Life,” he said.

It raises money to support cutting-edge research worldwide to find a cure for spinal cord injury.

“Like many people I had had very little contact with the disabled community and it fully opened my eyes to the challenges that disabled people face but also how diverse and talented that community is.

“I thought that if I could put on a dynamic, surprising, cool and exciting event that was truly inclusive and not exclusively about disability I could use it as a catalyst to change people’s attitudes and behaviour”





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towards inclusion. And so Parallel was born.”

Parallel events aim to remove barriers to enable as many people as possible of all ages and abilities to challenge themselves and get active, while also creating significant fundraising opportunities for charities.

The first event in 2016 attracted 4,000 visitors, the second in 2017 8,000 visitors – helping raise more than £1 million for 80 charities. So, despite the challenges involved, the

Parallel team was determined that charities would not miss out this year.

The virtual event format will include a morning section for mass participation, supported by Parallel’s new active lifestyle partner Sure, and every participant will receive an exclusive Parallel Windsor Virtual medal.

You can walk, run, hop, skip, jump or simply get pushed along in a day chair.

The range of distances includes a Sensory360 1K, for which Parallel Ambassador and sensory engagement and inclusion specialist, Jo Grace, has co-designed a toolkit to be sent out to people with autism and profound learning difficulties.

Other distances you can walk, run, hop, skip, jump or simply get pushed along in a day chair and there are no cut off times for when you finish - ‘Start Together, Finish Whenever’.

“We are currently filming in Windsor Great Park in order to create a digital show for the mass event that will create a sense of place and location for people participating at home,” added Andrew. ▶



BundleBean's much loved wheelchair cosies are now available in two new designs – a flock of cheeky seagulls on a bright marine blue background and a chic dark navy with metallic gold bees. Also, by popular demand, there are now wheelchair ponchos available in both adult and child sizes. These patterned ponchos are easy to put on, fully waterproof and have a peaked hood to protect faces from the rain.



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Purple Sock Day

PARALLEL LIFESTYLE IS calling on people to pull their socks up in supporting International Day of Persons with Disability.

Not any socks. A pair of purple socks made by BAM to mark and celebrate IDPD on December 3 and to help create a new fund for disability enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Founded by Claudia and Andrew Douglass, Parallel's social aim is to support disabled people to be free to live life to the full in mainstream society.

"50% of the profit from the sale of the socks for Purple Sock Day will be used to create a fund that will provide grant funding to disability-owned start-up businesses and entrepreneurs," said Andrew.

"The other 50% will be re-invested into Purple Sock Day and other Parallel social enterprise projects."

Businesses and individuals are being asked to get involved by buying BAM purple socks for £5 a pair and wearing them with pride on December 3.

"Together we can then celebrate Purple Sock Day, raise awareness for IDPD and generate some meaningful social impact," added Andrew.

To order your socks or request further information email socks@parallellifestyle.com or go to the website www.parallellifestyle.com

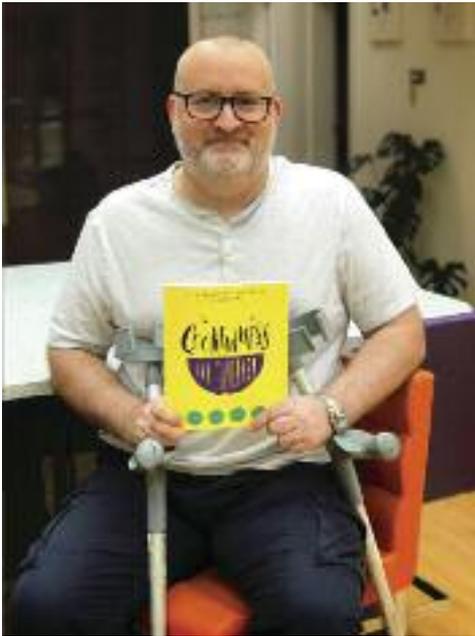


In the afternoon there will be a Digital Festival of Inclusivity, which will be able to be viewed live or on demand. Content will include live and pre-recorded film of participant stories, live streamed and pre-recorded entertainment, interactive workshops, music, fire-side chats and charity features. This will be free to access and you do not have to register or take part in the mass participation to watch it.

More information and how to sign up can be found on www.parallellifestyle.com The website will also announce performers and activities at the free Digital Festival of Inclusivity. You can also join Parallel's online community @ParallelGlobal ●



Cooking Up a Lifeline



IAN TAVERNER WAS a healthy, confident family man in his mid-thirties with a successful career – until he broke.

Suffering from chronic pain, depression and anxiety Ian had to give up work, his hobbies and a normal family life. What made it worse was that for a long time nobody could tell him what was wrong.

When a specialist finally diagnosed chronic fibromyalgia and arthritis it set Ian on a long path to recovery and to writing the world's first cookbook aimed at reducing the obstacles to cooking for people suffering from chronic illnesses like himself.

A Recipe for Life

Talking to LWD from his home in the New Forest, Ian outlined his former life as a high-flyer in financial services, half marathon runner, keen golfer and active family man with a wife and two young



daughters. A world turned upside down by unexplained panic attacks and excruciating pain.

“I would have to spend days on end in bed and could only get around in a wheelchair,” explained Ian. “It simply didn’t make sense. At first nobody could diagnose the problem. It wasn’t a condition you could see or seemingly cure.

“It’s not clear what causes fibromyalgia but it can start after a stressful event like an injury, illness or the death of a loved one. In my case it has been put down to the death of my mother, who had a long battle with dementia. By bottling up my grief, along



Five years after having to give up work and his family having to become his carers, Ian was finally referred to the NHS National Centre for Pain in Bath, which gave him hope and a desire to make life worth living again.

Treatment at the centre is provided by a specialist team, including physiotherapists, psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses and doctors, whose focus is on rehabilitation (exercise, coping skills) rather than medications or medical procedures.

Cooking with my children and being creative in the kitchen gave me back my family, my passion and made my life worth living.

“It was a four-week programme that for me was very much the last chance saloon,” said Ian.

“They certainly don’t profess to offer any cure, but they help you to deal with your mental and physical problems by getting you to understand them and begin to work with them. By showing you a light at the end of a very dark tunnel they put you firmly on the path to improving your quality of life.”

To do that Ian’s aim was simple. To reconnect with his wife and children and be part of the family again.

“I had always been passionate about cooking before my problems but since then it had simply been too confusing, tiring and difficult for my brain to make any sense of recipes and instructions,”

explained Ian.

“The people at Bath helped me to regain that enthusiasm and I started to try to cook again. Seeing my family enjoy the food I had made, cooking with my children and being creative in the kitchen gave ▶



with the stress of my job, I created a perfect storm for a physical and mental breakdown.

“There are no words to describe a seemingly never-ending pain that affects every part of your body and the deep, dark depression and anxiety that the suffering has on your mental state. Of course there are treatments, painkillers and exercise programmes. But there is no cure for fibromyalgia.

me back my family, my passion and made my life worth living.”

But it wasn't easy. Wanting to cook is not the same as being able to cook. For sufferers of chronic pain and mental health issues even the simplest of dishes, like a poached egg or baked beans on toast, become insurmountable tasks.

Inspired by his success, Ian set about writing a new kind of cookery book, one that was user friendly to the sufferers of symptoms such as fatigue and brain fog, by making the barriers to benefitting from the therapy of cooking as few and as easy to navigate as possible.

Cooking Up a Future

The result was *Cookfulness – A therapeutic Approach to Cooking*, which sets about removing some of the barriers to the kitchen that those of us who are well might not see, such as:

- A brand new “give yourself time” item, to add to prep and cook times, so you can realistically plan how long things are likely to take when you are feeling dreadful, and not just when are having a better day.
- A full list of every piece of equipment, utensils etc. you will need for every single recipe, set out at the beginning so there are no surprises for the anxiety levels.
- Key steps are marked in bold throughout, so you know when to turn ovens on, what is critical and won't miss those and panic.
- No final dish pictures which Ian says puts too much pressure on perfection and encourages you to give up.

“I want all sufferers of chronic pain and mental health issues to feel that they can find purpose, self-esteem and meaning in the kitchen,” said the proud author.



“If you're in pain it's hard enough to even find the drive to cook, let alone follow a recipe, have the right utensils to hand or adhere to time constraints. It's always about taking a step back and that whatever you produce is right.

“There is the satisfaction of getting a recipe right, but the food itself is not the therapy. It's simply the success of making it yourself.”

Following great feedback for the book – including from 2016 MasterChef Champion Jane Devonshire – Ian is already planning a follow-up cook book for children suffering from chronic pain conditions and another around entertaining.

For Dessert

Ian says he is in a good place, both physically and mentally.

“Of course I have good days and bad days but a year ago I couldn't even have done this interview and since then I've gone from using a wheelchair to crutches and today just a walking stick,” added Ian.

Cookfulness – A therapeutic Approach to Cooking is published by Clink Street Publishing and is available to buy online and can be ordered from all good bookstores. Part of the proceeds from sales of the book will go directly to the NHS Pain Centre in Bath.

As for Ian, the end of our interview meant it was time to for him to prep for dinner – chicken curry. Sounded delicious! ●

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demand. The charity promotes close collaboration between all service organisations for which it provides. It is sympathetic to all who are referred to it for help whatever their needs, level of ability or situation providing as much support and help as possible. Depending on need, a basic pack can consist of a single item to furnishing a full house to set up a new home. Packs may also include disability aids or specialist equipment.

As a charity, fundraising is on-going - because the need is always there. Relying on donations of furniture and household items to maintain its stock, the Project reclaims, restores, refurbishes and upcycles furniture for sale along with a dedicated furniture painting workshop responding to the growing trend in retro décor. All this goes



towards funding the charity as well as benefitting the environment by diverting over 100 tons annually of usable furniture from the waste stream.

The increasing number of requests evidences the need for the charity's help. Looking to the future it hopes to extend its work beyond the High Peak to reach more in need of support.
www.glossopdalefurniture.co.uk



Don't Get Caught Short

MORE THAN 250,000 disabled people will benefit from greater access to life-enhancing Changing Places toilets.

Hot on the heels of a new law that made the provision of Changing Places toilets compulsory in certain new buildings, the Government announced a £30m fund to increase the number of facilities across England.

Get Out and About

Changing Places toilets are larger accessible toilets for people who cannot use standard disabled toilets, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers.

Many disabled people need these facilities to enable them to get out and about and enjoy the day-to-day activities many of us take for granted.



In the absence of Changing Places facilities, disabled people and/or carers face:

- limiting what they drink to avoid needing the toilet when they are out – risking dehydration and urinary tract infections
- sitting in soiled clothing or dirty nappies until a suitable toilet is found or they return home ▶

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- having to change a loved one on a dirty toilet floor
- manually lifting someone out of their wheelchair – risking safety
- reducing their time out of the house – restricting their social lives.

The combination of the change in the law and the multi-million pound investment for existing buildings means thousands of people with complex needs will have greater access to public places.

“The biggest challenge I face when going anywhere outside my home is locating a Changing Places facility,” said Changing Places campaigner Kerry Thompson.

“They really do make a world of difference when planning days out so the investment in new facilities will open up a whole new world for the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on them.

Tackling Exclusion

“Knowing I have access to a Changing Places toilet lets me enjoy myself without having to worry about finding an accessible facility that can accommodate my needs. The additional funding from the government to improve facilities in existing buildings across England will give me and my husband the freedom that so many disabled people are desperate for.”

The programme will be delivered in partnership with the charity Muscular Dystrophy UK, co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium, who will provide advice to support local authorities in installing new facilities.

Muscular Dystrophy UK, in partnership with MHCLG and the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers, will also be undertaking a call for evidence with users in England to help develop an understanding of user needs and priorities.

“Everyone has the right to use a public toilet when they need to, and these accessible toilets vastly improve a person’s independence and make planning days out much easier,” said Robert Burley, Director of Campaigns, Care and Support at Muscular Dystrophy UK.

“This is a big step towards tackling the exclusion that many disabled people, including those with muscle-wasting conditions, experience when they are out and about.”



Kerry Thompson.



Robert Burley.

Funding In Place

Councils will be invited to “opt in” to bid for a proportion of the £30m funding so they can install facilities in their communities and boost the number of Changing Place toilets in existing buildings, for example leisure and sports, cinemas, and arts and tourism venues.

This will improve the geographical spread across England and ensure more

disabled people can take part in everyday activities that have the greatest impact on their quality of life.

There are currently around 1,200 registered Changing Places toilets in England. You can find your nearest registered Changing Places toilet in the UK by going to the Changing Places website and using the location map www.changing-places.org ●



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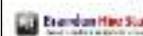


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Get a Better Grip



BioLiberty co-founder, Rowan Armstrong tests the glove.

A ROBOTIC GLOVE based on AI technology could soon be helping millions of people recover muscle grip in their hands.

The glove is aimed at the 2.5 million people living in the UK who suffer from hand weakness because of muscle mass loss as they age or due to illnesses like Multiple Sclerosis, Motor Neurone Disease and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.

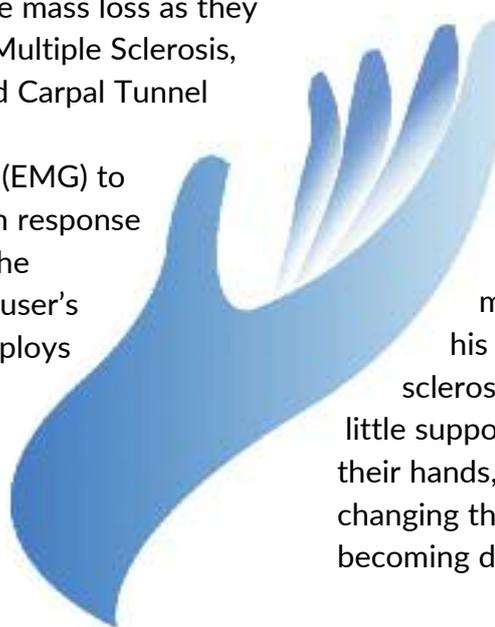
Using Electromyography (EMG) to measure electrical activity in response to a nerve's stimulation of the muscle, the glove detects a user's intention to grip. It then employs an algorithm to convert the intention into force, helping the user to hold an item or apply the necessary pressure to complete an

activity. The technology is expected to help with a wide range of day-to-day tasks including opening jars, driving and pouring a cup of tea.

The lightweight glove is the first product from BioLiberty, a Scottish start-up founded by four engineering graduates, which is receiving support from the Edinburgh Business School's (EBS) Incubator, based at Heriot-Watt University.

Relative Motivation

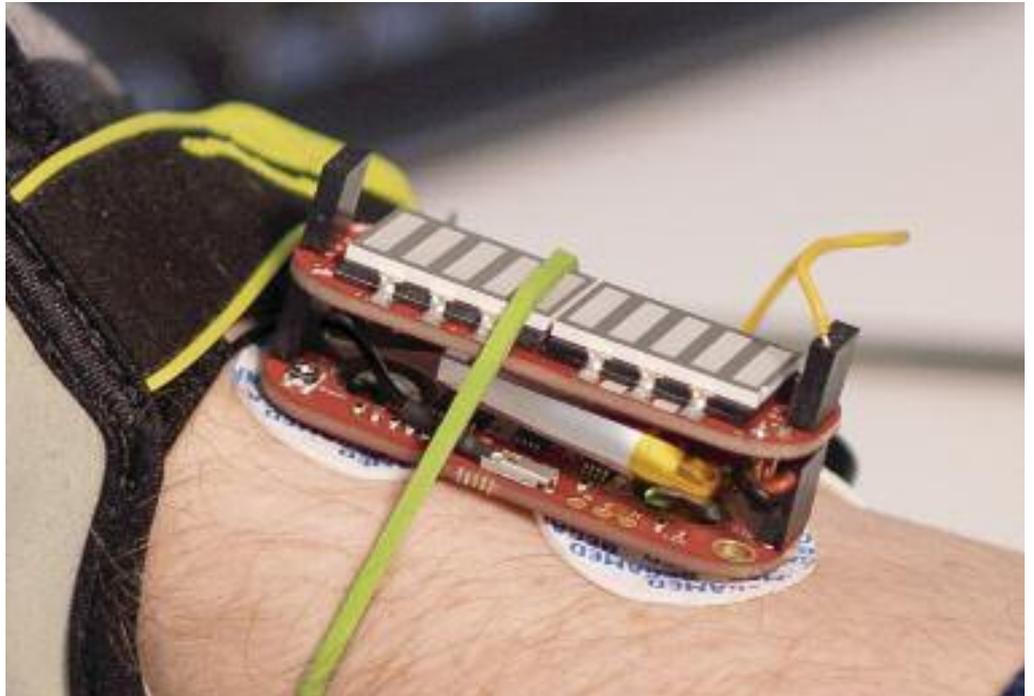
Co-founder Ross O'Hanlon, 24, was motivated to start the company when his aunt was diagnosed with Multiple sclerosis and began to lose movement. Finding little support for individuals unable to grip with their hands, Ross noticed simple tasks like changing the TV channel or drinking water were becoming difficult for her.



“Being an engineer, I decided to use technology to tackle these challenges head on with the aim of helping people like my aunt to retain their autonomy,” said Ross.

“As well as those affected by illness, the population continues to age and this places increasing pressure on care services. We wanted to support independent living and healthy aging by enabling individuals to live more comfortably in their own homes for longer.

“While there are many gadgets on the market that address a specific grip challenge such as tools to help open jars, I wanted an all-encompassing solution to support a range of daily tasks.



The technology is expected to help with a wide range of day-to-day tasks.

“We founded BioLiberty while studying and we’ve already achieved a working prototype but, with a background in engineering, converting a good idea into a successful business can be overwhelming.

“Up to now, we’ve funded the company from business competition awards so being accepted into the Edinburgh Business School Incubator programme is a huge boost. We’re confident that support of this type will help accelerate the glove into homes more quickly.”

Once companies leave the Incubator, the University’s Global Research Innovation and Discovery facility supports next stage business growth through accelerated scale-up and development processes. In BioLiberty’s case and subject to necessary regulatory approvals, they will target the UK and US markets.

To find out more www.bioliberty.co.uk ●



Ross O'Hanlon.

Product Innovation Takes On Arthritis



ARTHR IS ON a mission to improve everyday living for people with arthritis.

The social venture was set-up just six months ago in partnership with the charity Versus Arthritis to restore choice and confidence by designing, developing and championing innovative, high-quality and ergonomic products.

It has already launched four products on to the market – the Toilet Riser, Toilet Assist, Car Door Mate and Bath Step – and given its ‘Loved by Arthr’ seal of approval to arthritis friendly products already on the market that it rates highly enough to recommend.

Research carried out by Arthr amongst 1,350 people with arthritis showed a staggering 43% did



Arthr's Bobby Watkins.

not think there was enough choice of products that look good, work well and provide the user with a sense of dignity and independence.

One in two of them even admitted that they hid their ‘medical looking’ aids when friends and family came over, choosing to struggle on without them.

“It was a narrative I knew well as my mum and grandmother suffered from rheumatoid

arthritis,” explained Arthr Managing Director Bobby Watkins. “Very often, if an aid to living looked good it didn’t work and if it worked well it didn’t look good.

“It was all the motivation I needed to get on ▶

and fix a market that is so obviously broken. Which is exactly why Versus Arthritis got involved – to make everyday life easier for the 10 million people living with arthritis in the UK.

“The charity’s forward-thinking approach in supporting us and the investment of its time, money and unrivalled knowledge of the market is already paying dividends for arthritis sufferers and the charity.

“Because our social venture has a commercial bite, 100% of Arthr’s profits will be invested back into the fight against arthritis, enabling Versus Arthritis to continue the care, support and research work that they do and us to develop new and better products.”

Arthr’s team of product designers, led by ex-LEGO designer Adam Vaughan, develops new products that are not simply functional tools but design creations in their own right. Every product grows out of two simple questions; ‘will this design have a positive impact on someone with arthritis?’ and ‘will it feel good to own and use?’

