

The ESSENTIAL MAGAZINE for people with disabilities, their families, friends and carers

15th Edition  
£9.99

# Living with Disability

Up, Up  
and  
Away



## BE A SUPERHERO

Mass participation Superhero Series for the disabled is back



## PEDAL TO THE METAL

Team BRIT to enter iconic 24 Hours of Le Mans



## SHEPHERD'S HUT REVIVAL

Craftsman's inclusive approach to accessing humble hut

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## From us to you...

**W**ELCOME TO THE 15th edition of Living with Disability and our first of 2022.

It almost goes without saying what a difficult two years we have all endured. But there does seem to be a glimmer of light at the end of the very dark pandemic tunnel.

So, let's celebrate the coming of summer by getting out and about, meeting friends and family and enjoying the accessible events, festivals and activities that make the UK such a great place to live.

Here at Living with Disability we're all about pointing the spotlight firmly on the inspiring stories of the individuals who live life to the full and on those who are committed to helping disabled people live the life they choose.

Like the flying charity Aerobility featured on our front cover. It helps disabled people of all ages prove to themselves and all of us, that there is no limit on what you can achieve. We talk to the charity's CEO Mike Miller-Smith who despite Muscular Dystrophy continues to work, drive and most importantly...fly.

Or young entrepreneur Bianca Tavella who founded Fair Shot Café, a thriving social enterprise café in the heart of London offering training and future employment opportunities to young adults with learning disabilities.

Similarly, Elena Nicola and Nick Walsh who set up a community interest company as a way of changing the way learning disability services are run – by

supporting adults with learning difficulties to develop and run their own social enterprises.

In our Health section there's a fascinating feature on how a series of sound books of bird songs, published by two keen nature lovers with children in mind, is benefitting people suffering from alzheimer's.

The nature theme is continued in our Holiday section, where we focus on the accessibility of outdoor locations run by The Wildlife Trusts, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the British Wildlife Centre.

Under Equipment you'll find the truly inspiring story of teacher Kath Tregenna, who is back in the classroom despite losing both arms and legs after contracting sepsis.

We also highlight the work of craftsman Rob McFagan who is adapting the iconic Shepherd's Hut for greater accessibility for disabled people. Plus read about the disabled teenager who had a starring role in a major TV advertising campaign.

In Sport we try to catch-up with Team BRIT, the first ever all-disabled motorsport team aiming to compete in the iconic 24 Hours of Le Mans race. There's also a round-up of Team GB's success at the Winter Paralympics in Beijing.

Have a great summer and if you've got a story to tell then please get in touch.

*Clive Davis*  
Editor



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# Independent Living



COMPLETE CARE SHOP has expanded its services to include bathroom adaptations, stairlift solutions and hoist installation.

The online independent aids retailer is part of NRS Healthcare, a leading supplier of mobility equipment and disability aids and provider of associated services helping the disabled live independently in their own homes.

The new services enhance Complete Care Shop's 'Home Living Consultation' video call initiative which offers professional help and advice from one of the company's fully qualified Occupational Therapists.

Through its easy-to-use website, Complete Care Shop's bathroom adaptations service includes wet rooms, walk in baths or showers to create an accessible bathroom.

For those struggling to go up and downstairs with ease, the stairlift installation service offers a professional, value for money service, to deliver the right stairlift, straight or curved to meet the individual needs of older people, or adults and children living with disability.



Complete Care Shop's hoist system and installation service offers the Luna Ceiling Hoist, one of the only hoists that can be used as a fixed or portable hoist.



"We're on a mission to make independent living easier, helping more people carry on doing the things that are important to them for as long as possible," said Rachel Seabrook, Clinical Services Director at Complete Care Shop.

"Often this will include making adaptations to the home, such as accessible bathroom or stairlift installation, that can make a life-changing difference to your daily life".

For more information on Complete Care Shop's services, visit <https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/services-hub> ●



## A LASTING LEGACY

A FOUNDATION HAS been launched in memory of a young woman to help raise awareness of hidden disabilities.