Problem Solving Partnership

Products are co-created and rigorously tested with people who have a real and first-hand understanding of the day-to-day tasks that are challenging due to arthritis, whether that’s getting out of a car or lowering themselves down to the height of a conventional toilet.

“Everything starts with a need – from opening a jar to getting in and out of a bath – so it makes sense to fully involve the people to whom that is a problem,” explained Bobby.

“Which is why we coordinate with 300

ChangeMakers to brainstorm a practical problem and feedback to us before we’ve even started the product design. Then of course they get to test it before it goes into production at our UK manufacturing base.”

Arthr is also committed to providing its range of

products via mainstream channels, whether digital or physical retail, to ensure that the experience is as normal and enjoyable as shopping for other consumer products. Its products can be found on Amazon, E-Bay and Ideal World TV Shopping.



Arthr’s Car Door Mate.

“In creating Arthr we have built up a passionate community of stakeholders that includes innovators, retailers, users, healthcare professionals, volunteer groups and Arthr ChangeMakers, all with a vested interest and common purpose to move this market forward,” added Bobby.

The Fight Back

One in six people, with half of those living in pain every single day, suffer from arthritis. The impact is huge as the condition intrudes on everyday life – affecting the ability to work, care for a family, to move free from pain and to live independently.

“We are very proud of this innovative partnership with Arthr as it will enable Versus Arthritis to continue its fight against a condition which is often hidden and not fully understood,” said Charlotte Guiver, Chair of Arthr and Director of Income at Versus Arthritis.

“More importantly, it will address a much-needed gap in the market to provide products that help improve and normalise arthritis.”

To find out more www.arthr.com ●

Mencap is distributing £1 million to improve access to technology and help reduce loneliness amongst people with a learning disability.



THE INITIATIVE WAS made possible thanks to a grant from The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and Pears Foundation.

Mencap, with the support of the charity's project partners, Digital Unite and Good Things Foundation, will use this grant to fund its new programme, 'Let's Get Digital'.

The programme will help upskill their network organisations and support people with a learning disability to use and engage with digital platforms to boost their wellbeing and connect them with their local communities.

"The world we live in is becoming increasingly digital, we have seen this during the coronavirus



Mencap Chief Executive Edel Harris.

pandemic, and we are all using technology more in our day to day lives," said Edel Harris, Chief Executive of Mencap, the UK's leading learning disability charity.

"People with a learning disability often struggle to access and use digital tools. It is vital that they are not left behind. With the right support, people with a learning disability can use technology to stay connected and feel more included in their local community."

The programme will support 60 local organisations, who deliver support to people with a

learning disability in their area and are affiliated with Mencap through the charity's Network Partners, to develop digital strategies and move their services online.



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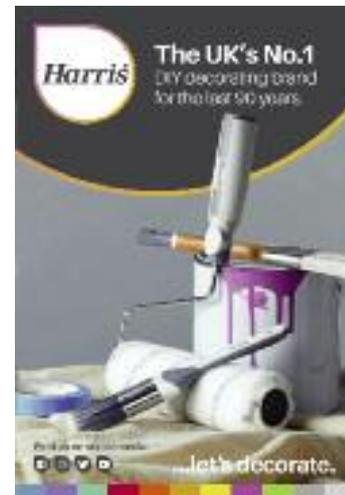
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Shining Stars

One of the organisations to benefit from the new 'Let's Get Digital' programme is Shining Stars UK, a voluntary run organisation providing safe social events and sports courses for the adult disabled community and more.

"Last year during the pandemic, I felt cut off from the outside world and I struggled to meet other people," said Maisie Pursey, 26, who has a learning disability and attends events held by Shining Stars UK.

"It was quite lonely, and I felt socially isolated. Since joining Shining Stars UK in February and having access to a tablet, thanks to 'Let's Get Digital', I've met new people and made new friends in a short amount of time. This new programme has boosted my confidence and will help so many other people with a learning disability."

People with a learning disability are one group who have been hit the hardest during the

coronavirus pandemic. Loss of routine, difficulties staying in touch with family and keeping active without support means that people with a learning disability have been struggling to cope.

They already face extreme levels of social isolation and loneliness – they are seven times more likely to feel lonely than the general population – and the coronavirus crisis only exacerbated this. Over a third (36%) of disabled people report they are still spending too much time alone – the same level as during the peak of lockdown in April 2020.

However, people with a learning disability have better wellbeing as a result of being more connected. Digital technology is playing an increasing part in the lives of many people with a learning disability by helping them to connect with the world.

"I know it's important for people with a learning disability to connect online," said Abdul Hameed, who has a learning disability and is a Co Trainer at Mencap.

People with a learning disability often struggle to access and use digital tools.

"They can see their families and friends and they can feel part of their communities again. I don't think enough people with a learning disability can access technology, some of them may not have the understanding on how to do it. This funding will go a long way. It will help over 3,000 people with a learning disability to get online and reduce the loneliness that some are feeling. This will change lives and make it a lot easier for people with a learning disability."

The grant to Mencap was part of the Government's Community Match Challenge scheme which was introduced as part of the £750m charities package set out to support frontline charities working with those most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

For further information www.mencap.org.uk

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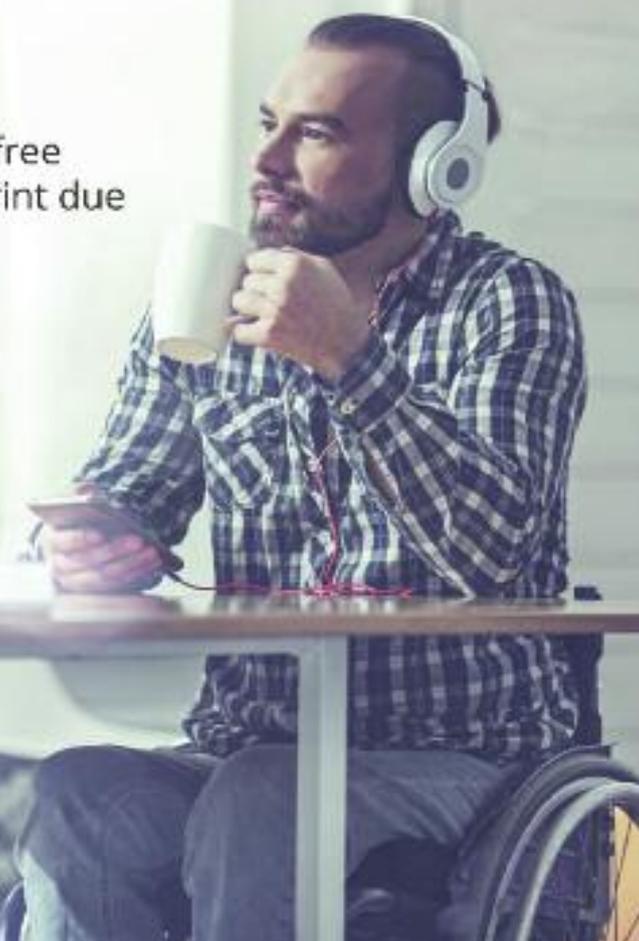
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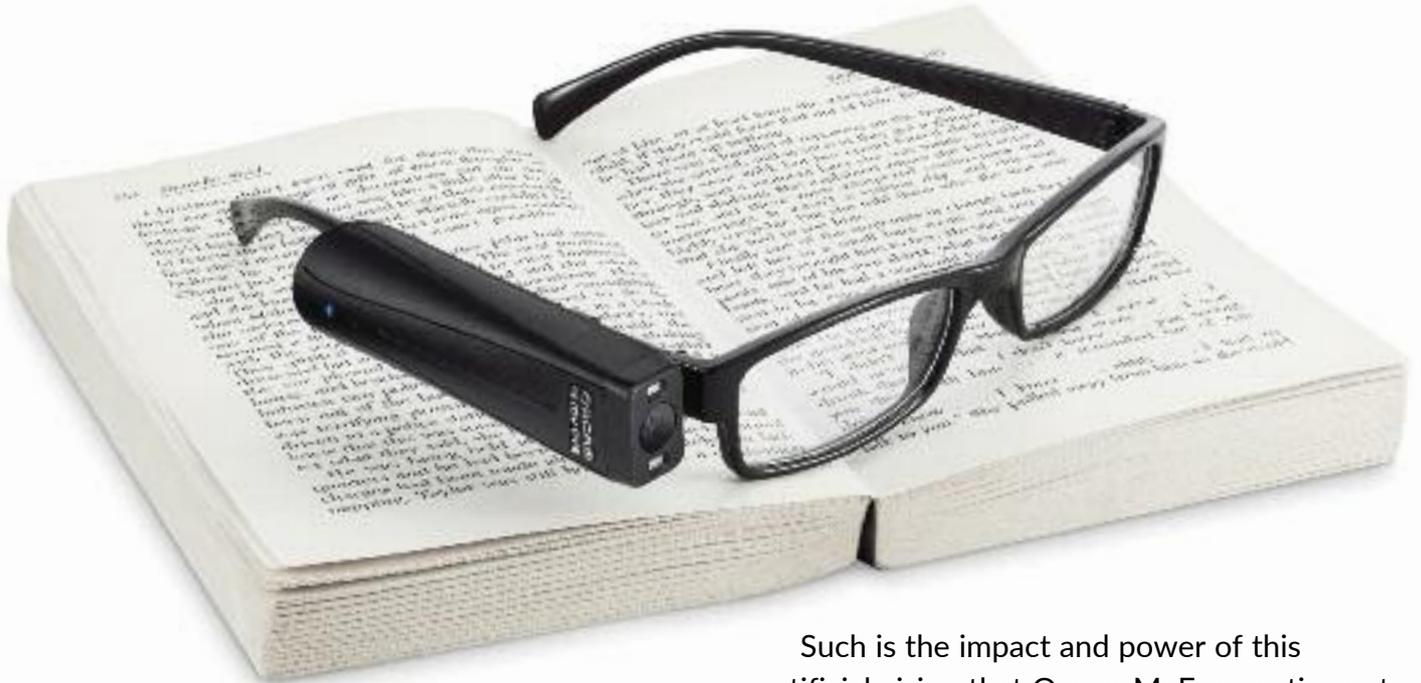
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AI Helps the Blind Read



ORCAM MYEYE has been a game changer for tens of thousands of people living with visual impairments.

Described as 'talking glasses' the revolutionary voice activated device that attaches to the frame of any glasses can instantly read to you text from a book, smartphone screen or any other surface, identify currency and recognize faces.

It conveys visual information audibly, in real-time and offline.

The latest OrCam MyEye Pro allows users to get even more specific, like telling the machine to read only the headlines of a newspaper, or only the appetizer section of a menu.

This pioneering AI technology is helping people in more than 40 countries, with users ranging from age six to more than 100 shop on their own, work more efficiently and live a more independent life.

OrCam MyEye is suitable for all eye conditions and all levels of vision loss, as well as for people with reading fatigue and reading difficulties.

Such is the impact and power of this artificial vision that OrCam MyEye continues to change lives and make headlines throughout the world.

In the UK, Living with Disability came across two inspiring individuals benefitting from the life changing device – Mikey Poulli and Dr Janet Gray, MBE.

Mikey's OrCam MyEye has given him a new lease of independence, and he is able to do things now that he hasn't been able to do in a very long time.

As a football fanatic, 10-year-old Mikey from London didn't allow his sight loss to prevent him from enjoying – and playing – the game. In fact, his unwavering determination to succeed

has made him a viral sensation on social media.

Losing her sight didn't stop Janet Gray of County Down in Northern Ireland from achieving her water-skiing aspirations. In fact, Janet's diagnosis spurred her on to succeed and she is now both a World Record Holder and Disabled Water Ski Champion, as well as a successful professional, holding a place as an independent member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.



My Story - Dr Janet Gray, MBE

Janet's sight started to deteriorate when she was 15 years old, due to a rare form of glaucoma. She completely lost her sight when she was 21 years old.

Previously a lifeguard and swimming coach, Janet was determined not to let her diagnosis get in the way of her love of water sports. After losing her sight, Janet took up water skiing and through sheer determination of following her dreams, she succeeded in becoming the World Water Ski Disabled Champion in 1999, 2001 and 2003.

In 2004, she survived a near-fatal accident in Florida.

"I was at a training camp in Tampa and was on the water to try out a new set of jump skis when the boat I was travelling behind accidentally whipped me in to the back end of the steel jump structure," explained Janet.

"I had to be resuscitated several times and my

injury list included breaks to my hip, pelvis, femur, kneecap and elbow, crushed ribs and severe head and facial injuries."

She underwent surgery more than 30 times over the next 12 years and spent almost three years in a wheelchair following the accident. But defying doctors' predictions that she would never walk again, Janet went on to win the World Championship one more time, in 2007.

Following her international successes, Janet was honoured by becoming a Freeman of the City of Lisburn in Northern Ireland. Consequently, Janet became the first blind councillor in Northern Ireland, serving on the local council for five years.

She was then appointed as an independent member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. Janet, now aged 58, is also a founder member, former Chair and currently President of Disability Sports Northern Ireland, President of Lady Taverners Northern Ireland and an Ambassador for Belfast Activity Centre and Concern Worldwide.

Janet has not allowed her blind condition to hold her back in achieving her successes, and her resilience and inner strength have defined her career and personal achievements.

Janet & OrCam MyEye

As an independent member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, Janet and its other members have a range of legislative duties to meet and hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of the policing service.

Recognising the immense value of the OrCam My Eye to Janet and her work, the Northern Ireland Policing Board decided to provide her with funding for the assistive technology device.

"The nature of my work means that I have to read material that is often highly confidential and sensitive," said Janet.



“The OrCam MyEye allows me to read those documents in hardcopy or digitally from a computer, iPad or mobile phone. More important, I can sit and read documents independently at home or in meetings. The device has enhanced the way I approach my professional life and undoubtedly improved my independence in everyday life.”

The OrCam Eye works completely offline and does not store any of the text that Janet reads.

The facial recognition feature also helps Janet ascertain which of her fellow board members are present and where they are seated in a room, ensuring that she can address her colleagues as seamlessly as if she were sighted.

“At home it allows me to identify products in my fridge or freezer and it gives me the freedom to read magazines, newspapers and books. In smart reading mode it will even pick out a headline, name or date,” added Janet.

My Story – Mikey Poulli

Mikey was aged six when he was unexpectedly diagnosed with a rare incurable eye condition called ‘Rod Cone Dystrophy’, which, for many, eventually leads to blindness.



Photo credit:
Malcolm Griffiths.

In the next year and a half, his sight started to deteriorate and at the age of just seven, Mikey had lost all his vision.

By the end of the 2016 football season, Mikey was legally blind and was unable to continue playing with his local club as it became too dangerous for him and his fellow teammates.

Despite this seemingly insurmountable setback, Mikey still dreamed of becoming a professional football player. Drawing on his inner strength, Mikey practised with his family at any given opportunity and learnt how to play blind.

Mikey’s talent shined through when he joined a visually impaired football training session at Tottenham Hotspur Centre of Excellence. Training with specialised coaches, Mikey further developed his skills and passion for the sport. Impressed with Mikey’s natural ability, the Football Association (FA) sent scouts to monitor him in training. This ultimately led to him receiving FA funding for 1-1 specialist coaching.

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Mikey's story is not only a testament to his resilience, but also his determination to succeed in the face of adversity. He is now training with England's visually impaired football team with the aim of playing internationally in the future.

Mikey and OrCam MyEye

It was Argentinian football legend and OrCam Ambassador, Lionel Messi, who invited Mikey to become part of his 'OrCam Dream Team'.

As a new group member of remarkable blind and visually impaired athletes from across the world singled out for their courage, Messi gifted Mikey with the life-changing wearable AI device to help the youngster reach his full potential off the pitch as well as on.

The OrCam MyEye has empowered Mikey to easily and efficiently navigate everyday tasks, such as participating in class work as well as reading his books – both from the hardcopy and the computer screen.

With the pioneering 'computer vision' AI technology, the device is able to capture an image of text, whether in print or on a screen, and instantly read it back to Mikey. Through an intuitive pointing gesture, Mikey is now able to identify anything from product labels, to store signs as well as his favourite football magazine.

Importantly, the device incorporates advanced 'Smart Reading' technology, with a 'find for me' capability. The OrCam MyEye scans a document for a particular word, headline or section, thereby allowing Mikey to save time when he reads the



football training guides that have been sent from the FA – something he's not been able to do independently until now.

At school, Mikey can also participate in comprehension activities and reading exercises, which are vital parts to his education. Teachers have been very impressed with Mikey's progress and have identified a noticeable change in his confidence and learning independence.

He also uses the facial recognition technology to easily identify his friends and loved ones in real time, at school and family events. Mikey also benefits from the 'time gesture', activated by a simple raise of the wrist, which allows him to easily tell the time on the go.

"Mikey's OrCam MyEye has given him a new lease of independence, and he is able to do things now that he hasn't been able to do in a very long time," said Mickey's father John Poulli.

"We are honoured and privileged for Mikey to use this incredible assistive technology – it is quite overwhelming.

"He's been picking up books that he hasn't been able to read since he became blind – it's made a meaningful difference. Now Mikey can read the books

that aren't just audio books, and in class he can read the same content as his classmates and therefore feel more included, at the same level as his peers."

To find out more about the OrCam My Eye go to www.orcam.com



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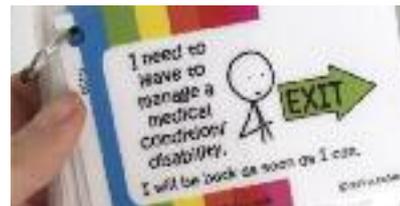
GROUP CAPTAIN SIR DOUGLAS BADER WAS commissioned as an officer in the RAF in 1930. But, after only 18 months he crashed his plane and became a double amputee. The accident, he said, was caused by "my own fault". Douglas was discharged from the RAF, but after the outbreak of the second world war he rejoined as a disabled pilot. Douglas became a member of 222 Squadron and was later promoted to lead 242 Squadron. His skill as an aviator and contribution as an outstanding leader and fighter ace, along with his continuous attempts to escape prisoner of war camps after he was shot down, were immortalised in the book and film 'Reach for the Sky'.

Douglas Bader's courage over adversity as a double amputee, fighting for his country, a leader by example, a global campaigner for the disadvantaged, became an inspiration for the able-bodied and disabled. Bader's inspiration continues in the form of the DOUGLAS BADER FOUNDATION, established by his family and friends immediately following his death in 1982, at the age of 72



Creating understanding of hidden disabilities

FOR MANY PEOPLE with hidden disabilities (such as autism, fibromyalgia, CFS etc) one of the biggest challenges is getting people to understand



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P I C T U R E S A T A



(Virtual) Exhibition

A 3D EXHIBITION of photographic portraits and compelling stories of kidney patients has become a must-see online success.

Survivors: Life-Unfiltered is a joint creative project by award-winning photographer and director Richard Booth and kidney patient advocate Maddy Warren.



Richard Booth.

When the Covid 19 pandemic put a stop to a national tour of the exhibition to public galleries and exhibition spaces across the UK, the pair embraced virtual technology to take the whole thing online.

The exhibition is designed to educate and raise awareness of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) and

how it affects people by highlighting inspiring stories of survival.

It features over 30 participants, from two to 78 years old, who come from all walks of life, including former Premiership footballer and Kidney Research UK ambassador Andy Cole, who is a kidney patient and founder of the Andy Cole Fund.

Their inspiring human stories cover topics such as facing mortality, mental health, body image, gratitude, survivors guilt, silver linings and reconciling with a 'new normal'.

Diptych images show two sides to living with an invisible life limiting condition; the outward positive face that people share with the world and the inner hidden life coping with fears, mental anguish and the vast time drain and ongoing burden of treatment.

Surviving with kidney disease requires an enormous investment of time for the rest of people's lives – time spent each week on dialysis, time spent waiting for a kidney and (if they are lucky) time spent looking after their transplant(s), with many associated complexities. ▶

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It also became apparent during the pandemic that many people in intensive care with Covid 19 also developed Acute Kidney Injury requiring life sustaining dialysis. So as society faced one of the most challenging health emergencies in a century, the stories and messages in the exhibition took on a heightened meaning and relevance.