Saarah Ahmed, from Carlisle, had a form of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS) so rare only about 15 people in the UK have it.

The 20-year-old psychology student had shared on social media the daily struggles and battles she faced in a bid to educate others before her death in April 2021. Now, her family has set up Saarah's Foundation to support people with EDS and hidden disabilities in Cumbria.

"This foundation is for rare diseases and rare diseases like Saarah's and it also involves hidden disabilities," said Saarah's mum, Shefaly Begum.

"This is something Saarah wanted to do and we're going to carry on with her legacy."

Saarah, who was a finalist in Miss Universe Great Britain, used her platform to educate others about living with EDS. Now her family are set to continue her campaign.

To find out more go to <https://www.gofundme.com/f/eds-awareness-and-in-memory-of-saarah-ahmed> ●



## Mental Capacity Toolkit

**B**OURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY (BU) has developed a Mental Capacity Toolkit to support health and social care professionals working with individuals whose decision-making process is impaired.



As part of a wider research project funded by the Burdett Trust for Nurses, BU developed the toolkit to enable ethical, legal, and informed professional practice and ensure professionals are confident in their understanding of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The BU team identified a need for a Mental Capacity Toolkit that was accessible and easily understandable for all healthcare professionals. It is a comprehensive guide that enables professionals to make better informed decisions about everyday choices for their patients.

So far it has been accessed by approximately 14,000 professionals and was designed to support a broad range of practitioners across the health and social care practice.

The toolkit contains sections of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 including assessment of capacity and decision making. These sections are underpinned by interactive user experiences such as videos and quizzes.

“We all take making decisions for granted but if you have cognitive problems, for example caused by dementia, then someone else might have to make a decision for you,” said Professor Lee-Ann Fenge.

“These decisions can range from choosing what to have for breakfast, to selling a property.

Making decisions on behalf of another person can be really difficult which is why we developed this toolkit to ensure healthcare workers can do so professionally and ethically, which is the top priority when working with vulnerable patients.”

The Mental Capacity Toolkit is a free resource for health and social care professionals and for friends or family who may have to make decisions on behalf of another person.

To access the Toolkit please visit:  
[www.mentalcapacitytoolkit.co.uk](http://www.mentalcapacitytoolkit.co.uk) ●

## Law Firm Boosts SEND Department

**L**AW FIRM IRWIN Mitchell has appointed Gurvinder Kaur to its Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) department.

A qualified solicitor for 14 years, Gurvinder specialises in SEND, focusing on cases concerning education, social care and public and human rights law.

Having led and established public law departments in previous firms, Gurvinder’s expertise has been recognised by Chambers and the Legal 500 for her work with young people post-16 and for children with brain injuries.



*Gurvinder Kaur.*

A trustee of the children’s charity VICTA, Gurvinder has wide experience of SEND cases nationwide and continues to work closely with a number of charities, various parent carer forums, professionals, schools and families.

“Joining Irwin Mitchell was an easy decision to make, given the firm shares my own commitment to going the extra mile in supporting clients and with an established reputation for success in education and SEND cases,” said Gurvinder.

“It’s more important than ever that parents and children with SEND have their voices heard, accessing excellent education provision and in joining Irwin Mitchell I am sure there will be ample opportunity to play my part in seeing this continues as the education sector begins to return to a new normal post-lockdown.”

[www.irwinmitchell.com](http://www.irwinmitchell.com) ●

# Get Active, Get Involved



**L**EADING DISABILITY CHARITY Leonard Cheshire has teamed up with Sport England to get more disabled people involved in sport.

Sport England will invest £1.2 million in the All Active Together initiative over three years to fund opportunities for disabled people to participate or volunteer in sport related activities.

The UK wide inclusive community partnership will concentrate on offering accessible, everyday opportunities and will be available across a wide geographical spread, based on need. All Active Together will initially grow in communities across Barrow-in-Furness, Bristol, Derbyshire, Devon, Essex, Gloucestershire, Isle of Wight, Kent, London, Manchester, Wolverhampton and Yorkshire.