Queen of Dialysis

Maddy Warren, aka 'Queen of Dialysis' and co-creator of the Survivors: Life Unfiltered has been on kidney dialysis for 22 years since the age of 14. But it hasn't stopped her drive for life. She has run marathons, skydived and been a TEDx speaker.

"I have spent over two decades so far relying on a machine to keep me alive as I can't have a kidney

transplant," said Maddy. "But my greatest fear has never been that I might die. The thought of being trapped in a life controlled by illness, mapped out by symptoms, limitations and treatment scares me far more than death.

"Yet surprisingly, through gaining absolute control by dialysing myself at home, and by staying relentlessly positive and mentally focused, I have become liberated by my condition. It has taught me more about humanity, perspective, joy and the importance of grabbing every single moment, than anything else possibly could.

"I draw power from knowing that whilst our existence is fragile we can still be strong, an insight which drives me to pursue my passions and face my fears. ►



Maddy Warren.





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Andy Cole.



“That’s the reason we created our exhibition – to share the amazing stories of strength, vulnerability and resilience of those living with CKD, and to raise awareness of this little-known disease.”

Chronic Kidney Disease

- CKD is often known as a silent killer and commonly shows no symptoms until a very late, critical stage.
- More people now die of it than of several types of cancer and once diagnosed they undergo treatment (dialysis or a transplant) for life, there is no cure.
- It affects around 3 million people in the UK, more than the number currently living with cancer. The BAME community are disproportionately affected.
- It became rapidly apparent at the start of the pandemic that many people in intensive care with Covid-19 also developed Acute Kidney Injury requiring life sustaining dialysis.

Kidney failure is rising, as are the factors contributing to it, such as diabetes and obesity. Treatments can be gruelling and currently there is no cure. Only research will end this.

“We support the exhibition as it brings home the reality and complexity of life with kidney disease in such a striking way,” said Sandra Currie, Chief Executive of Kidney Research UK, which has jointly sponsored the exhibition along with Quanta Dialysis Technologies and Kidney Care UK.

“We hope it will encourage people to take notice of this often ignored, often misunderstood condition and are delighted Maddy and Richard have found an alternative way for it to reach the public this year. Maddy is a past trustee of Kidney Research UK and is a strong advocate for greater investment in research. We hope the stories will raise greater interest in an area of health where research is needed now more than ever.” ●

The virtual exhibition will run until July 31 and can be visited at www.survivorslifeunfiltered.co.uk



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Matt was just 20 years old when he lost three limbs to a bomb blast in Afghanistan. We've been there by his side ever since...

"I joined the Royal Engineers when I was just 16. I think it was because, as a child, I was fascinated with cars and planes, and was good at science and maths at school. I have to admit that I was drawn to working in bomb disposal by the glamour of a dangerous job," says Matt.

"I enjoyed the risk aspect of it – you can't beat the rush of blowing something up! And you get respect because you're saving lives. Every device could potentially kill someone!

"In Afghanistan, it was obvious that IEDs were the key threat. My unit was the A-Team – we worked with Special Forces and did some really high-risk stuff. We were good at finding bombs – we disposed of more than 100 in just four months! – and so we were often sent to the most dangerous areas. I was even given a commendation for bravery, but I felt that I was just doing my job!

"The very real risks of my job materialised on 29 June 2009. My memory of the fortnight up until the explosion is still hazy. The Taliban were using IEDs to channel us into certain areas, and soldiers were getting hit in hellish ambushes.

"We were close to a compound; I'd searched a doorway and it all seemed to be clear. All I remember is a flash, my ears ringing, and the sensation of falling. "I lost both my legs and my right arm below the elbow in the blast. I was only 20 years old.



"My rehab has been long, slow and difficult. I was in intensive care for a while and was in hospital for three months. I've now had more than 50 operations since then.

"As a triple amputee, there were some aspects of rehabilitation I simply couldn't do, and that was frustrating. I can't use prosthetics – the reward I'd get with them isn't worth the time I'd have to put in – so physically, I'm as good as I'm going to get.

"I only get three hours' sleep a night because of pain and mental issues. But I'm succeeding. I've got myself into work and am getting on with my life.

"Blesma have been brilliant right from the start. After my injury, the Support Officer I had was my lifeline. Blesma helped me into civilian

life, but they are ex-military, so understand me. They really helped me sort out my compensation – they did all the paperwork for me, and they knew it inside out. They don't pat themselves on the back – they just do it. Blesma just gets things done!

"I've met some great people through Blesma too, and that's been another big help as the other Members have all been through something similar. I know that Blesma will always be there for me, right through my life. Right now, I'm working, but it's fantastic to know that the Blesma safety net is there for me if I do fall to pieces. If my chair breaks and I can't repair it, Blesma will get it done. If I need guiding towards another kind of help as I get older, Blesma will do that.

"Churchill once said: 'If you're going through hell, keep going.' I can relate to that. I was in a bad place after my injury but Blesma have been there for me, by my side, from day one. Once you've been through something like this, nothing else seems like a big problem.

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obligation to leave a gift to the RNRMC in your Will, but we do hope you will consider supporting our vital work. If you do decide to leave a gift in your Will, thank you. Your truly wonderful gesture of support will go a long way to helping countless numbers of serving men and women, naval veterans, and their families. Every gift in every will, no matter how small or large, will have a lasting impact on the lives of our beneficiaries.

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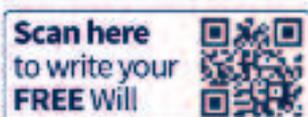
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Secondly, **hold the drops under your tongue for one to two minutes before swallowing.** The longer the better.

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tongue first, the CBD readily absorbs through the tissue there and into the bloodstream, dramatically increasing the amount of CBD entering your system.

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Love Conquers All

A GROUP OF filmmakers has hit its £6,800 target to make a film about chronic illness.

'Chronic', a short film about the tensions that build up in an early relationship where one of the partners has a chronic, invisible illness, will go into production this summer.

At the centre of the story are Rob and Sadie, who have just moved in together, but life is not all it's luvved up to be. Sadie's chronic illness complicates their plans and begins to govern their relationship.

Sadie and Rob have been planning on moving in together for a year now. In that year, Sadie has experienced debilitating chronic fatigue and pain. Move-in day is here. But it doesn't look like either of them imagined.

The next week brings with it intensified symptoms for Sadie and a complicated doctor's appointment. The couple struggle to know how to hold onto their relationship, and each other.

M.E. in the Spotlight

Two of the leading lights in this women-led group of film-makers both have M.E. – script writer Charlotte Paradise and director Milly Garnier. Milly will be remembered for her animated short film called 'All About M.E.' which was made in 2016.

"I was diagnosed with ME/CFS at a young age and although my health is in pretty good shape at the moment, it's something that has defined quite a large chunk of my life," said Milly.

"As my health has improved over the years, it's become increasingly important to address some of the misconceptions about the illness and show that it's so much more than 'feeling tired'.

"Having already made an animated short 'All About M.E.', I felt it necessary to go further than talking generally about chronic

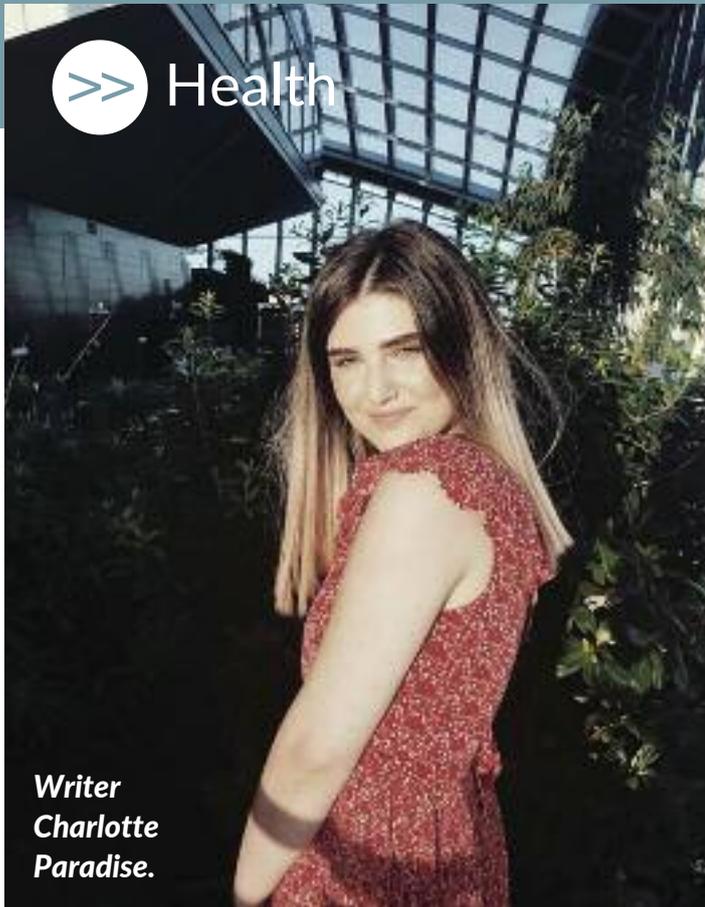
fatigue and delve into the individual experience. That way, we can illustrate the day-to-day monotony, the excruciating frustration, how truly limiting it can be and how increased awareness is key.

"It's also extremely important to demonstrate that there's hope in many people's lives, through the support of their friends and family."

ME is at the heart of the 'Chronic' project, which hopes to create empathy and raise funds and awareness for much needed research around invisible chronic illnesses. ▶



**Director
Milly Garnier.**



Writer
Charlotte
Paradise.

A Few Home Truths

Crowd-funding on the Indiegogo platform to make the film was completed so successfully that the group has already made a donation of £400 to the ME Association.

“The ME Association, Britain’s oldest charity for people with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, is delighted with ‘Chronic’ – a film which reveals some intimate home truths about what it means to live with a largely invisible illness,” said Neil Riley, Chairman of the ME Association.

Charlotte Paradise’s script for this deceptively simple, short film illustrates the light and shade of many relationships where couples quickly must make compromises if they are to survive in a world where there are as yet no treatments that restore full health.

Rob and Sadie, the star-crossed lovers, are going to have a tough time if they stick together.

Doctors can get bored with Sadie, if they can’t cure her. Employers can get decidedly tetchy if she takes too many days off work. Workmates will begin to shun her. Friends will drop away if she can’t be relied upon to come out to play. Even mum and dad can become less than sympathetic as the years pass by.

Yet M.E. is a real physical illness that affects over 250,000 adults and children in the UK and millions more worldwide.

One in four are so severely affected that they are rendered housebound or bedbound – with some needing 24-hour care.

They are often confined to their beds, unable to walk, are extremely sensitive to light and sound and in extreme cases can require tube-feeding.

Minor exertions – such as talking, reading, sitting up in bed, brushing hair or trying to stand – can result in worse symptoms and trigger relapses.

There is no known cure or effective treatment and worse still, there remain vast misconceptions – even in medical circles – that M.E. is ‘made up’, ‘in the mind’ or even ‘just laziness’.

Invisible illness within a romantic relationship is not spoken of enough and ‘Chronic’ sets out to change that.

“We rarely, if ever, see a portrayal of invisible chronic illness and the difficulties of living with a diagnosis that offers no definitive answers or treatment,” said Charlotte Paradise.

“In what can be a very isolating place, we desperately want those who are suffering and their carers to feel seen.

“The grief and pain involved with chronic illness affects not only the person experiencing the symptoms, but also the people caring for them. That’s why Chronic is about Sadie and Rob. It’s a story that many people will relate to across the board of invisible illnesses such as autoimmune diseases, arthritis, connective tissue disorders, mental health conditions and cancer.”

In a world reeling from the effects of Covid 19 the film comes at a time when it seems even more important to raise awareness for illnesses that include chronic pain and chronic fatigue.

Data from the King’s College London Covid symptom tracking app suggests that up to 500,000 people in the UK are suffering from long-term, fatigue-like symptoms.

Many people who have been tested positive for the virus are now experiencing debilitating symptoms that look alarmingly similar to chronic

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VIRUSES SURVIVE ON SURFACES

Governments across the world have been testing the COVID-19 virus' ability to live on surfaces – such as door handles, walls, and work surfaces. A study by The National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that Sars-CoV-2 (the virus that causes Covid-19) could survive in droplets for up to 3 hours after being dispersed into the air. The study also discovered that viruses could survive for even longer on cardboard (24 hours) and on plastic and stainless-steel surfaces (48-72 hours). The concerning results suggest the virus might contaminate other hard surface areas such as door handles, plastic-coated or laminated worktops for just as long. It is vital to keep surfaces extra clean especially frequent touch points such

as car door handles, toilet seats, and kitchen worktops. But how can you be sure that when wiping down and cleaning surfaces, you are confidently and specifically removing potentially dangerous viruses? A report from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and a further report from the World Health Organisation (WHO), recommend the use of bleach containing Sodium Hypochlorite diluted with water as one of the most effective ways to deactivate viruses when in non-health care environments.

Family cleaning brand ACE is currently the only brand to produce two different laundry cleaning products that contain Sodium Hypochlorite bleach. The two products, ACE for Whites and ACE Ultra, are more commonly used for cleaning and brightening white laundry and textiles, however when diluted correctly they can be used as surface cleaners too.

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fatigue. Long Covid looks a lot like many other invisible chronic illnesses.

“Lockdowns and restrictions have shown able bodied people just how hard it is to be housebound even without chronic pain,” added Charlotte. “We believe it’s the right time to create empathy and awareness around this struggle for the chronically ill and that making a film about it is critical for solidarity, support and awareness.”



Charlotte Paradise

Charlotte is a screenwriter, playwright and published journalist who was diagnosed with ME/CFS in 2014 and hEDS in 2020.

She recently gained a Master’s degree in Writing for Stage and Broadcast Media from the Royal Central

School of Speech and Drama.

Her theatrical credits include ‘Mess’ (Warwick Arts Centre), ‘Know You Well’ (Southwark Playhouse) and ‘Why am I Soft in the Middle?’ (CSSD).

Milly Garnier

Milly’s directing debut was ‘The Leaving Party,’ funded by a £20,000 grant from the inaugural Female Film Force. It premiered at a private screening in association with the London Short Film Festival, before its first public showing at the 2019 Underwire Festival in London, where it was nominated for best screenwriting.

Her other directing credits include, ‘The Dinner Party’ (Chalkboard Productions, 2019) and ‘All About M.E.’

Chronic is due to be released early in 2022. To find out more message the filmmakers on @chronicfilm on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook ●

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Heather's story: 'We are a family'



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“A big thing for me is being employed. But it can be difficult when you have a learning disability or you are on benefits, you worry about being judged. Working has been really important to me, and we should all be allowed to have those opportunities and have independence.

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Ethical lender wins top accolade at national credit awards

A Durham-based charity that works with social housing providers to help tenants access loans for vital household goods is celebrating success in a national award win.

Smarterbuys Store won the 2020 Diversity and Inclusion award at the CICM Credit Awards beating off stiff competition from institutions such as Aggregate Industries UK Ltd, DWF Law LLP, JLL, and Kingston University.

Managing director Vicky McCourt, who has been part of Smarterbuys Store since 2014, a partnership between an ethical community bank and an established housing association, took the top prize in the category at the ceremony held at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London, the first CICM awards the not-for-profit charity had entered.

Ms McCourt said: "I feel so proud of what we have achieved



Comedian Colin Murray with chief executive of Smarterbuys Store Vicky McCourt.

and of my team for getting the recognition like this at such a prestigious event.

"We entered as we were so proud of being an ethical lender and caring about our customers and staff and this prize is going to make a huge difference to encouraging more to come to us

as well as increasing our brand identity in the industry."

The CICM is the largest recognised professional body in the world for the credit community.

The British Credit Awards were launched eight years ago as a platform to celebrate the achievements of the most deserving individuals, teams and organisations in the international credit industry.

The judges said of Smarterbuys Stores that it was, 'a charity that ticks all the boxes in its support of diversity and inclusion'.

Originally designed to give social housing tenants access to cheaper credit for white goods, TVs and furniture, last year Smarterbuys Stores extended its offering to work with all consumers on lower incomes, sparking a 50% increase in demand for its service.

Visit www.sbstore.org or phone 0300 500 0975

Bolt Burdon Kemp Design The Change

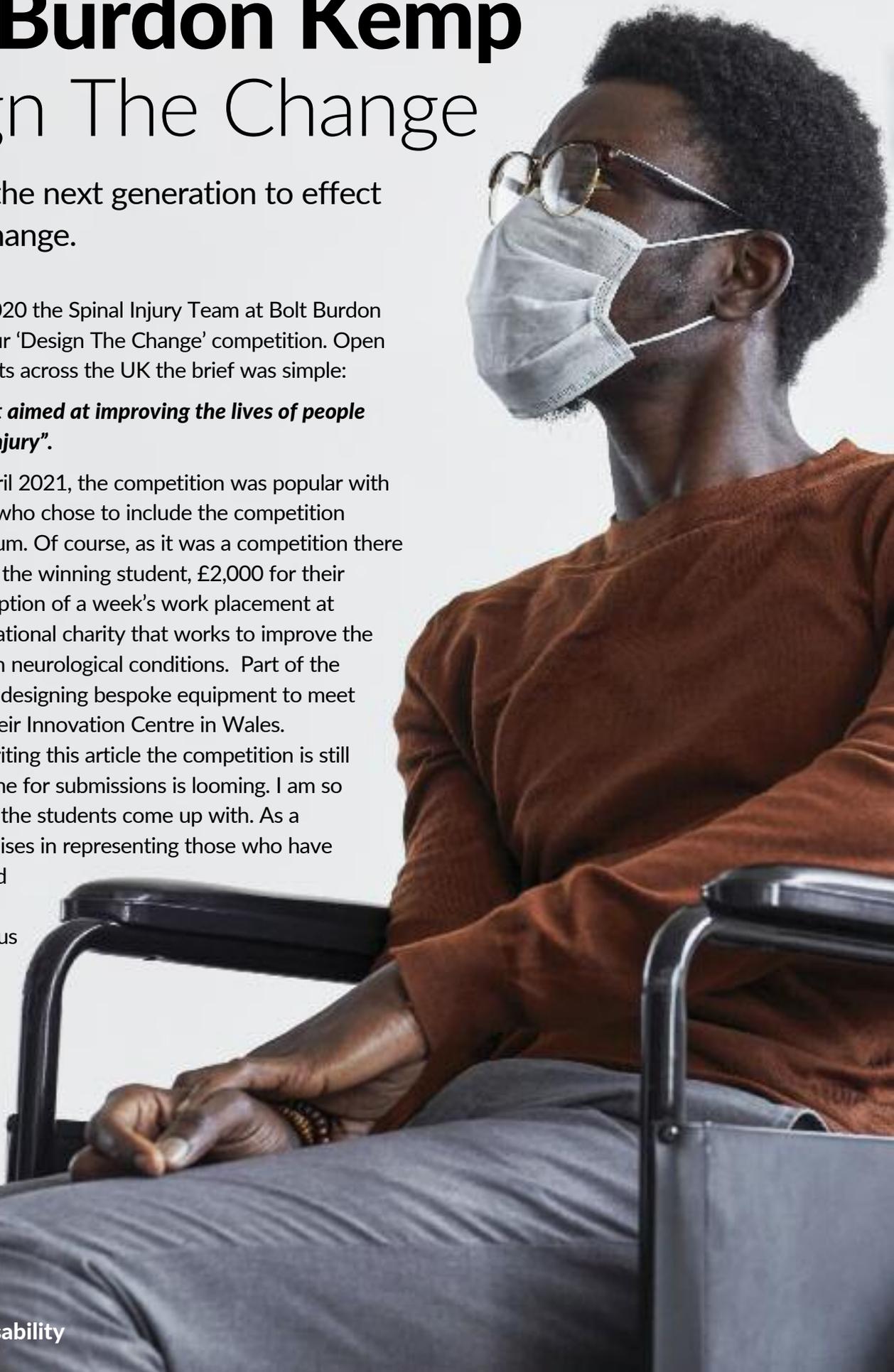
Encouraging the next generation to effect meaningful change.