"The project reflects our ethos and the way we work as an organization," said Ruth Owen, Leonard Cheshire's CEO.

"All Active Together will offer inclusive services in ways that align to local needs, so everyone can contribute to positive individual change and wider opportunities for disabled people. Sport England are the perfect partner and we're excited to be working with them."

After establishing the programme regionally, Leonard Cheshire will also look to integrate activity with their network of social care services.

"Whether playing, volunteering or otherwise, ensuring that everyone in society has the opportunity to be involved in sport and physical activity is at the heart of Sport England's work," said Mike Diaper, Sport England's Executive Director of Tackling Inactivity.

"With our most recent research continuing to show notable gaps between disabled and non-disabled people on these fronts, great programmes such as All Active Together are more important than ever. We're incredibly proud to be working with Leonard Cheshire to deliver opportunities across England and



Ruth Owen.

look forward to seeing its positive impact over the coming years."

To find out more go to [www.leonardcheshire.org](http://www.leonardcheshire.org)



## Top Show is Back

**N**AIDEX RETURNS THIS year to the NEC Birmingham on July 6 and 7.

Registration is now open for the flagship event dedicated to supporting people with disabilities and showcasing a wide range of solutions and technology to improve mobility, accessibility, and independence.

Naidex is for everyone, and welcomes anyone who is living with a disability, as well as anyone caring for or supplying to the disabled community.

Thousands of visitors will experience the latest independent living solutions and daily aids, meet with hundreds of innovative exhibitors and inspiring speakers.

All this, along with interactive features such as the Mobility Test Track and Accessibility Summit, make Naidex the go-to event of the year.

For those working within healthcare, there is also the opportunity to enhance your professional development with the CPD accredited seminar agenda, making the event not only enjoyable, but informative and educational too.

To find out more and to register go to [www.naidex.co.uk](http://www.naidex.co.uk)



## Disability Awareness Day

**T**HE 2022 DISABILITY Awareness Day (DAD) will take place on Sunday July 17.

DAD is the world's largest 'not for profit' voluntary-led disability exhibition, held annually in a huge tented village in the grounds of Walton Hall Gardens in Warrington, Cheshire.

Visitors to the show will find around 250 exhibitors, equipment suppliers, transport, holidays, leisure, employment, support groups and services and a sports zone including scuba diving, an arts marquee, Centre Arena and family entertainment.

Founded by Warrington Disability Partnership's Dave Thompson MBE DL, Disability Awareness Day is a pan-disability event which promotes a 'can do' culture focusing on what disabled people can do throughout their life and work. The show has three main aims:

- To highlight what statutory, private or voluntary services are available to enable disabled people to stay independent.
- To promote equipment and aids that could maintain or improve independence, not just what is offered by statutory service providers.
- To provide an opportunity to showcase what disabled people can do, in the field of sports, arts and entertainment.

To find out more go to [www.disabilityawarenessday.org.uk](http://www.disabilityawarenessday.org.uk) ●



*Dave Thompson.*

## Big Event Back on the Road

**M**OTABILITY'S ONE BIG Day events programme is back.

The events offer the perfect chance for disabled motorists and their families to find out everything they need to know about the Motability Scheme, see the latest range of products available and talk to the experts.



The programme kicks off on Friday 20 and Saturday 21 May 2022 with The Big Event at the NEC in Birmingham. The flagship show



houses the Scheme's largest display of cars, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs), powered wheelchairs and scooters available on the Motability Scheme.

In addition to the event in Birmingham, there will be three regional One Big Day events taking place across the UK on:

- **Saturday 23 July, One Big Day at Westpoint, Exeter**
- **Saturday 13 August, One Big Day at Yorkshire Event Centre, Harrogate**
- **Saturday 17 September, One Big Day at Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh**

The Big Event will also be available online, meaning the live expert Speaker Sessions and event footage from across the two-day event, will be available to view from the comfort of home.