IN SEPTEMBER 2020 the Spinal Injury Team at Bolt Burdon Kemp launched our 'Design The Change' competition. Open to university students across the UK the brief was simple:

"to invent a product aimed at improving the lives of people with a spinal cord injury".

Running until April 2021, the competition was popular with several universities who chose to include the competition within their curriculum. Of course, as it was a competition there is a prize: £3,000 to the winning student, £2,000 for their university and the option of a week's work placement at Cerebra, a unique national charity that works to improve the lives of children with neurological conditions. Part of the charity's focus is on designing bespoke equipment to meet families' needs at their Innovation Centre in Wales.

At the time of writing this article the competition is still open but the deadline for submissions is looming. I am so excited to see what the students come up with. As a solicitor who specialises in representing those who have sustained spinal cord injuries, I regularly explore the numerous aids and equipment my clients need to improve their quality of life. The aim of the law in injury claims is to





return the injured person to the position they would have been if the accident or negligence hadn't happened. This is done by way of money but of course the reality is that when you have sustained a life changing injury such as a spinal cord injury, no amount of money will ever replace what has been lost. Instead it is more about looking at ways to give the injured person the best quality of life possible and providing the means to be as independent as possible.

Useful and Stylish



Specialising in this field, you soon learn about all the different types of equipment that exist that are designed to help people on a day to day basis and there's no doubting that there are some really helpful gadgets out there. However, when you speak to those with a spinal cord injury they will often tell you that whilst there are many products out there, some are very expensive, others are unsightly and there are still many daily activities, ones which the able bodied take for granted, that are a continual challenge.

We asked Ella Beaumont, a

team member of the Stoke Mandeville Maulers Wheelchair Rugby Club to prepare a short video for us to highlight some of the difficulties she faces as a tetraplegic wheelchair user. An example she gave was the challenge of carrying all her shopping bags whilst wheeling herself, and having to carry bags in her teeth! Her solution would be a small, yet stylish(!), foldable trolley that would attach to her wheelchair, that would help make that aspect of her life easier. I love the emphasis on stylish – so many products can be incredibly utilitarian – in this incredibly diverse world, why can't useful products also look good and cater to numerous individual tastes?

As I become ever more familiar with the experiences my clients and those in the general SCI community face, this drove me and my colleagues to run the Design The Change competition. I really want to help make the world a more accessible place.

Tech that works for all

I wrote a blog recently on the issue of electric vehicles and the fact that the current infrastructure is not accessible to those with disabilities. As documented by Zap-Map, reported difficulties include locating a suitable charger that could meet their needs; challenges with the weight of charging cables; difficulties with the force required to attach the connector; the lack of dropped kerbs around charge points; and unsuitable parking arrangements. Why are we missing opportunities to develop tech that works for all? It's short-sighted and unacceptable in this day and age that as brand new infrastructure is being built, we are still seeing the needs of the disabled community being overlooked. ▶



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The RAF Benevolent Fund provides a range of support aimed at serving and former RAF personnel and their dependants. This includes grants to help with financial difficulty, emotional wellbeing services, and support for young people through its Airplay youth programme. In addition to this, it offers a range of independent living support, including (but not limited to):

- 📌 Mobility equipment, such as mobility scooters, electric wheelchairs and manual wheelchairs
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- 📌 Home adaptations, such as the installation of wheelchair ramps, stairlifts, level-access showers, widening of door frames and improving ground-floor facilities

- 📌 Financial support for care at home
- 📌 Additional support for carers, such as a Listening and Counselling Service, relationship support and telephone friendship groups
- 📌 An Advice and Advocacy Service offering benefits advice and acting on the beneficiary's behalf if they feel they are not receiving the support they are entitled to from the Government, the NHS or their Local Authority.

If you or someone you know is in need of support, please visit rafbf.org or call 0300 102 1919 for more information.



Struggles in the Pandemic

The Covid pandemic has emphasised this continuing oversight. When the restrictions that accompanied the first lockdown were announced in Spring 2020, it was clear that little, if any, thought had been given to the true impact the new rules would have on those with disabilities. As a result of the lockdown, people faced being without care or being cared for by people without adequate PPE. Further challenges included difficulty accessing shopping; cancelled therapy appointments; lack of respite care, to name but a few. Sadly, not much has changed with the second and third lockdowns.

If you are struggling as a result of the pandemic there is of course information on the government website. However, there are also some amazing charities out there who, despite facing severe funding crises, have managed to continue to provide support. For example, for those with spinal

cord injuries the Spinal Injuries Association has managed to provide weekly virtual coffee shops as well as providing ongoing peer support, advocacy input as well as keeping up-to-date information available on their website.

Whilst I alone cannot effect the changes which we, as a society, need, I do hope that by running our competition, we are planting the seed of accessibility in the mind of the next generation who will be designing the products that we use in the future. Hopefully our efforts to broaden their horizons and educate them on a different perspective, will ensure they do not take a linear approach but instead look at everything they design and consider how it can be made accessible to as many people as possible.

Competitions like Design The Change are essential in inspiring those who design the future. ●

Victoria Oliver, Head of the Spinal Injury Team at Bolt Burdon Kemp.



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HOW TO GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP AND IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH

Discover the benefits of a Baavet duvet

The secret to a good sleep is to have your body temperature regulated, so you go into a deep, dormant sleep allowing the body to repair cells, fight illness and generally rejuvenate itself

There was a time when everyone in the UK slept under wool, but as many of you may well remember they were itchy and heavy and by the time winter came you were locked down under three blankets and even a quilt siderdown. Oh happy days! And we had to make the bed up every day; all those blankets.

After the Second World War, more people travelled abroad where they discovered French wine, cheeses and the 'continental quilt', which eventually became known as the duvet. It was nice and snugly at night and you didn't have to make the bed, just shake it out.

But since then, times have changed for the better. The vast majority of us now have double glazing and central heating as well as loft insulation and so on.

Our houses are warmer, our beds are warmer and our duvets seem to have become hotter.

THE SECRET TO A GOOD SLEEP

The secret to a good sleep is to have your body temperature regulated, so you go into a deep, dormant sleep allowing the body to repair cells, fight illness and generally rejuvenate itself.

To go into that deep, dormant state our blood pressure must drop, our heart rate must go down, but most of all, our temperature has to drop.

Under normal duvet fillings, polyester, feather and even the most expensive down duvet, only one thing can happen during



the night: your temperature will rise because they're all insulators. So, during the night you toss and turn or throw the duvet off in order to cool your body down. This leads to disturbed sleep.

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Wool naturally wicks away moisture: (it's the way a sheep sweats).

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Baavet dry. The secret is in the structure of the fibres, which are hollow, and absorb moisture leaving the surface of the fibre dry. Wool can absorb 30% of its own weight in moisture. **ALSO DUST MITES HATE WOOL** and can't survive because of the very dry nature of the surface of the fibres.

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Dr Peter Corr is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with over 20 years NHS experience and director of Bridge Psychology Services Ltd. He specialises in working with children and adolescents with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and other neurodevelopmental conditions, along with associated social and mental health difficulties.

Dr Corr has provided expert assessment and opinion to the criminal, family, coroners and civil courts as well as at tribunals and other legal proceedings.



His specialist reports cover:-

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- **Diagnostic Assessments** – including level of learning disability, neuro-developmental conditions, mental health assessment.
- **Functional and Adaptive Skills** – including social skills, self care, managing social interactions.
- **Capacity Assessment** – including treatment decisions, for place of residence, for college and employment.
- **Capacity Relating to Court** – fitness to plead, fitness to instruct a solicitor, fitness to manage the court environment.
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BENEFITS OF A HIGH QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism, adhd, and learning disabilities are very complex conditions and sometimes they can be invisible to other people. A high quality assessment should not be quick, or simply a checklist. It should take time to gather information from those who know the child, involve an experienced clinician who is able to understand the information, it should provide a clear opinion and recommendations on what might be helpful. A good assessment should be able to untangle neurodevelopmental difficulties, mental health difficulties, learned behaviour and "just being a child" so that the right understanding and support can be offered.

A thorough, assessment can be life changing for the child and family. It can be the difference between not being excluded from school, people understanding them better, opening up opportunities to access support, being able to cope with college, securing employment, having a family and living a fulfilling life. It could mean that they don't miss out on the life that they could have had.

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Flipper



Energy auto-switch site Flipper warn that around 11 million households could pay extra on their energy bills as the industry fears that people will default on their gas and electricity payments as the fall-out from covid 19 hits.

Flipper says energy regulator Ofgem's decision to up the maximum price that suppliers can charge from April 1 to £1,138 for the average bill – £96 higher than the previous cap – will have a disproportionate impact on people who are on poor value tariffs.

Barry Hayward, Managing Director of Flipper said: "While Ofgem is responding in an appropriate way to address an unprecedented situation, it does nonetheless leave many including the elderly and the most vulnerable people who are on standard or default tariffs bearing the brunt of this."

"We don't yet know what the full effect of coronavirus crisis will be, but with so many companies going into administration and job redundancies, it will no doubt increase the number of households struggling to pay their bills."

"For an average family home with medium energy usage, there is a price difference of more than £900 between the standard variable rate charge and the cheapest deal on the market, which could make all the difference."

"People on standard tariffs are easy pickings for energy suppliers. They are often elderly or among the

most vulnerable in society, or else householders who have been loyal to same supplier for years, or failed to notice they've come to the end of a fixed rate."

It is estimated that the 11 million households on standard tariffs miss out on collective annual savings of more than £3 billion by failing to switch to a competitively priced deal.

"Many people never check whether they could save money by switching energy supplier, either because they see it as a hassle or don't feel confident enough," added Barry, "but with bills rising by 9 per cent, it's more important than ever to be on a good deal."

"Flipper check the market for their members every month and switch them every time a saving of £50 a year is found – even if that's to a new deal with their current supplier. It means we spot if their current supplier has introduced a new tariff that is cheaper than the deal they are on, then we switch them over straightaway."

Unlike comparison sites, who get paid commission by the energy providers for switching people to them, Flipper the UK's first auto-switching service, do not take money from suppliers.

Members pay an annual fee of £30 when they are switched for the first time; tariffs are checked every month and customers are automatically moved to a better tariff if they can save £50 a year.

For more information visit: www.flipper.co.uk



Dogs with Ability to Share

Ability Dogs 4 Young People founder Carol Court (right) with the charity's first puppy, Georgie, who was matched with Christina (left).

DOGS ARE NOT our whole life, but they make our lives whole'. The saying, by photographer and writer Roger Caras, sums up what the passionate founder of Ability Dogs 4 Young People helps to do so successfully.

By training assistance dogs to enhance the independence of young people and children with physical and mental disabilities Carol Court is helping to make the lives of those children whole.

Seeing A Need

Founded by Carol in 2012, after she moved to the Isle of Wight from the mainland, the charity Ability Dogs 4 Young People has trained and homed more than 50 puppies to help youngsters with disabilities, including cerebral palsy, autism, diabetes and epilepsy.

"I used to work with Guide Dogs for the Blind and immediately saw that there were no similar schemes for disabled young people on the island," said Carol. "I suppose I wondered out loud if I could start a ▶

Training a puppy to be an Ability Dog takes two years with a lot of dedication.



Georgie as a two-year-old opening a cupboard door.

Vitamin D and Disability

As more and more of us are made aware of the benefits of supplements and nutritional products, how can you be sure that you are taking the right strength or product? Well, here at SunVit-D3 our vitamin D test kits are an excellent way to learn more about your health.

Over 7 million people or 18% of the working-age population in Britain are disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (Source: Employers' Forum on Disability). Vitamin D helps regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body. This vitamin is needed to keep bones, teeth, and muscles healthy. A lack of vitamin D can lead to bone deformities such as rickets in children, and bone pain caused by a condition called osteomalacia in adults.

Disabilities come in all shapes and sizes but what is clear is that low levels of vitamin D have been linked with a range of medical conditions.

For example, low vitamin D levels have been linked with an increased risk of getting MS, but also with more frequent relapses and increased disability in those with established MS. No single cause for MS has been found but in those people, who have a genetic predisposition for MS risk, a number of several environmental factors are implicated in causing the disease. Low vitamin D is one of these risk factors, which may

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work alongside other triggers causing the onset of MS.

Several large studies from around the world have shown evidence of this link. One study* compared 15,000 people with MS and 24,000 people without, and found genetically lower vitamin D levels in the people with MS. Two further studies looked at those joining the US Army or Nursing professions, and compared their blood levels of vitamin D with their subsequent chance of getting MS. Those with lower levels of vitamin D were more likely to develop MS.

Some forms of disability cause difficulties for individuals getting outdoors and causing

low levels of vitamin D.

In general vitamin D plays a major part within all our bodies and due to the UK being a country that does not see enough sunshine and warm weather it is advised that we look to supplement our low levels of vitamin D with a daily dose of between 400 -2000iu. Always check with your healthcare professional if taking higher doses of vitamin D.

*Reference to the study details <https://mstrust.org.uk/life-ms/diet/vitamin-d>

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charity, thinking people would tell me it wasn't a good idea. When they didn't I took that as a green light to set-up Ability Dogs 4 Young people."

As well as helping with practical tasks (picking up items, opening doors, helping dress and undress, crossing the road), Ability Dogs help increase disabled young people's well-being, confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to go on to further education or gain employment without needing full-time carers.

In addition, having a jacketed Ability Dog by their side means that more people feel able to come and talk to them, thereby increasing their general social interaction.

"Training a puppy to be an Ability Dog takes two years with a lot of dedication," explained Carol. "We place specially selected Labrador puppies with volunteer puppy parents, who care for the puppies in their own homes, fully socialise them and start their initial training. With the help of our puppy trainers, the young dog's training continues through to assistance dog level by about two years when each Ability Dog is placed with a disabled young person.

"The disabled young people are supported every step of the way, and we fully fund our Ability Dogs



Puppy parent (left) introduces puppy Pippa to Katy and her friends.

throughout their working lives (paying for food, equipment and vet bills), so we can give the young people all the benefits without an added financial burden."

Puppies Need Pounds

The population of the Isle of Wight is just 150,000 of whom about 26,000 people are registered disabled or have long term illness and there are over 700 children and young people (under the age of 24) with a disability living on the island.

It costs between £250,000 and £300,000 a year to run the charity – each dog costs £6k a year for the first three years and £2k a year for the rest of their lives – and much of that is raised from donations and through sales in the charity's three shops on the island. So, the recent lockdowns due to Covid-19 could have had serious consequences.

The lockdown meant that all fetes and fairs were called off, all talks and demos were cancelled, and the charity shops had to close their doors. Fundraising looked very bleak and the charity's fundraisers were all laid off.

"Of course we had to shutdown and all training stopped but it gave me the time to write to more than 500 trusts and with their donations and the



Puppy XJay meets with Bertie - both now working Ability Dogs.

THE SEQUAL TRUST has just celebrated its 50th year of supplying augmentative communication aids to disabled children and adults, throughout the UK, whose lives have been impacted by the loss of their natural voice, have extremely severe learning difficulties or are more or less housebound.

These individuals have lost the power to interact socially or even just to express their most basic needs and wishes. Children with such problems are unable to access the education system without the aid of technology. Their motor and social skills will be adversely affected and their path in life will be more of a struggle than for others. Elderly people can become isolated and restricted without the means to join in conversations and our aim is to turn all these negatives into positives.

The difficulty is that we have to raise the funds to purchase each piece of much needed equipment and whilst this process has always been a hard one, the recent and unusual circumstances caused by the Covid-19 situation, have added greater strains on many charities. That is why we need as much help as possible, by way of monetary donations, in order that we may continue issuing these life-changing devices to those in need.

Some of the more disabled children and adults who, apart from being unable to vocalise, also have no use of their limbs and so eye operated devices are required and these, along with wheelchair mounts, can cost around £8k plus. When we are fund raising to help, on average, 20 people at any one time, the total cost required soon mounts up!

If you can help by donating a few pounds towards the cost of these much-needed devices, then please don't hesitate to either contact this



office, send in a cheque, or visit our website www.the-sequaltrust.org.uk and press the Donate button!

If you, or anyone you know, requires our help in the provision of such a device, then click here www.thesequaltrust.org.uk/register-your-interest from our website, to access the application forms.

All equipment is provided on a lifelong loan basis with Sequal remaining responsible for all necessary repairs and upgrades for the life of each particular device. Membership of The Sequal Trust means lifelong help and support.

Lee Ridley, aka 'Lost Voice Guy', who is one of our Patrons, would not have been able to gain fame without his communication aid - who knows how many more individuals out there have as much to offer, given the chance?

Many Thanks, Liz Downes, Charity Manager.

Puppy parents with another generous donation to the charity



generous support of so many individuals we are back doing what we do best, training puppies” said Carol.

Work that was acknowledged in 2018 when the charity received The Queen’s Award for Voluntary

Right: Carol Court accepts The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service on behalf of the charity.

Service – the MBE for volunteer groups in the UK.

Following the pandemic of 2020-21, Ability Dogs 4 Young People is currently playing catch-up in terms of the number of puppies it trains, normally six a year. It’s already taken on seven so far this year and hopes to push the number of dogs it trains up to at least 10 a year.

To find out more or to donate go to www.abilitydogs4yp.org.uk



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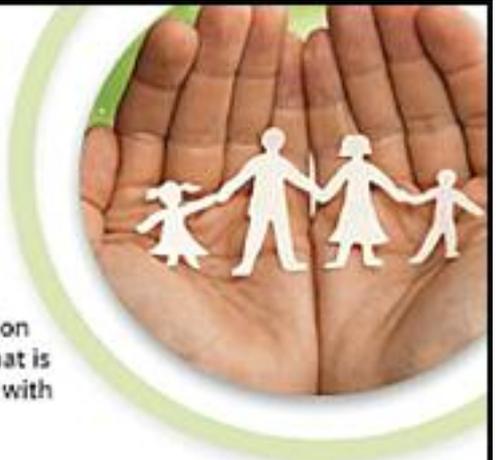
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Providing the correct care package is essential to save money and provide safe, efficient care. In many cases with the correct equipment double handed care is not required. Moving and handling is one of the major causes of occupational injuries, we should not expose professionals to avoidable risks. Bed blocking is a result of delayed discharge from hospital, not only are there financial costs but it is the unseen costs, emotional and physical, affecting the patient the most.



On average over a 12-month period, there are over 1,000,000 delayed days at an estimated cost of £320 million to the NHS. These costs could be reduced by providing the correct equipment to allow increased numbers of people to be discharged home. Discharge costs will continue to rise unless the correct care packages and equipment are provided.

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The Arctic Turning Bed

The Arctic turning bed is a multi-positional, multifunctional versatile bed system that has the following features: turning, high low, Trendelenburg, reverse Trendelenburg and profiling. The patient has the added feature of an independent leg movement and the ability to turn left or right whilst staying in the seated position. Height adjustable, the bed reduces unnecessary strain on carers backs. The automatic turning function can be fitted and tailored for an individual's needs. Repositioning available at the touch of a button.

The Amazon

The Amazon boasts all the above features of the Arctic Turning bed, but also has the added advantage of 'growing'. Regardless of the height of the person the Amazon will fit and profile in the correct places. This product is ideally suited for an environment where beds are recycled or where a teenager using it will be growing to an unknown height.

The Caribbean

The Caribbean is a paediatric, fully profiling bed that turns, has independent leg movement, and will grow with a child. This specialist bed has a wide range of movements available that can help children reposition and find comfort with minimal intervention. An automatic turning system is available. The Caribbean is suitable for children of all ages, from toddler to teen with a starting length of 60" growing to 66" then finally 72". The Caribbean's colour and theme can be customized to suit a child's design wishes.

Example Saving

A patient who needed regular turning to prevent pressure sores. This was costing £60k annually. By providing an Arctic turning bed these costs would be reduced to £10k an incredible £50k saving in one year*.

*This is a demonstration of an easily achievable saving and does not take into account the savings associated with the risk of injury or the improved independence and dignity for the client, which is simply priceless.

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“

The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest her or his patients in the care of the human frame in a proper diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease.

- Thomas A Edison

”

What is Chiropractic?

Chiropractic is a safe and natural solution to back, neck and shoulder pain, sciatica, headaches and migraines, minor sports injuries, and overall health & wellbeing.

Chiropractors are concerned with the framework of bones and muscles that support the body (the musculoskeletal system), and associated problems caused by accidents, stress, lack of exercise, poor posture, illness, and everyday wear and tear.

Chiropractors are committed, highly educated primary healthcare professionals, focused on helping you to be as active and healthy as possible. By offering expert drug-free spinal health care, dietary and lifestyle advice, chiropractors help you to lead a healthy life and maintain your wellbeing.



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We also offer a range of employment services aimed at getting those detached from the work place back into work as well as a free recruitment service. If you want to find out more about OA Scotland Welfare Services, please contact us.



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¹CEP 15, 2017, Vol. 48(1)

²Professor of Medicine, Corporate Vice President of Quality and Patient Safety, Corporate Medical Director, Director, Prevention, Epidemiology and Antimicrobial Stewardship, Cleveland Medical Center and Wayne



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Think about what you want and need from professional care. Collate as much information as possible about your requirements so you can compare providers and choose one that's right for you. Consider what activities you need help with and how often you'd like support.

Next, make a list of care agencies that provide the kind of support you're after, care directories can help you find agencies local to you and list the care they provide. You can then make enquiries to the agencies on your shortlist and arrange to meet with staff, preferably in your home. A reputable agency will use this opportunity to fully understand your needs and requirements, but this is also your opportunity to find out everything you need to know - don't be afraid to ask questions. It's often a good idea to ask a family member or neighbour to sit in on the assessment with you to make notes and keep track of everything discussed so you can review it later.



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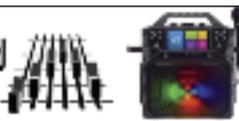
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Where There's a Will, There's a Way

THE OXFORD FOLK festival was one of the first live music events to face cancellation when the Covid pandemic prompted the UK's first lockdown last year.

But for organiser Cat McGill that wasn't an option. She went into organisational overdrive and took the whole Folk Weekend Oxford online, thanks, in her own words 'to the power of my autistic brain'.

Cat was diagnosed autistic at the age of 37 after her 11-year-old daughter was diagnosed and Cat suddenly recognised many of her daughter's traits in herself.

Diagnosis Heralds Positive Change

"It was very much a light bulb moment in my understanding of my own behaviour and character," explained Cat. "I went through a period of self-exploration and self-realisation and came out a lot kinder person. Just knowing it was autism dictating my life completely changed it for the better.



Cat McGill.

"I'm now very passionate about raising awareness for other women who may have gone undiagnosed for most of their lives, because it really does help when you understand what you are dealing with."

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact

with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.

"Keeping busy is one way of dealing with anxiety, so getting the folk festival online in under a month last year was a great way of dealing with the challenges and uncertainty of the time. We had to liaise with all the performers involved in 48 separate events and of course get the tec right," added Cat.

It was a success. The festival sold more tickets than in a normal year and attracted a worldwide audience. ▶



There is so much you can achieve in terms of communication through music.

Weekend Oxford, again!

The unique appeal of the shows is both the gig quality sound, provided by engineers connecting remotely and mixing live during the performance, and the interaction between artists and

It led to Cat and fellow musician, producer and educator Pete Ord, launching Live To Your Living Room, a virtual music venue which brings together artists and audiences, in a unique, live, intimate and interactive gig setting.

The online platform hosts established national and international artists at the forefront of the acoustic, blues, roots and folk music scene and the duo have hosted more than 100 'live' online interactive gigs - including the 2021 Folk

their audience. This much missed aspect of live gigging, using Zoom, allows performers and viewers to see and hear each other, connect and applaud.

The online venture was set-up by Cat, herself a singer and fiddle player, and Pete as a means of providing professional musicians, normally playing in 200-500 seat venues, and those employed in the wider music industry, from sound technicians to music agents, with a vital lifeline and viable income stream while venues remain closed.



It turned out to be a lot more than that

“I soon realised our Live to your Living Room gigs were appealing not just to people who could no longer go to gigs because of Covid but to people who could never go to gigs because of their disability,” said Cat. “People who had felt excluded from attending live gigs for so long because of insurmountable problems in getting there, just too ill or, as is the case with autistic people, completely out



of their comfort zone in a social setting,

“As someone with autism I could relate to that and my hope is that when live gigs return to packed venues I can persuade the artists and bands to schedule online dates between their ‘dead dates’ while on tour. It’s a win-win situation.”

Cat is also an author and community musician, specialising in working with special needs and disabilities, as well as working for the charity Music for Autism in special schools nationwide.

“I have missed that during the pandemic,” said Cat. “Just rocking up to a special school with my fiddle and interacting with the children through music.

“There is so much you can achieve in terms of communication through music. It’s a joy for both me and them.”

To find out what gigs you can enjoy www.livetoyourlivingroom.com ●

A poster for Shakespeare's Globe. At the top, it lists plays: Romeo & Juliet, Twelfth Night, The Tempest, As You Like It, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Metamorphoses, along with 'Live-streamed performances'. The main title is 'Assisted performances SUMMER 2021' in large red letters. Below the title is an image of the Globe Theatre with a red archway. At the bottom, there are four red boxes with white text: 'AD', 'BSL', 'R', and 'CAP'. Below these boxes, it says 'JOIN OUR FREE ACCESS SCHEME' with the phone number '020 7902 1409', the hours 'Monday to Friday, 10.00am – 5.00pm', the email 'access@shakespearesglobe.com', and the website 'shakespearesglobe.com/visit'.



Don't Stop the Music

Disabled singer songwriter calls on the music industry to start playing a new tune after releasing his debut single to wide acclaim.

Kieron Kneafsey is hitting all the right notes after being told he would never make it in the music business.

After releasing his first single in 2020 – Just Be Mine – the talented 28-year-old is proving he is no one hit wonder. His second single has just hit the airwaves and Kieron is working with studio producers to release an album in November.

Kieron suffers from Hypermobility Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, an incurable condition that affects the connective tissues that provide support in skin, tendons, ligaments, blood vessels, internal organs and bones.

Follow Your Dream

As a gifted singer and dancer Kieron enjoyed the spotlight as a youngster, but as EDS and arthritis took rapid hold in his mid-teens he became confined to a wheelchair and over a 10-year period underwent more than 20 operations.

“It was bad enough that I couldn’t walk but due to the condition my vocal muscles deteriorated to such an extent that the doctors told me they would never be strong enough to sing again and that physically I would never be able to cope with the day-to-day challenges of the music business,” said Kieron.

“I’ve loved music and singing from a very early age and despite what anyone said or what personal hardship I faced due to my disability I was not going to give up on my dream. Disabled or not it was what I wanted to do and I got to a point about a year ago, during yet another long period of rehabilitation, that I started to write songs.

“A disabled person is rarely given the chance to prove themselves but I wasn’t going to let that happen. I made sure I did get noticed.”

Kieron posted a recording of him singing a cover version of a Becky Hill song on Instagram and was invited by Electric Bear Studios in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, to come in and record one of his own songs.

The result was ‘Just Be Mine’, a feel-good dance track that was well-received by music producers and included on the playlist of top Irish DJ and producer Shane Codd, known for his hit ‘Get Out My Head’. It has gone on to be released on all major streaming platforms.

“The whole experience has been surreal, from going into a studio and recording my track to releasing it as a single and getting such great feedback,” explained Kieron. “It feels like I’ve finally got my voice back! It’s certainly my greatest achievement and shows that even with a severe disability people can still follow their dream.

“Which along with showing I still have a feel for dance is what I wanted ‘Just Be Mine’ to convey, that my dream did become my reality.

“Obviously I couldn’t have done any of it without the support of my parents and the production ▶



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team at Electric Bear Studios, who showed great patience and let me record the track at my own pace.”

Kieron wants his success to be the catalyst for change in the music industry and to start raising awareness of the untapped talent that goes unnoticed because people can't see past disability or the use of a wheelchair.

“I hope to build on what I have achieved so far and to use that to become an advocate for change in the music industry and to see more disabled people breaking into the industry,” said Kieron. “Of course I understand that many disabled people don't have the confidence and are fearful of being judged or not being taken



seriously but I hope I can inspire those people.

“When I was young you never really saw or heard disabled people on the television or radio who were involved in the music industry. It was sort of a taboo subject and people didn't want to talk about it. That's the exact opposite of what we need today.

“I want to be seen and heard and like any good musician perform live.”

Kieron's debut single and the follow-up – ‘Doing It On My Own’ – are available to stream on Spotify, iTunes, Apple Music, Instagram Sounds and Tik Tok. ●

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ADVERTORIAL



Upgraded facilities at Hull New Theatre include a new level entrance, increased number of wheelchair spaces with discounted seats for eligible carers, improved accessible toilets and lifts providing access to various floors, bars and refreshment areas.

In addition, the varied programme with regular accessible performances including audio described, captioned, signed, and relaxed

performances aims to delight. While at Hull City Hall, lifts and wheelchair spaces for both seated and standing events make it a fully inclusive space.

We welcome Assistance dogs and have systems to aid hearing and visually impaired customers at both venues, allowing the power of the stage to be experienced by everyone.

We look forward to welcoming you to Hull Theatres soon.

We're (not) all going on a **Summer Holiday**

THIS SUMMER MOST of us will be opting for a staycation – but does that mean staying at home or discovering a bit more about the country where we live.

If you rely on a wheelchair to get around, then it's good to know the most suitable locations for a break-away to enjoy a city break, countryside retreat or seaside getaway in the UK.

Thanks to new research by one of the most successful and highly respected specialist car insurers in the UK that choice has been narrowed down.

According to Adrian Flux, Nottinghamshire, Brighton and Hove, Norfolk, Reading and Cornwall are all top of the charts for accessible staycations this year, offering plenty of accessible accommodation and sightseeing options.

Exploring not just wheelchair-accessible accommodation and sightseeing, but also the latest government data on availability of accessible taxis and private hire vehicles, Adrian Flux pinpointed the five UK regions as the most-improved since 2019 for disabled travellers.

Its UK Locations For Disabled Drivers report gives the following overview of the regions:

Nottinghamshire

Home to the first wheelchair-accessible nature reserve in the UK – Skylarks – Nottinghamshire is an ideal staycation spot for disabled travellers for a myriad of reasons. Even the famous Sherwood Forest is now accessible to all thanks to well-maintained pathways and free wheelchair hire. ►



The Royal Pavilion, Brighton.



Skylarks Nature Reserve.



National Ice Centre.



Sherwood Forest's accessible pathways.

Boasting everything from accessible river cruises on the Nottingham Crusader to wheelchair ice skating at The National Ice Centre, the county now has 315 accessible taxis and private hire vehicles to go round, an increase of 48 (+18%)

114 Living with Disability



compared to 2019, as well as a plethora of wheelchair-friendly accommodations. In 2020, HomeToGo ranked Nottingham itself the 20th most wheelchair-friendly city in all of Europe.

Brighton and Hove

If sunning yourself on the shoreline in an all-terrain wheelchair sounds just the ticket, look no further than Brighton Beach. As well as the accessible i360 viewing platform, offering panoramic views along the coastline, Brighton's



The Queens Arms.



Brighton's pier and seafront are all well-equipped for wheelchair access.

pier and seafront are all well-equipped for wheelchair access.

It wouldn't be a trip to Brighton without a little drag cabaret, and The Queen's Arms are happy to oblige, with step-free facilities and highly-rated table service at all of their shows. Brighton and Hove has 398 accessible taxis and PHVs, up by 42 (+12%) since 2019, meaning journeys from beach to bar don't require forward planning. While you're there, check out The Royal Pavilion and Toy & Model Museum, too.

Norfolk

From all-terrain wheelchair hire on the North Norfolk coastline to accessible day boat hire on the scenic Norfolk Broads, the majority of Norfolk's main attractions are wheelchair-friendly.

Disabled visitors can choose from countryside cottages or luxury hotels, with 414 accessible taxis and PHVs to take you from castle to coast and back again, a rise of 36 (+10%) since 2019. **Page 119** ►



Boating on the Norfolk Broads.



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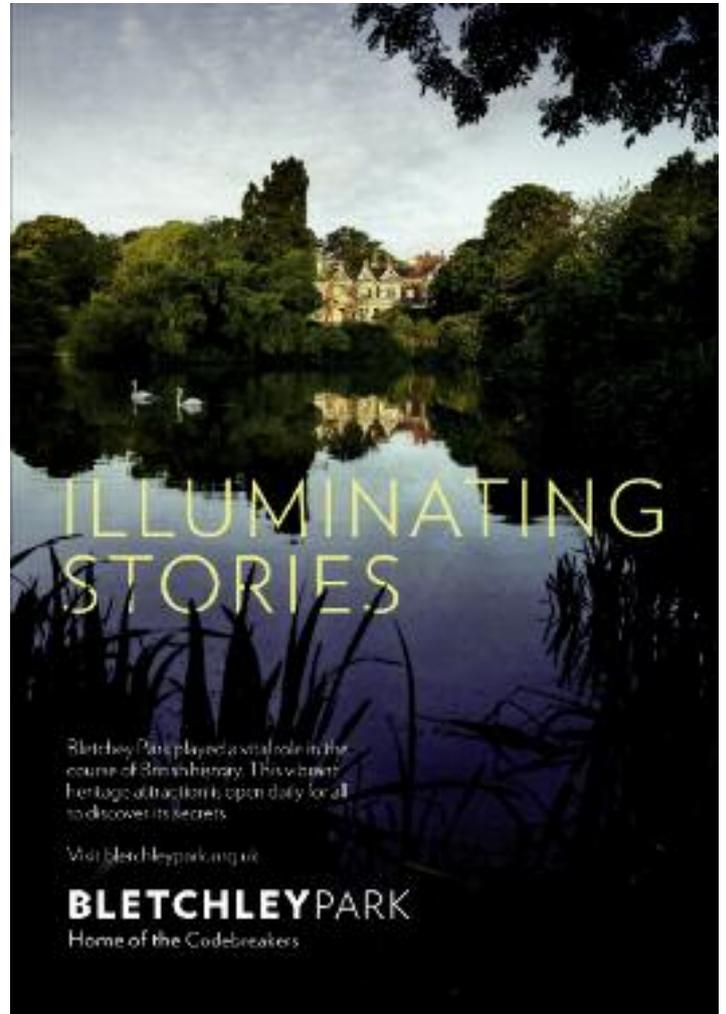
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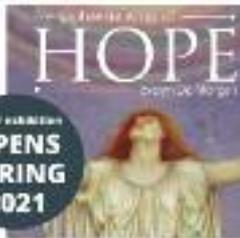
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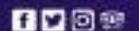


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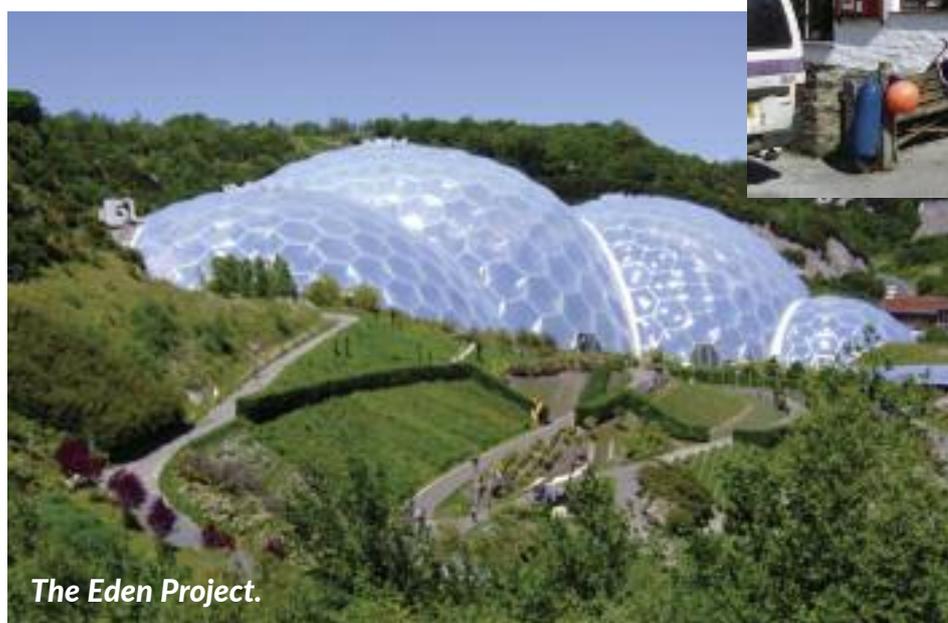
Norwich offers plenty in the way of wheelchair-friendly shopping, museums and galleries, while elsewhere in Norfolk, it's easy to navigate nature reserves – such as the renowned Sculthorpe Moor Nature Reserve – and even Royal residences, with Sandringham on your doorstep.

Reading

The city of Reading offers shopping aplenty for those in need of a city break, with Broad Street Mall and The Oracle Shopping Centre both rated as highly accessible by Euan's Guide. Restriction-dependent, there are live performances planned for 2021 at the accessible Sub89 underground



Live performances in Reading.



The Eden Project.

music venue and at The Mill, a wheelchair-friendly theatre with waterside bar and restaurant just outside of the city.

Reading now has 252 accessible taxis and PHVs, a rise of 31 (+14%) since 2019, along with hundreds of choices for wheelchair-friendly hotels, guest houses and staycation apartments.

Cornwall

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Witchcraft Museum.

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For more information visit bclm.com/accesstours



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There are 10 car parking spaces available for Blue Badge Holders which must be applied for when booking tickets. The path is accessible but not suitable for motorised wheelchairs. The event is not recommended for photo sensitive people and if you are taking an assistance dog please remember it will be dark with noise, lights and people. Book tickets at www.enchantedforest.org.uk

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Footprints on the Right Path

A CHARITY PROVIDING specialist care and support for children with mobility or communication difficulties has been granted a financial lifeline.

The East Midlands based Footprints CEC is continuing its valuable work following concern that the loss of more than 40% of its income during the Covid-19 pandemic would lead to its closure.

Global's Make Some Noise has made a £21,000 grant to upgrade Footprints' I.T. systems and train staff to deliver online Conductive Education sessions.

But the charity is not out of the woods just yet and will need to raise further funding - a minimum of £17,000 a month through voluntary donations - if it is to re-open fully.

"It's heart-breaking to think that we may have to rethink our strategy to survive, possibly making some difficult choices regarding our services," said Footprints Manager Nathalie Bailey-Flitter.

"We desperately need more people to support us, particularly through annual corporate partners as that kind of support helps us forward plan financially and helps us ensure we help as many families as we can." ▶

Jesse at one of Footprint's weekly sessions.





Global Support

The education centre provides weekly sessions for families of children with mobility or communication difficulties, teaching them everyday life skills that are often taken for granted such as eating and walking.

But due to the vulnerability and complex needs of those children, Footprints had to close its doors last year as a result of the health crisis.

Fifty-percent of its education staff were placed on furlough, meaning that the remaining team had the full burden of supporting families without the technical know-how and appropriate equipment to deliver online sessions.

“To be able to function fully and provide seamless support for families is important to us,” said Nathalie.

“During the lockdown, we were fortunate to receive funding to start online Zoom classes that our staff embraced as well as they could. However, our outdated systems and internet capabilities were insufficient and unable to cope with the demands we wanted to place on them.”

The funding from Global’s Make Some Noise scheme allows the charity to ‘Covid-proof’ their service. It helps ensure that children who cannot attend in person, can still join in from home with a parent or guardian and benefit from ongoing support, which is vital to maintain life skills.



Nathalie Bailey-Flitter.