The family-friendly events are free to attend, and children can meet the Scheme mascot, Billy the Bear, who is always happy to take selfies. There will also be a children's play area as well as cafés, plenty of seating, and accessible toilet facilities.

To find out more go to [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk) ●



# Business Partners

**A** PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN the British Business Bank (BBB) and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) will break down barriers to the business world for people with sight loss.

The bank will work with the RNIB to create an environment where blind and partially sighted people participate equally.



Only one in four people with sight loss of working age are in employment. There are currently 11,000 people with sight loss in the UK who are actively seeking work, and one of the initial aims of the new partnership is to empower and enable entrepreneurs with sight loss to take the first steps toward starting their own businesses.

“We are delighted to be forming a close collaboration with British Business Bank to help and support blind and partially sighted people,” said David Clarke, Director of Services at RNIB.

“Working with British Business Bank presents a great opportunity to focus on enabling blind and partially sighted people to realise their aspirations. It is critical that businesses empower people living with sight loss to realise their potential and enable them to play

an important part in contributing to the economy.”

As a first step, the RNIB will produce Braille, Audio and Large Print versions of existing Start Up Loans documents and will support the BBB in providing better accessibility to its customer facing channels. This will involve changes to the bank’s websites and its Start Up Loans application process, as well as the provision of training to staff.

Additionally, to improve accessibility within its own recruitment process, the British Business Bank has become one of the first organisations to have passed part one of the Visibly Better Employer Framework, to become a ‘Visibly Better Employer’.

This quality standard helps employers to become more inclusive and will help the bank to increase the number of people with sight loss who apply for job opportunities and become employed by the organisation.

“The British Business Bank is proud to partner with the RNIB on ensuring that blind and partially sighted people experience equal opportunities, both in the workplace and in accessing the finance and mentoring they need to set up in business,” said Catherine Lewis La Torre, British Business Bank CEO.

“Our goal is to create a fairer environment as the economy recovers from the impact of Covid-19 so the best talent is able to thrive.”

For further information [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk) ●



**A** HI-TEC POCKET-friendly braille keyboard device is set to give further independence to the blind and partially sighted.

Bridging the learning curve in making assistive technology easier for blind and partially sighted people, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) has launched Hable One.

The device can connect to any iOS or Android smartphone or tablet through Bluetooth. It uses a selection of braille key combinations to help users navigate their mobile or tablet.

The product is easy to use and requires no installation, making it ideal for adults and children with sight loss. Additional features include a combination of six dot braille key entry to make typing easier for blind and partially sighted people.

“We’re very excited to be working with Hable One as we believe this wireless braille keyboard is a game-changer,” said Jennie

# Eye-opening Braille Tec



Mather, RNIB Senior Retail Products Manager.

“New tech such as Hable One really demonstrates how technology can play a vital role in increasing independence for blind and partially sighted adults and children.”

The innovative device allows users to leave their mobile or tablet in their pocket or bag and use Hable One to write a message, navigate an app, or post on social media. It can also be used in conjunction with VoiceOver or TalkBack.

David from Oxford has an 11-year-old son, Daniel, who is registered blind.

“We’re hugely impressed with Hable One,” he said. “The product is user-friendly to a young blind user and even to a sighted user like me. It’s easy to

use and enables Daniel to do his homework up to 50 per cent faster. Gestures like being able to play or pause by holding braille ‘P’ is a huge improvement.”

Demonstrations of Hable One at the Products for Life stores in London, Edinburgh, and Belfast are via appointment only and can be in-store, by phone, or video call. To book a slot, please visit [rnib.org.uk/stores](https://shop.rnib.org.uk/stores) or call our Helpline on 0303 123 9999.

“We are pleased to partner with RNIB and offer blind and partially sighted people more accessible technology,” explained Ayushman Talwar, co-founder of Hable One.

“My grandfather had sight loss which inspired us to create Hable One and highlight the importance of making assistive technology easier for people of all ages and disabilities.”