“Our biggest concern is being able to consistently provide the right support at the right time for our families,” added Nathalie. “Missing a few school sessions is not the same as missing a few Conductive Education sessions for our children – it’s the difference between eating and

drinking safely, communicating wants and needs, learning to grasp, sit-up, roll over or walk.

“Conductive Education builds new neural pathways in the brain, and this is done through repetition, using the group’s motivation. Each time a session is missed, progress is delayed – it takes so much longer for each child to learn how to master the activities we take for granted. These children (and their families) need continuous access to our regular weekly support.”

Jesse’s Story

Footprints currently support 60 families, such as the family of two-year-old Jesse who has a number of health conditions which affect his development.

Mum Beth Fisher had been attending Footprints’ conductive education centre with Jesse for nearly a year when the pandemic forced its closure.

Jesse was born prematurely at 31 weeks, and as a result was very ill when he was born, having a collapsed lung at one day old. When he was just three and a half weeks old, his family were told he

had severe bilateral brain damage/Periventricular leukomalacia (PVL) – which is a type of brain injury, most common in premature babies, that causes damage to the white matter of the brain.

They were told before birth and in the first few days he might not survive, but he continued to go from strength to strength and was discharged after spending the first four weeks of his life in hospital.

Doctors said that Jesse was likely to have a number of physical and learning difficulties and may have epilepsy. It was also said to be likely he would have cerebral palsy, and he has recently been formally diagnosed with the condition which affects his movement, coordination and sight.

Jesse's development is delayed, and he is just learning to sit on his own – something that is often done by babies between six to eight months. It is unclear if he will ever be able to walk, and if he does, he may need some form of walking aid.

Jesse was attending Footprints weekly where he works on his mobility and communication, as well as learning things other children would generally pick up naturally.

A Zoom class is not the physical contact a child needs to progress.

“Footprints is a place of physical, emotional and social support for children and parents of disabled and special educational needs children,” explained Beth.

“Through the weekly sessions, I've made great friends who understand how it feels to raise a disabled child. It can be difficult to go to regular baby groups where other children are all developing neurotypically and can all do the same things, so having other parents to relate to who understand how you feel means the world to us.

“At Footprints, Jesse gets the opportunity to work



on everyday skills such as rolling over, standing and learning to turn pages in a book. Through the programme and conductive education classes, we can monitor things such as how he responds to certain activities like reaching or using his hands and put these ideas into practice at home. The weekly sessions are amazing because he learns by repetition – he knows what's coming and he learns what to do next time.

“The sessions are very social, and since the temporary closure of the centre we have missed the simple things like sitting with the other families to have a snack, and just the support that being at the centre gives us as a family.”

Support Another 40-Years

Founded by a group of parents in 1981, Footprints CEC's mission is to provide Conductive Education and other services to help children with mobility and communication problems develop the skills they need to thrive and achieve their potential. It is committed to creating a safe, positive, supportive and fun environment where parents receive practical assistance, information and training to help them support their child in their own home.

“2020 was an incredibly difficult year for us all,” said Nathalie. “But none more so than for our families. They know isolation better than most, but have also had to cope with the 24 hour a day needs of their children with little or no support for months. We all know that virtual is no replacement for a real conversation. A Zoom class is not the physical contact a child needs to progress. A phone call is no replacement for a hug.

“Footprints has managed to re-open for our families, on a reduced (Covid safe) scale. However, some of our classes and speech lessons remain on-line for the safety of our children.

“We have also moved our fundraising on-line. The #keepfootprintsafloat campaign has been so well supported and we are incredibly grateful to all who ►

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have set-up pages and donated. But Footprints needs to keep the momentum going as there have been no live events to generate income for us.”

If you would like to support the charity, you can donate to its Keep Footprints Afloat campaign: <http://bit.ly/KeepFootprintsAfloat>

£3,300 will transform the lives of parent and child, giving practical advice and emotional support to one of the families for one year

£1,000 will purchase low and high technology communication aids and sensory toys

£500 will provide new supplies of books to support specialised pre-reading and writing skills work

£100 purchase materials for topics each term: colours, the weather, where people work, things that move.

£85 will give a parent hope by providing a single parent and child session for a new family.



£25 buys a supply of bubbles, chewy tubes and other equipment to help with a speech therapy project for children with Down's syndrome.

To find out more www.footprintscec.org

Nurturing Independence

The **halow** project supports young adults with a learning disability to live the life they choose as independently as possible.

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halow provides exceptional person-centred care which enables young people with a learning disability to take control of their own lives by providing opportunities and support to:

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halow currently supports over 200 young people (aged 16+) throughout Surrey and the surrounding area.

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Everything Is Better Purple



LACK OF ACCESSIBILITY and inclusion is non-negotiable, inexcusable and short sighted.

It's a message that Purple believes is finally getting through to businesses.

Purple Tuesday is a change programme for organisations of all sizes from all sectors to get involved in improving the customer experience for disabled people.

But as Purple CEO Mike Adams OBE states, it's not just about one day – changing the conversation between businesses and disabled people has to take place 365 days a year.

“Our ambition is to normalise disability in company conversations, to show that it is

We have seen a sustainable step change by businesses to make the customer experience more accessible since Covid 19.

In the UK alone, the Purple Pound – the spending power of disabled people and their families – is worth a staggering £274 billion and is estimated to be rising by 14% per year, yet less than 10% of organisations have a targeted plan to access the disability market.

Purple see disability as a value opportunity and Mike is leading the development of products and services which are beginning to transform the landscape across all business sectors.

“We realised very early on that if we were going to improve the lives of disabled people and tackle the inequalities and injustices of accessibility we needed to take non-disabled people on that journey,” explained Mike.

“In doing so we could change the conversation and show that disabled people were not simply vulnerable people, supported by charities or looked after by the state. They were also a huge commercial opportunity for businesses willing to buck convention and break down the barriers to accessibility.

Seize the Opportunity

“Businesses need to make sure that they are attractive and ready for disabled customers, not just because it’s the right thing to do, but also because it’s a huge business imperative in terms of generating income.

“It’s also a catalyst for attracting and retaining an amazing talent pool of disabled people to work in an organisation. This reflects the message that the business is sending out to customers about its willingness to naturally incorporate accessibility and inclusion in its commercial planning. Good organisations reflect their customer base in their workforce.”

Additionally, over 80% of disabled people have hidden or invisible impairments and in persuading businesses to accommodate their needs there

not a taboo subject and that there is a huge commercial opportunity for businesses willing to make a simple step-change in their attitude to the needs and value of disabled customers,” said Mike.



Purple CEO Mike Adams OBE.

has been a dramatic increase in the number of employees disclosing their own hidden disabilities.

“As a disabled person, I am passionate about disabled people having an equal customer experience to everybody else,” said Mike. “I am equally passionate in supporting businesses to work with their staff and environment to create a positive difference for disabled customers and impact their bottom line.”

Purple Tuesday is about making that happen and is free for all organisations to get involved with – if they make at least one new commitment to improve the customer experience for disabled people, such as:

- **Complete an Online Accessibility Audit**

To identify where you can make improvements on your website to improve online accessibility.

- **Complete a Site Access Audit**

To identify where you can make improvements in your physical space to improve accessibility.

- **Provide customer service training**

For your staff through face-to-face, online or blended forms of delivery to help your staff confidently communicate with disabled people, without fear of unintentionally offending them.

- **Training and awareness**

To help your staff to understand various types of disabilities, including those which are hidden or invisible.

- **British Sign Language**

Training your staff to learn some key words and phrases in British Sign Language to enable basic conversation with customers who use this as their main form of communication.

● **Formalising quiet hours**

To support customers who may have sensory needs such as Autism, ensuring all usual loud noises are either reduced or removed during this period, such as till beeping and music.

“We have seen a sustainable step change by businesses to make the customer experience more accessible since Covid 19,” said Mike. “The economic and social impact of the pandemic has enabled us to discuss the benefits in the sort of commercial terms that businesses understand – profit.

“The lockdown that affected high street retailers and led to such high levels of isolation, particularly within the disabled community, naturally drove people to the internet. But that shone a light on the very lack of accessibility that Purple has long urged companies to sort out.

“Access to the online environment, to information and knowledge and to the means of buying products and services is unknowingly denied to disabled people by a very large number of websites.”

Purple Tuesday – this year on November 2 – is about making the customer experience accessible. Now in its fourth year, Purple hope 2021 will be the year businesses finally reconnect with all their customers and staff.

Last year 4,000 businesses registered. This year the target is 10,000.

“We do offer a basic package of free resources but we would love it if all businesses would shine a light on providing a good customer experience for disabled people all year round,” added Mike.

“So, we have introduced Purple Tuesday 365, a subscription service supporting organisations and their staff to access knowledge, understanding and practical approaches to provide a better everyday customer experience for disabled people and their families.”

As part of Purple Tuesday 365 organisations will receive:

- A monthly exclusive webinar covering contemporary disability related topics to align with other national awareness events e.g. mental health day, autism day, diabetes day etc. All webinars will

be recorded to share with all your staff.

- Resources throughout the year to help you engage and communicate with your customers and guide your staff. During the Covid-19 pandemic we know more is needed about online accessibility, mental health and staff training resources.
- Use of Purple Tuesday 365 logo and marketing assets to demonstrate your commitment to disabled customers and Purple Tuesday, the #1 brand for improving the disabled customer experience.

“Register your organisation to join us on this journey and celebrate your commitment to change on 2 November 2021 and make a difference,” added Mike, who after his interview with LWD was lined-up for a call to Saudi Arabia, where Purple is looking to replicate its accessibility initiative.

To find out more go to www.purpletuesday.org.uk ●



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Support for Growing Careers

THE FIRST GRADUATE of a unique apprentice scheme to help young adults with learning difficulties has landed his first job.

Set-up by Ground Control, one of the UK's largest external maintenance and commercial landscaping companies, the industry-first scheme has successfully supported, mentored and now employed 20-year-old Wayne Gorman.

It empowered Wayne to learn new skills, extend his knowledge base and become more confident as a person.

Wayne is the first student from The Westminster School in the West Midlands to be taken on by Ground Control, which services more than 50,000 private and public sector sites throughout the UK. And he won't be the last.

Following close on his heels are Jordan Brown, who has completed his supported internship and is transitioning to his grounds maintenance apprenticeship scheme, and Kenny Hanney, who has just taken his first step on the career ladder by joining the internship programme.

"We've worked closely with teachers and regulatory authorities to make training courses more accessible and flexible for people with learning difficulties," said Roy Candlin, Contracts Manager at Ground Control.

"A key to this has been the removal of barriers



Youngsters involved in the apprenticeship scheme include from left to right Kenny Hanney, Jordan Brown and Wayne Gorman.

such as the requirement for five GCSEs that were preventing a lot of people like Wayne, Jordan and Kenny from achieving their potential."

The scheme has proved such a hit at The Westminster School, which caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties plus additional needs for pupils aged 7-19, that five more students will move into the programme during the next 12 months.

"It empowered Wayne to learn new skills, extend his knowledge base and become more confident as a person," said Wayne's mum Lex Farmer. **Page 143** ►

Whether just starting out or well established, businesses use finance for any number of reasons. Cashflow along the supply chain is a frequent concern. Suppliers, tax liabilities and wages can't wait. Straightforward and quick access to cash helps meet your expenses, and can help boost your growth.



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We're proud to foster inclusion through employment. Because of you, we can keep the world moving.

At XPO, we take pride in creating a workplace where our employees feel they belong, and we're committed to fostering equality to ensure our people thrive. We have an opportunity to make an impact that can change people's lives by offering rewarding jobs and providing training to support career advancement.

We work with a number of organisations, including the Down's Syndrome Association whose WorkFit programme connects employers with individuals who have Down's syndrome. WorkFit provides training for employers to help support the programme's participants in the workplace. As part of our diversity agenda, we signed up to be Disability Confident Level 1, Committed and are currently working towards Level 2, which will be completed this year.

Logistics is a sector where we can offer tailored employment solutions that can help empower individuals with Down's syndrome. Through WorkFit, each employee has at least two "buddies" within the team and a designated trainer assigned to them. The trainer will stay with them as long as they need and works as part of the buddy team. The programme benefits everyone involved and is a way for us to contribute in a meaningful way to creating a strong community.



Amanda is our Warehouse Operative, who works in our Returns and QA department.

Every year, we also celebrate "World Down Syndrome Day" by wearing different socks. It's our very own contribution to "Lots of Socks" Day, a worldwide campaign aimed at raising Down's syndrome awareness. Over the past few years, a genuine movement has started with a lot of our employees now wearing mismatched socks on March 21.

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Short-term Business Loans – Paul Michel Finance provides secured loans to businesses from 3 – 12 months, or negotiable thereafter.

Trade Finance – Paul Michel Finance purchases supplies for its clients, secured against verified purchase orders and the resultant invoices.

Solutions can be tailored to clients' needs, incorporating some or all of these strategies. This is of course part of Paul Michel Finance's mission to offer flexible options for businesses. Clients are never tied in to long-term contracts, only using the company's services when they wish to.

"We also have a greater discretion than larger institutions because our own capital is used, meaning we can offer quick decisions," said Paul Michel. "We offer greater client control, as they can select which invoices they'd like to offer us for sale, meaning they are not contracted to factor all business through us."

Of course, the pandemic has created numerous challenges for businesses over the last year, and Paul Michel Finance has been the key to its clients' survival. "As a smaller outfit it has not been easy to compete with the Government backed funding schemes. Nonetheless, I have maintained funding relationships throughout the period.

"As the Government backed schemes come to an end, lending rates will rise and traditional funders will become more stringent with their criteria. These developments are already seen. In that sort of climate, a short-term, flexible and quick solution will be highly valued by an increasing number of businesses.

"I've helped a number of clients that could not secure funding, even from banks they've used for years. Fifo Capital has been established for over 15 years in Australia and New Zealand, and our processes allow for great flexibility."

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Written by Alice Bennett
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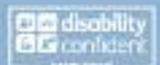
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Our values



“The rewards of having paid employment have contributed to Wayne feeling valued and having a sense of meaning and purpose. He has become more independent and it has given us peace of mind that Wayne has a future – he has an identity not just a name.

“I asked Wayne what he liked about being an apprentice, he said learning to drive machinery, helping out to get a job done and getting paid so he can buy things himself and learn to drive a car.”

Eventually, graduates like Wayne will become their own bosses and work for themselves – as part of a qualified team – and be given the appropriate level of support to enable them to work on suitable maintenance contracts on behalf of Ground Control.

“No other apprenticeship programme in the

country compares to this,” said Oliver Flowers, Head Teacher at The Westminster School. “It’s a beacon of best practice as it gives our young people an opportunity to develop a career and gain real independence.

“Ground Control’s commitment highlights what can be achieved through partnerships with private sector companies. I encourage other industries to think about the benefits they can enjoy from involvement in a professionally run apprenticeship scheme.” ●



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When contacting us, mention "Living with Disability" magazine.

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Go to www.charnwood.gov.uk/jobs to find out more.




Appreciating You And valuing everyone's differences

Brunel University London is located on the western edge of the capital set within a modern campus environment.

One of the University's greatest strengths is the diversity of its culture, backgrounds, values and individual differences of people who live, work and study here.

The staff workforce drives and supports the invaluable teaching, research and enterprise activities and also contributes to the University's exciting diverse community.

A wide range of employment opportunities are available at the University and we encourage you to visit our website to view our current vacancies. We positively encourage applications from all sections of the community.

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City Health Care Partnership CIC: supporting colleagues with disabilities

City Health Care Partnership CIC (CHCP) is a co-owned 'for better profit' community interest company, providing mainly NHS services in Hull, the East Riding of Yorkshire, Wigan, Knowsley and St Helens.

CHCP is a Disability Confident Employer, working towards becoming a Disability Confident Leader by the end of 2021. Our Supporting Disability and Wellbeing Network group gives our colleagues the chance to have their voices heard and be involved in organisational discussions and decision-making to improve equality and health and wellbeing outcomes. Peer support is available for colleagues who have similar personal or work-related experiences, with a safe space to discuss concerns.

Our dedicated Accessible Information Standards project worker does incredible work with services to ensure that information is accessible to all, including easy read documents and bespoke training packages for colleagues with additional needs such as a learning difference or autism. Our Colleague Health and Wellbeing Guide gives details of the resources on offer.

We are involved with Supported Employment schemes, working with external agencies to support work placements from education for young people with special/additional needs and Workfit placements for people with Down's Syndrome.

Laura's story

I have worked in the HR team at CHCP for 11 years and it's been a very positive experience. I have Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita, a very rare multiple bone disorder (this means fixed joints); I have a curvature of the spine, I cannot bend my arms or legs, my hands are fixed and turned upwards, I am unable to lift my arms up and I am unable to walk long distances, so I am in a wheelchair for the majority of the time. I have lovely work colleagues who support me fully not only personally, but professionally. I'm continuously encouraged to put new ideas forward and implement new processes that affect the team and the organisation as a whole. I work with many different teams internally and externally and I always feel valued as an employee and colleague. I love my job and the team I work with and it definitely gives me a sense of purpose.

I have been encouraged and given the confidence to gain qualifications which has resulted in my role developing enormously over the years and with the support I have been given I am able to embrace change and develop myself even further. The support within my role ensures I am able to respond quickly to change in an organisation which is changing constantly. CHCP have always been very supportive in terms of any equipment needed to do my role, such as Bluetooth headsets to answer the telephone, a special scanner to transfer my documents into electronic format and I have my own printer under my desk for ease. I also have a PA, funded by Access to Work and supported by CHCP, who comes to my place of work three times a day to help with anything I need.

The vast majority of my colleagues who are out in the community are completely unaware of my disability - and I love this; why should my disability define me? It certainly does not define me within an organisation where I am part of a great team and work as an equal. Ultimately my role makes me financially independent and able to live a full and active life. I hope my presence demonstrates a diverse workforce which is fully supported, inclusive, contributing and confident.



A Partnership for Good



SCOPE AND VIRGIN Media have blazed a trail for five years with successful disability employment programmes.

The partnership officially came to end in December 2020, but the flagship programmes Work With Me and Support to Work are still going strong.

More than 100 businesses – which employ around 170,000 people in the UK – have committed to becoming more inclusive employers of disabled people as a result of the Work With Me campaign.

Whilst more than one million disabled people have gained the skills and confidence to get and stay in work through the Support to Work service.

“All good things come to an end – and while we

Above L/R. Phoebe Whittome - Sustainability Manager at Virgin Media, Rachael Burdon - Work With Me Programme Support at Scope, Matt Green - Business Development Lead at Scope and David Standish - Retail Operations Manager at Scope.

wrapped up the partnership in December Virgin Media will continue to fund Support to Work for an additional year,” said Mark Hodgkinson, Chief Executive at disability equality charity Scope.

“Many, many more disabled jobseekers will have access to the skills, information, and advice that is needed now more than ever.

“We are incredibly grateful to all Virgin Media and their employees who generously supported us throughout the partnership by fundraising, volunteering and donating. Their support for Scope means we can keep being there for disabled people and their families.”

Work With Me

The #WorkWithMe campaign was launched by Virgin Media and Scope to address the UK’s disability employment crisis.

The disability employment gap – the rate at which disabled people are employed compared to non- ▶

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Everton Celebrate Anniversary with Kit Launch

Everton in the Community's disability programme is currently celebrating 20 years of providing sporting, education, employment and volunteering opportunities to disabled people across Merseyside.

Founded in October 2000, Everton in the Community's disability programme supports disabled people into education, training, employment, volunteering and social opportunities, whilst tackling negative stigma in society and challenging inequalities that still exist. The programme includes 11 competitive football teams, with players of all age groups and with a range of disabilities. Outside of lockdown, the programme also delivers sessions at 10 special schools across Merseyside. Each week, engaging with more than 350 disabled children throughout the academic year and helping them develop key skills. Also delivering

sessions for disabled adults at local community centres and daily play therapy sessions at Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

The programme has seen more than 50 players go on to represent their countries playing at European Championships, World Cups and Paralympic Games. Recent victories also include the Everton Amputee team being named 2018/19 FA Disability Cup winners after beating Portsmouth Amputee team 4-1 in the final at St George's Park.

To mark the start of its 20th anniversary year, players from the charity's disability football teams helped to launch Everton Football Club's 2020/21 third kit when they exclusively modelled the modern seafoam green and charcoal design which quickly became the Club's fastest selling third kit.

The third kit launch reinforces the commitment of the Club and its

official charity to its All Together Now campaign, launched in 2018 to promote and raise awareness of inclusion and diversity across Everton Football Club and Everton in the Community, and share the message that Everton is a football family for all.

The kit launch also saw the start of a new partnership with Everton's technical partner hummel, who have pledged to invest into a year-long education and training initiative that will see 20 disabled participants join a FA Level One coaching programme as part of its ongoing commitment to the charity.

In the past year alone, more than 1,200 people have engaged with Everton in the Community's disability programme in opportunities including sport, education, training and volunteering.

Find out more about Everton in the Community at www.evertoninthecommunity.org



disabled people – has remained static for more than a decade, with disabled people’s employment still stuck about thirty percentage points behind.

This issue has been further compounded by Covid-19, as many disabled people who were not redeployed or furloughed during the pandemic faced an impossible choice between going to work and risking their health or staying home and being unemployed.

As a result, Virgin Media and Scope appealed to businesses to do everything they could to transform their policies and practices so they could support disabled people and to join the #WorkWithMe community to become a more inclusive employer.

#WorkWithMe is a free platform designed by business for business, helping companies – large and small - to take accountability for how they employ disabled people, and offers practical advice on how to improve the workplace and culture for disabled people.

Some of the UK’s biggest brands have signed up to the community since its launch, including American Express, Centrica, Deloitte, Ford, Innocent Drinks, Legal and General and Unilever.

“It is an uncomfortable truth that huge numbers of disabled people continue to be left out of the workplace, with the Covid-19 crisis forcing even more

disabled people out of work,” said Jeff Dodds, Virgin Media’s Chief Operating Officer.

“Therefore our #WorkWithMe community has never been more important or timely; helping employers – no matter their size – to become more inclusive and supportive employers of disabled people.

“As a business leader I have seen first-hand the benefits of employing disabled people and how they have enriched our company with sought-after skills, from diversity of thought to problem solving and creativity.

“I am urging other employers to do what they can to support disabled people and to join #WorkWithMe.”

Scope has confirmed it will continue to deliver, fund, and develop the Work With Me community.

Supporting a million disabled jobseekers

Virgin Media and Scope have also supported disabled people gain the skills and confidence to get and stay in work through their Support to Work service.

The service, launched in 2018 to address the inequalities disabled people can face when applying for work or when they are in the workplace, has

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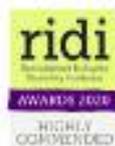
As a leading recruitment outsourcing provider, Guidant Global can offer you direct and exclusive access to great jobs with some of the UK's top employers.

We're also a Disability Confident Leader, and our award-winning approach to disability inclusion is building careers and changing lives.

It goes without saying, we welcome applications from disabled people! In fact, if you have a disability, we'll guarantee you an interview for any internal role (assuming you meet the minimum

criteria required for the job) and please don't forget to tell us about any adjustments you might need during the recruitment process.

If you would like to find out more about inclusive careers at Guidant Global, or search for roles with our amazing clients, please visit our website. jobs.guidantglobal.com



Generate's Access to Work Employment Service your practical solution for employment

What is Access to Work? If you want to work but have a disability or long-term medical condition that makes working independently or without adaptation difficult, you may be able to get help from the Governments' DWP Access to Work programme.

How can Access to Work help you? The Access to Work grant is money to help you do your job if you have a disability or a health condition. It can pay for practical support to help you start work, stay in work, or to move into self-employment if you are starting a business. The money can pay for things like a support worker or job coach to help you at work, transport etc. The money you get from Access to Work doesn't have to be paid back and there is no set amount for an Access to Work grant. The amount of money you get depends on your situation.

How can Generate Help you? With over 20 years experience, we are specialist in supplying one-to-one employment support staff, to individuals with a range of disabilities. We can cater for a variety of employment situations. Including self-employment.



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Research suggests that people with Neurodiversity have specialist skills and attributes that we want in our organisation. We have a range of opportunities available at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) that we encourage people with Neurodiversity to explore.

Firefighters: Community focused, physical, practical, high intensity, structured environment leans towards people who have ADHD and Dyslexia. We are looking for physically fit candidates who are passionate about making a difference in their community regardless of ability.

Corporate Support: Your varying abilities may complement the range of other opportunities we have available, including Research and Digital roles.

To view and apply for our opportunities visit our recruitment websites:

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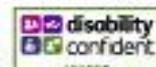
The Isle of Man is a Crown Dependency which is not part of the UK but with its own Parliament and legislation. The Equality Act was introduced in 2017 but since 2009, the Constabulary has been working with partners, both statutory and third sector to improve services to the hard to reach, and often excluded, groups in the community. This work is supported by many partners and is overseen by a Scrutiny Group which is Chaired by a member of the Island's Legislative Council. Police Officers have received sight and hearing awareness training and become Dementia Friends through this work, had excellent support to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace.



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Newcastle United Foundation

helped 2728 disability participants last year. The Foundation's Powerchair and Amputee Team were both national Championship winners.

supported more than a million disabled people.

Users can access online resources or a tailored 12-week programme which provides key advice such as how to write a CV and a cover letter, interview practice, as well as how to discuss workplace adjustments with an employer.

Support to Work is open to disabled people who:

- are 16 years or over
- are looking for a paid job
- have internet, email and telephone or Skype access
- live in England or Wales.

Jobs Board

The Support to Work jobs board recently launched with vacancies from a variety of inclusive employers which are welcoming applications from disabled people. There are roles from employers such as the Civil Service, Colas Rail, as well as Virgin Media and Scope.

Jaki Wilson from Basingstoke is blind and has used Support to Work twice in her career. Once to help her move from being a support worker at a hospital, to supporting victims of domestic violence. And then again when an opportunity became available within the same company.



Jaki Wilson.

“Trying to change career was like going into the unknown, with my eyesight condition it was really quite scary,” said 48-year-old Jaki.

“My Support to Work adviser was just really, really brilliant. We started working together around once a week. At the time I wanted to switch careers, I didn’t have a huge number of relevant skills from my previous employment.

“We worked together, looking at what career I wanted to go into, and managed to make my skills transferable. That’s something I just don’t think I would have been able to manage very well on my own.

“My adviser coached me through how to talk about my disability positively and when to bring it up. Previously I was telling interviewers what I couldn’t do rather than getting them to think about how I can do the job.

“Likewise, when I wanted to move jobs Support to Work was there for me again and I’m now very happy as a Domestic Abuse Health Advocate.”

Scope and Virgin Media have blazed a trail with our disability employment programmes.

Teach What You Preach

Since it partnered with Scope in 2015, Virgin Media has taken a number of steps to better support disabled people, from recruitment and employment to the products and services it sells.

This includes removing workplace barriers for disabled employees and ensuring line managers have the tools and confidence to recruit and support disabled people.

In addition, the company has rolled-out dedicated disability and vulnerability training to 8,500 front-line employees, is streamlining its workplace adjustments process, and at the start of the pandemic redeployed ‘at risk’ or vulnerable employees into different roles so they could work from home.

Virgin Media has also become a strategic



The Natural History Museum is one of the world's leading museums, internationally recognised for its dual role as a centre of excellence in scientific research and as a leader in the presentation of natural history through exhibitions, public programmes, publications and the web.

Museum staff and volunteers cover a wide range of work. Scientists, curators, visitor services, exhibition technicians, and corporate services all work together to achieve the Museum's vision.

Our collections are a model of nature's diversity.

We are committed to equality at every level within our organisation. We apply this through our employment policies which support workforce diversity, provide flexible working arrangements and an established framework for learning and development.

Contact our recruitment team via the Natural History Museum website: <https://careers.nhm.ac.uk/>



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Find out more

Visit our website for more information and details about current job opportunities:

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This might be helping tenants who need their homes adapting so they can live more comfortably, or working with all our employees to make sure they are informed, engaged and involved.

It could also extend to being an active community partner, encouraging schoolchildren to care for the area where they live, running free holiday club events, setting up group activities to help beat social isolation, advising tenants on how to manage their budgets and carrying out voluntary projects to help other charities.

If you would like to find out more about us, including any job opportunities, please take a look at our website www.tworivershousing.org.uk.



partner of the Valuable 500 – an organisation which aims to put disability on the board agenda of 500 global businesses.

“We are incredibly proud to have worked so closely with Scope over the past five years, and together we have made a positive impact on the lives of disabled people across the UK,” said Mr Dodds.

“Our work to become a more inclusive business is only just beginning. We’ll take the values and lessons we have learnt and put them front and centre of our plans to support communities over the next five years.”

Work in Progress

Mark Hodgkinson, Chief Executive of Scope, said the partnership with Virgin had supported huge

numbers of disabled job seekers to benefit from much sought-after specialist advice and information on getting in, staying in, and progressing in work.

“Scope and Virgin Media have blazed a trail with our disability employment programmes,” he said. “We wanted to transform the employment prospects of disabled people in this country. For too long far too many have been left behind.

“With Virgin Media’s support, we have been working directly with disabled people when they are ready to move into work and support continues after employment starts.

“Disabled people have been hit extremely hard by the pandemic, and we’ve yet to feel its full economic fallout. Never have our employment support programmes been so badly needed.”

To find out more www.scope.org.uk ●



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If you would like to join our internship programme, or you're an employer, college, local authority or training provider interested in helping us deliver **Interns and Outcomes**, visit our website or get in touch.

 www.mencap.org.uk/employment

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*Department of Health (November 2010) The Adult Social Care & Income Framework 2015/16



ADVERTORIAL



Since the introduction of the Apprenticeship levy in 2017, Mencap has been delivering apprenticeships for people with a learning disability and other additional support needs. One of Mencap's first apprentices was Becca Bishop. Becca completed a Level 2 Customer Services Practitioner apprenticeship working as part of the fundraising team. Having passed her apprenticeship she has since progressed to a full-time job in the Programmes team at Mencap. "There are loads of pathways for me now. I've been given so many opportunities to do things I would never have done a few years ago. You're always building your skills, building your knowledge."

Mencap are looking to set up apprenticeship programmes in Bristol, Somerset and Warwickshire from Summer 2021. They are keen to speak to employers about partnerships to help create a more diverse workforce.

If this is of interest or you are someone with a learning disability, a learning difficulty or autism living in one of these areas and you want to find out more about Mencap's programmes please visit <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/employment-services>



Hold the Front Page

YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE are being trained as reporters as part of a ground-breaking initiative to raise awareness of disability issues that affect young people across the UK.

Leonard Cheshire's Change Makers programme kept its momentum throughout the recent pandemic, delivering virtual training and support for young citizen reporters in four locations across the country.

Aged 16-25, the reporters have signed up to train other people their age to highlight issues they face in their community through citizen journalism, assisted by experts from the BBC and communications agency On Our Radar.

Pictured above: Prior to the Covid-19 lockdowns, young news hounds get to discuss what should be making the headlines.

Josie Verghese, Head of BBC Young Reporters is one of those sharing her experience of journalism and life as a disabled person with the young reporters.

"I am delighted to share my youth journalism experience, as well as my own personal insights as a disabled person, with the next generation of storytellers," said Josie.

"I am looking forward to championing them, their skills and the authentic and original stories I have no doubt they are going to discover."

The project is active in four cities – Belfast, Swansea, Manchester and Glasgow – with reporters now beginning to focus on their campaigns.

Reporting for Change

Working in pairs the eight young lead reporters will recruit, train and mentor a further 60 youngsters ►



Pete Donnelly and Megan Smith-Josephs from Leonard Cheshire, Arthur Lawson from the Glasgow project and Kyle from Swansea during one of the virtual sessions.

in their local areas over the course of the project, which runs until December 2021.

Among the subjects the budding journalists are campaigning on are relationship myths for disabled people (Swansea), pavement parking (Belfast) and accessibility at local attractions (Glasgow).

They will document daily experiences of issues/barriers they face in their local communities. They will submit this content to a tech 'cloud-based' platform, developed by On Our Radar, and can then take direct action based on theme, e.g. vlogging via social media, petition local authority, lobby key-decision makers including local councillors and NHS representatives.

Making a Difference

This user-led and community-centred approach will empower young disabled people to reveal and explain key issues as they experience them, using simple mobile devices to share personal insights in their own words, in their own time, in their own terms, generating powerful and persuasive messages.

Through Future Leaders, a cohort of young disabled people will become disability advocates, leading grassroots social action to transform the current social landscape. Their insights and expertise will also strengthen future youth-led programme delivery.

The idea behind the project came from a group of young disabled people who wanted to give

voice to the frustrations they felt but lacked the skills and confidence to do so.

It was inspired by Leonard Cheshire's work in the UK, including youth skills-development programme Can Do, and countries such as Kenya, where the charity trained citizen reporters have successfully campaigned through effective story telling.

"Initially, the concept of delivering a programme like this virtually seemed a daunting prospect but it's worked really well," explained Megan Smith-Josephs, Youth Campaigning Programme Lead at Leonard Cheshire. "The disparate groups have been able to share ideas easier, friendships have been made and we're all excited about activating their various campaigns."

The initiative is funded by Act for Change Fund, a £3.6 million partnership between Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, for organisations supporting young people working for change. The Fund provides resources for young people to challenge social injustice, find ways of overcoming inequality and give voice to issues they are experiencing. ●

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The Single Mums Business Network (SMBN) was created to help members gain exposure to their businesses, whilst raising awareness of the need for policy change around flexible working. Many parents and other primary carers face barriers to homes, finance, and employment, specifically employment in line with their skillset and pay scale. Not wanting to accept relative poverty as a penalty for being a primary carer means that many 'choose' to set-up a small business or work freelance / in self-employment.

But this can be challenging in adversity, as founder Julie Hawkins is all too painfully aware. Despite a strong 20-year career history, she lost her full-time income and then her home when she became a single mum. Despite this she worked part-time in low pay, completed a law degree with the Open University, designed a product called a KIH Bed Pregnancy Cushion, and brought it to the market despite not having any disposable income. She was desperate to exhibit or advertise in a magazine, but she could not find the budget, and so after seven years of pain, as soon as she was generating an income through business and work, she set-up the Single Mums Business Network to help others.

In the knowledge that single mums have limited support and a short timescale in which they need to grow their business, due to the Minimum Income Floor, the SMBN is dedicated to helping these women raise awareness of their businesses. But not wanting to exclude anybody the Single Mums Business Network

also welcomes 'Friends of the SMBN' who can also benefit from greater business exposure, regardless of sex or status.

When Julie was having a coffee with a friend in 2019, discussing the SMBN, the friend asked Julie 'What is a virtual assistant?' 'Patsy' Julie said, 'I have been your virtual assistant for years!' 'You call me to help you with anything administrative, whether creating a poster for your business or sending your daughter flowers, that is

somebody assisting you virtually, on the end of the e-mail or telephone.' It was after that conversation that Julie pledged to help her members find their audience off-line, and she does this via in-print advertising, such as this article, exhibitions and direct mail.

The SMBN is a National UK Network of Women in Business who are doing all that they can to reduce stigma and dispel misconceptions about Single Mums being workshy and their children

struggling due to their status. We have happy, healthy, intelligent children and the SMBN network will form a strong, long-term allegiance to ensure that they have great opportunities and support as part of the SMBN. We need to remove the barriers to work, home and finance to enable us to have a positive impact and support the circular economy. Whether you are looking for a virtual assistant, jewellery for your pet, somebody to do permanent make-up or a pet taxi, SMBN members have so much to offer and you can visit the member directory by visiting www.singlemumsbusinessnetwork.com



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Students on a supported internship programme stay on in a school or college role but spend the last year of their education at a host business site. The site is staffed by a qualified instructor and job coaches to meet educational and training needs.

“We believe that every young person has a right



to aspire to work, something that is often denied to people with learning disabilities and autism,” said DFN Project SEARCH CEO Claire Cookson.

“As a society we are not very ambitious when it comes to dealing with learning disabilities. We’re very good at telling young people what they can’t do, not what they can do. That’s our problem.

Throughout the programme year, interns work on employability and functional skills.

“We believe that a collaborative approach between businesses, local authorities, colleges and schools and supported employment providers; partnered with our evidence-based DFN Project SEARCH programme, can be a force for transformative change in the lives of these young people.”



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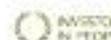
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The goal for each participant is competitive employment. The programme provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent-living skills to help young people make successful transitions to productive adult life.

Transition-to-Work Programme

The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of skills training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from instructors, job coaches and employers.

Throughout the programme year, interns work on employability and functional skills. Training room activities are designed around: Team Building, Workplace Safety, Technology, Maintaining Employment, Self-Advocacy, Financial Literacy, Health and Wellness, and Preparing for Employment.

Through a series of three targeted internships the interns acquire competitive, marketable and transferable skills to enable them to apply for a related post.

“The change in these youngsters is truly remarkable,” added Claire. “The internships give them self-purpose and they take on the challenges with real enthusiasm and energy. They change the way they look, behave and talk as they become a valued member of the business and the wider community”.

Today DFN Project SEARCH has 69 internationally recognised programmes across the UK, Ireland and Iberia, and has supported over 1500



interns into work, 1300 of which meet Project SEARCH’s success criteria. These criteria mean that the work is over 16 hours per week, is non-seasonal and pays the prevailing wage for the role.

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Young Talent Pool

“It’s an amazing talent pool from which businesses are benefitting,” said Claire. “We can prove it works and over the next decade we want to get 15,000 young adults with learning difficulties and autism into full-time paid jobs as part of a more inclusive society.

“That means working collaboratively with local authorities, colleges and schools and of course businesses to licence many more programmes. The success of DFN Project SEARCH is down to a team of teams.”

The charity recently showcased its success at a virtual awards ceremony to recognise 15 partner organisations covering a wide range of sectors, including healthcare, hospitality, distribution and education, that run Project SEARCH programmes.

Top award winners included NEXT Distribution Toftshaw, which achieved 100% of its interns securing full time paid jobs after graduation, followed by Scotland’s Forth Valley Royal Hospital & Serco, which achieved a 90% success rate. ▶



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“Huge congratulations to all the winners,” said Claire. “We’ve seen some fantastic outcomes for another year running, which is a testament to everyone involved in the DFN Project SEARCH programmes across the country. Together we are transforming lives for many young people with learning disabilities and autism, helping them to be recognised as a fantastic talent for employers.”

Project SEARCH was developed at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center in the United States by Erin Riehle and Susie Rutkowski in 1996 and has since grown to over 600 licensed

programmes, spanning 47 US states, 11 countries and multiple public and private sectors.

Run by the DFN Charitable Foundation, DFN Project SEARCH holds the exclusive master franchise rights in the UK, Ireland, and Iberia to the prestigious programme.

To find out more www.dfnprojectsearch.org



Autistic Intern Lands NHS Job

A DFN project SEARCH case study

EMMA PRICE IS as proud as punch of her son for securing full-time employment with the NHS following a supported DFN Project SEARCH internship programme.

Bobby Price, who has learning disabilities and autism, had always dreamed of working for the NHS and now the 24-year-old is fulfilling his ambitions of working at The Royal London Hospital Barts Health NHS Trust and couldn’t be happier.

His mum is delighted not only by the positive change the job has made to her son’s life but also the dedication and contribution her son made to the great work of the NHS during the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

“I’m so proud of Bobby because all he’s ever wanted is to work for the NHS at Royal



Bobby Price.

London Hospital, and it’s all come true for him,” said Emma. “He’s so proud of working in the hospital and loves all his colleagues.

“Bobby is such an inspiration to me, he’s so motivated to get up every day and he’s always got such a positive mind-set, he doesn’t even like having to take a day off because he loves his job so much. It just makes me so proud to see him in his

scrubs working at the hospital and doing his part for the NHS. Young people like Bobby are making such an amazing impact.”

Bobby is a graduate of the DFN Project SEARCH programme, which gave him the skills, support and the confidence to land his dream job.

“Bobby’s journey hasn’t been the easiest, but he has always had a clear idea of what he wanted, and that was to get a job and go to work,” added Emma. “Without the support he got along the way he wouldn’t be where he is today.”

By sharing Bobby’s journey Emma hopes this can be a way of inspiring more parents to use supported internship programmes to get their children with autism or learning disabilities into work. ●



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On track to improve accessibility



NEW INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED by rail operators across the UK will improve the experience of travelling by train for anyone with disability or mobility issues.

Reviewing and improving accessibility policy and practice for Southeastern will be a new panel, led by Paralympian Andy Barrow.

While Northern Rail have set up a £250K fund for voluntary organisations, community groups, charities and stakeholders to bid for funds based on ideas to improve accessibility improvements at stations in their area.

To the east, East c2c and Greater Anglia have joined forces to give local disabled people the chance to create a more accessible rail network and have a say in how future policy is shaped.



APPROXIMATELY 11% OF rail passengers say that they have some form of disability, but thanks to improvements in the last 25 years, most of them can still travel unaided and without booking assistance.

But many people do need help and Southeastern's new measures are part of its Accessible Travel Policy that is now available following approval by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). 

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The policy, and specially designed passenger leaflet – Making Rail Accessible, Helping Older and Disabled People – sets out the arrangements and assistance the operator will provide for people who want to use their trains.

Among the new improvements are:

- A new specially trained Mobile Assistant who will provide extra help for passengers getting onto trains and at unstaffed stations.
- A brand new Southeastern App allowing assistance to be booked for Southeastern trains as well as automatic updates on toilet and lift availability.
- A network-wide rollout of the Sunflower Lanyards and Just a Minute (JAM) cards to let passengers tell staff discreetly that they have a non-visual disability.
- A new disability awareness programme for Southeastern’s 4500 staff.
- Since April, passengers have been able to book assistance up to six hours before a journey and from April 2022, this will be reduced to two hours.
- Setting up of a Passenger Accessibility Panel – led by Paralympian Andy Barrow – to continually review and improve policy and practice.

“I’m passionate about people with any kind of impairment having full parity when using the rail network,” said Andy.

“I’ve been working closely with Southeastern to help their staff empathise with the day-to-day challenges that people can experience when travelling by train. Our new accessibility panel will also improve understanding when it comes to the assistance needs of their customers. So when we act on our findings the changes we make will have a lasting and meaningful impact.”

Southeastern runs train services into London from Kent and East Sussex, operating over 2000 trains a day, carrying more than 640,000 passengers a day, serving 176 stations and covering 540 miles of railway infrastructure.

“We are committed to providing a safe and

comfortable journey for everyone and I’m very proud of the new measures we are putting in place to support that aim, said Southeastern Passenger Services Director, David Wornham.

“Throughout the Covid-19 crisis Southeastern, along with the rest of the rail industry, has kept vital train services running for everyone who had to travel for work, education, shopping, or medical appointments. As we start to come out of the lockdown restrictions and passenger numbers pick up we want to be sure that we are doing everything we can to make our services equally accessible to everyone in the communities we serve.”



NORTHERN’S APPROACH IS to empower its users to come forward with ideas to make its network and trains more accessible for disabled and older people.



A £250,000 Accessibility Fund will give organisations, groups and charities the opportunity to bid for grants of up to £50,000 to make improvements at stations in their area.

Back in 2020, Northern agreed to launch the fund alongside South Yorkshire Passenger Transport, Transport for Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

As a first for the UK industry, the fund will be led by an independent body, the Northern

Accessibility User Group (NAUG), but will be supported by Northern.

“Everyone has the right to travel independently, and we are delighted that our pan disability group will lead the Accessibility Fund to make Northern stations and services more accessible for everyone,” said NAUG spokesperson James Martin.

“We are pleased with the commitment Northern has shown to support the fund, which will benefit many communities across the North.”

For ideas to be considered projects will need to go live before 30th September 2022.

Applications can be submitted via www.northernrailway.co.uk/accessibility-fund and are being considered on a rolling basis.

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THE TRAIN OPERATORS c2c and Greater Anglia announced plans for a new Accessibility Panel to focus on spreading awareness of hidden disabilities such as mental illness, chronic pain or fatigue, sight or hearing impairments and learning differences. ▶

Andy Barrow Profile

IN 1997, ANDY Barrow was playing rugby for his local club when he suffered a spinal-cord injury that left him paralysed from the chest down, with limited use of his hands. He was aged just 17.

Following this life-changing injury and many hard months of rehabilitation, his life was transformed again when he discovered wheelchair rugby – also known as “Murderball”.

Andy’s wheelchair rugby career encompassed three Paralympic Games, three World Championships, and five European Championships, where he was part of a record-breaking team that won three gold medals in a row.

He captained Great Britain from 2005 to 2010 and led the team out at the Beijing Paralympics – one of his proudest moments.

The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games was the greatest sporting event in Great Britain’s history, and the perfect opportunity for Andy to end his career on a high. He took the decision to make this his final tournament, following well

over 100 appearances for his country.

Since retiring, Andy has gained experience as a speaker and mentor, and as a member of the Professional Speaking Association and Global Speakers Federation, he has spoken to audiences across the world.

Andy has turned his attention to access. His experience as a world traveller sees him working as a consultant with multiple aviation and rail organisations to improve the assisted travel process for customers with impairments.



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- > Low floor and accessible vehicles
- > Tactile map at Norwich bus station
- > Community transport



The new joint Accessibility Panel will meet four times a year and will be made up of people with both visible and non visible disabilities to provide consultation on business policy.

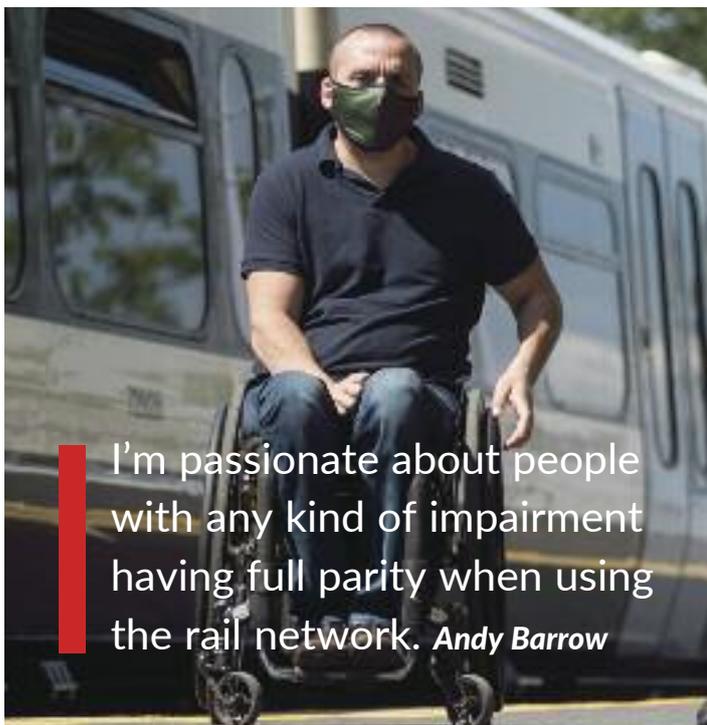


“We are really excited to work with c2c on this project to ensure accessible travel is high on the agenda for our region,” said Greater Anglia Accessibility Manager Rebecca Richardson.

Membership is by application and panel members will be paid. Applications are encouraged from people who live and travel on rail services in East Anglia and the South Essex and East London area and share a passion for accessible transport.

The panel members’ recommendations will help us to continue to enhance accessibility on our trains and at our stations,” added c2c Customer Experience Manager Alex Whybro. “We’re committed to making our services inclusive and accessible for all customers.”

If you have lived experience of disability and want to work with train operators to make rail travel more accessible please email: accessibilitypanel@greateranglia.co.uk



I’m passionate about people with any kind of impairment having full parity when using the rail network. *Andy Barrow*

More Needs to be Done

MORE THAN 50,000 disabled people could get jobs if Britain had an accessible rail system.

Despite progress being made by individual rail operators on accessibility, a new study by leading disability charity Leonard Cheshire has revealed that 51,000 disabled individuals have turned down a job offer due to a lack of accessibility on the railway.

If all 51,000 found work the subsequent benefit to the Exchequer would be as much as £900m, with a potential output (GVA) boost of £2.5bn.

The charity says:

An accessible rail system must be prioritised as part of the economic recovery from COVID.

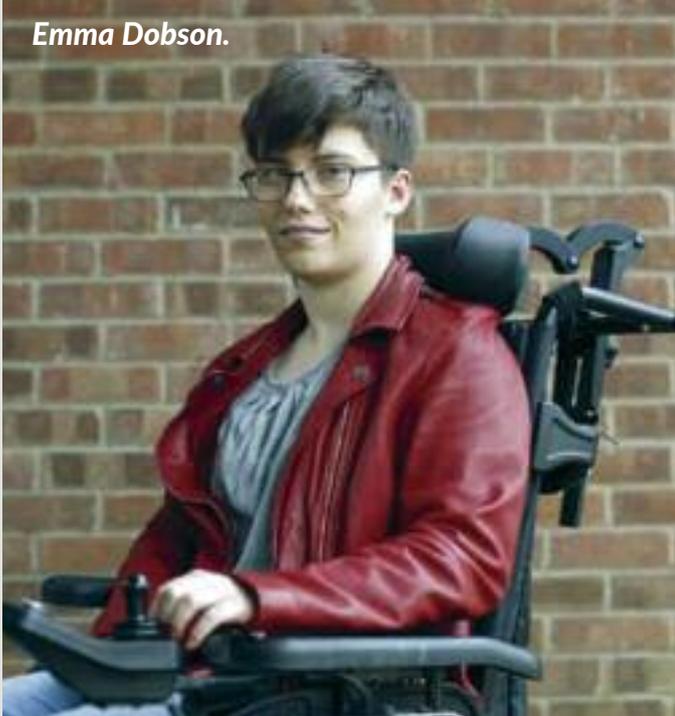
41% of railway stations in Britain are still not step-free.

Government is still set to miss 2030 target on creating step-free journeys for disabled people by 40 years (2070).

An estimated £4.3bn is needed for creating step free access to platform level for disabled people across the rail network - a fraction of overall transport capital spending – and just a single year of spending on High Speed 2.

The cost also represents just 2% of current transport capital investment.

Emma Dobson.



“I’m now looking for work, but most positions mean I would have to get a train,” said 24-year-old Emma who lives in Birmingham and has cerebral palsy.

If the government would invest, it would bring benefits to everyone because of the purple power – the money of disabled people.

“Once I’m on the train I don’t know if I’m going to be able to get off because I need a ramp. Around 95% of the time I could be waiting for someone and I can’t just get off the train when I want to.

“When I hear about the research into how much money it would cost to make stations accessible, it’s frustrating because it would make such an impact on disabled people’s lives. If the

government would invest, it would bring benefits to everyone because of the purple power – the money of disabled people.

“Also, accessible transport would enable careers and fulfilling work, which would mean not just an increase in spending power but also an increase in earning power.”

Responding to the survey’s findings Leonard Cheshire is calling for a new law that guarantees all rail journeys in Britain will be fully accessible by 2030.



Leonard Cheshire’s Gemma Hope.

“These findings reinforce the need for investment in railway station infrastructure,” said Gemma Hope, Leonard Cheshire’s Director of Policy.

“It is a simple issue of equality that is even more relevant as we remain in an economic crisis for the foreseeable future. We have revealed a clear link between accessible rail and job opportunities for disabled people that will boost the economy and improve lives.” ●



Special Olympians

Train for Winter Games

DESPITE THE DISAPPOINTMENT of its National Summer Games being called off, Special Olympics GB has something to cheer about.

It has announced its team for the 2022 Special Olympic World Winter Games to be held in Kazan, Russia.

The good news follows Liverpool City Council's decision not to host the Special Olympics GB National Summer Games.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2021 games was postponed and rescheduled for next year, but having explored all the options for the Games to take place Liverpool made the difficult decision that it would be undeliverable.

So all eyes will be on Russia in January as 17 GB athletes compete in the Alpine Skiing and



Michelle Carney.

Figure Skating events.

"I'm absolutely delighted for all our amazing athletes who have been selected to compete at the Special Olympics Winter Games," said Michelle Carney, CEO of Special Olympics GB.

"To represent your country in any sport is a remarkable achievement. To represent your country as an athlete with an intellectual disability adds a whole other level of respect."

Special Olympics GB is the largest provider of year-round, all ability, sports programmes in Great Britain and supports more than 10,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities on a continued basis.

Across England, Scotland and Wales, approximately 27,000 regular sports coaching

sessions of at least one hour each, are delivered locally each year at 120 accredited clubs across 28 different sports.

This coaching activity leads to around 100 all-ability, inclusive sports competitions every year. Its competition pathways make Special Olympics GB unique within the disability sports sector as it provides for athletes of all abilities, opportunities to compete and progress at local, regional, national and international levels.

In January, 17 athletes will get to travel to Russia and experience the pinnacle of the Special Olympics GB Winter Sports calendar. Congratulations to them all.

In Figure Skating they are; Stephanie Gott (Merseyside), Jonathan Higgins (Scotland West), Jennifer Gibson (Scotland West), Courtney Montgomery (Scotland West) Callum Mills (East Midlands) and Jennifer Lee (Bradford)

In Alpine Skiing; Ayesha Franks (Brentwood), Fleur O'Donohue (East Midlands), Stefan Nakoneczny (Surrey), Cameron De Vial



Callum Mills and Jenny Lee.

Special Olympic World Winter Games 2022 logo lights up the Kremlin.



Special Olympics aims to transform attitudes about intellectual disabilities in Russia.



Stephanie Gott - figure skater.

(Rossendale), Gustavo Santos (Brentwood), Marcus Mason Williams (West Midlands), Joanne Desmond (West Midlands), Emily Plant (Grampian), Elanor Sinden (Surrey), Kathryn Martin (Surrey), Jack Hale (South West), Matthew Evans (Rossendale), Anthony Hibbard (West Midlands) and Charlie Marshall (Brentwood).

“Following a difficult selection process we are thrilled to be able to announce our team to represent Great Britain in Kazan in 2022,” said Alex Williams, Special Olympics GB’s Head of Delegation for the Special Olympics World Winter Games.

“Congratulations to all our athletes who have been selected to compete and commiserations to those who did not get chosen this time. We just wish we could have taken everyone who applied!

“Now the hard work begins, and we are looking forward to getting to know each other and getting ready for the most amazing opportunity of representing Great Britain on such a world stage.”

They will join 2,000 other athletes from 108 nations, 3,000 volunteers and 4,000 dignitaries and family members, at what will be a truly global event.

Destination Kazan

Regarded as Russia’s capital of sports, Kazan is an exciting new destination for Special Olympics. It will mark the first time the organisation has brought a global competition to Russia. No stranger to major sports events, Kazan has played



Ayesha Franks.

host to an array of top sports competitions, including the 2018 FIFA World Cup, 2015 FINA World Championships and the 27th Summer Universiade.

Using the platform of the Games, Special Olympics aims to transform attitudes about intellectual disabilities in Russia, as well as create new opportunities for social integration for the estimated three million people with intellectual disabilities living in Russia.

To find out more about taking part in Special Olympic GB events go to www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk ●

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Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup



One of the elite athletes preparing for the tournament is England international Sébastien Bechara.

Challenge Accepted

A motorbike accident in 2012 resulted in Sébastien Bechara becoming a right leg below-the-knee amputee. It was in a moment during his recovery, that the 27-year-old decided to dedicate his time to become a star within the wheelchair game.

"I remember it was in July 2012", explains Sébastien. "The period of the London Paralympics. I remember being in my hospital room back then watching the Paralympics start and thinking - right, that's where I'm going to be in four years' time.

"I started playing some wheelchair basketball to start having some fun, and I thought at the time, I was an absolute beast in the wheelchair. So fast and agile. Of course, I was just playing with other patients who were just learning to use a wheelchair and weren't used to playing sports."

Though wheelchair basketball provided Sébastien with an outlet during rehab, it was a chance encounter with Cyril Torres, the captain of the French Wheelchair Rugby League team that helped

LEGENDS WILL BE MADE, nations will collide and champions will be crowned as the 2021 Rugby League World Cup returns to England in October and November.

History will be created as the world's finest Rugby League stars take to the field at premier venues across the nation later this year.

And for the first time ever, the wheelchair competition will be part of the Rugby League World Cup main event. It will be part of the same brand, with the same profile and the same level of support.

Wheelchair Rugby League is truly the most inclusive sport of all - not solely a disability sport, as able-bodied people are welcome to compete as well, and both men and women can play in the same team.

This year's Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup will be contested by eight teams over 15 days, starting on Thursday, 11 November with an epic opening clash between England and Australia at the Copper Box in London's Olympic Park.

The showpiece final will be at the M&S Bank Arena, Liverpool on Friday 26 November.



him discover his true calling.

“He watched me play and invited me over to try wheelchair rugby league at Catalans Dragons,” said Sébastien. “When I started training with them, that’s when I realised how bad I was.”

“Back then at Catalans, four of the French players I was playing with went off to the 2013 World Cup in Medway, England, and they were crowned world champions. “I was learning from the best at the time, which helped me progress really quickly.”

Now a fully-fledged Catalans Dragons representative, the England international is excited by the potential of a match-up against some of his club teammates at RLWC2021.



“The Spanish captain is actually a club teammate from Catalans Dragons, so expect some great brotherly rivalry there,” he said. “I’m really expecting them to show that they’ve acquired a lot of experience in the last four years, and I’m sure they will be fighting for a spot in the semi-finals.

“Australia have always been a very strong side. I expect them to be in great form and be a huge challenge. That’s actually our opening game, so we’ll have to turn up and just give it everything straight away from game one.

“Norway are a really tough one because I have actually no clue what to expect. I’ve never seen them play as a country. I trust them to turn up with a team that’s ready to fight for a win.”

Although Sébastien may have begun to focus on his opponents, ultimately, he is aware that the main focus remains on one single goal – greatness.

“Alongside my England teammates, we’re just aiming for nothing else than being world champions,” he explained. “We’ve got the capabilities, the work ethic; we have the players in-depth now and we’ve got the support staff.

“We have everything now to get there. I think we’ll get to the final, so we can finally pick up that World Cup trophy; that’s what we’re aiming to achieve.”

After heartbreak in the 2017 final, the England international is determined to not suffer the same fate this time around. With home advantage, Sébastien hopes to fulfil a dream of representing his country at London’s iconic Copper Box Arena.

“It’s actually a dream come true,” he said. “To be able to play in the Copper Box Arena that can hold up to 7400 spectators. I’ve played in crowds where there was maybe 3000 people and it’s absolutely mad.

“We need the supporters. Not only for them to discover the greatest sport on earth but also to support their country. To show the other nations that this is England, this is our home, and no one is coming here to grab the trophy.”

To find out more about the 2021 Rugby League World Cup go to www.rlwc2021.com ●

Who wouldn’t feel proud about being able to represent your country?

“Of course, who wouldn’t enjoy some rivalry in competition?” added Sébastien.

“It’s a crazy feeling; actually, you see them three or four times a week, sometimes train with them, play with them, you have drinks with them, they’re like brothers to me.

“Rugby teammates are a very special thing, but when it comes to the most important game of your life, suddenly playing against them, that’s a game where you’ll do absolutely anything to win.”

Born in Nottingham, Sébastien moved to France at the age of ten. However, he takes great pride in representing his country of birth.

“Who wouldn’t feel proud about being able to represent your country? I mean, it’s that feeling of putting your England top on and going out on the pitch and screaming out the national anthem.”

With this year’s tournament edging closer, Sébastien has already started to weigh up his opponents ahead of their fixtures at RLWC2021.

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