Hable One is available to buy from £239 ex VAT, £286.80 inc. VAT, customers can purchase online at <https://shop.rnib.org.uk/hable-one-90938?HT388> ●

## CONFIDENTLY ON TRACK

**N**ETWORK RAIL HAS won the Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative (RIDI) Disability Confident Award for its commitment to becoming a more diverse inclusive employer.

The RIDI awards – with a judging panel comprising disability experts and senior industry leaders – are designed to celebrate the best of disability confident recruitment.

Network Rail was commended for its five-year diversity and inclusion strategy – Everyone Matters – and the Disability Matters workstream that is delivered as part of the strategy.

During The Covid-19 pandemic the Disability Matters project provided fresh opportunities for employees to meet and ask questions around disabilities whilst working from home.

Network Rail chief executive Andrew Haines, and chair Sir Peter Hendy CBE, have both pledged to increase the number of disabled employees, after figures showed that less than 3% of their 44,000-strong workforce have shared that they are disabled or have a long-term health condition.

“I am delighted that we have won this Disability Confident Award,” said Lorraine Martins, OBE, Network Rail’s Director of Diversity & Inclusion.

“Becoming a more diverse and inclusive employer is vital for us, and this award signals that we are on the right track.

“I would like to thank all colleagues involved in making Network Rail a better place to work. We will continue to make progress through our Disability Matters initiative and through working with our CanDo employee network. This is great recognition, and we know that we still have much more to accomplish.” ●





## Push to the Peak

Emily Burnett (left) with her Aunt Teresa.

**M**ENCAP IS ORGANISING a climb up Wales' highest mountain to raise money and challenge stigmas about what people with a learning disability can and can't do.

The learning disability charity has joined forces with its new ambassador, Hollyoaks star Emily Burnett, to embark on a trek up Snowdon.

The trek will take place on August 28 and will see a group of people with a learning disability and others without, including a number of other Hollyoaks actors, climb 1,085 meters to reach the summit.

Push To The Peak came about after Emily, whose Aunt Teresa has a learning disability and has always wanted to climb the mountain, approached Mencap for support.

"My aunt is turning 60 next year, and after being told as a little girl she wouldn't live that long we decided we needed to do something major to celebrate," said Emily.

"As well as becoming an ambassador for Mencap, which I'm delighted about, I'm so excited about taking on this challenge with my friends and colleagues, other people with a living disability but most importantly with my aunt.

"She's had a profound impact on my life - I call her my sunshine - and I can't wait to highlight some of the societal struggles but also to share the many joys, the beauty and the talent that comes with having a learning disability or having someone with a learning disability in your life."

The participants, of which there are set to be 30, will be taking the Llanberis track up and down the mountain and have all pledged to raise at least £1,100 each for Mencap resulting in at least £30,000 going to the charity to help people with a learning disability live a happy and healthy life.

"It will be good to do this walk," said Emily's Aunt Teresa.

"I'm so geared up for it now. We first talked about it last year, me and Emily. She said about Snowdon. And I said, 'We'll do it!'"

"I wanted to raise money for Mencap as I have been going to a swimming club that is supported by them for the last 32 years!"

Emily has roped in some of her friends and colleagues from Hollyoaks and The Dumping Ground to take part in the challenge including James Sutton and Kia Pegg.



"I think all of us have thought at some point 'Oh, this is a really big challenge. Are we going to get there?' But then we just think about Teresa and her one-track mind and we know we can do it. She'll get to the top no matter what."

To donate to those taking part or to find out more go to <https://www.mencap.org.uk/event/pushtopeak> ●



## Passenger Charter Close

**A** NEW DISABLED Persons Passenger Charter for bus, coach, taxi, private hire vehicle and rail is being developed.

Disability charity Scope, in conjunction with the government, will bring together a host of information for disabled passengers travelling across England and advice for passengers on what to do when things do not go as expected.

Providing a clear explanation of their rights, the charter will improve journeys for disabled people by helping ensure they can travel easily and more confidently.

The charter follows the recent unveiling of the government's National Disability Strategy - a range of initiatives to improve journeys for disabled people including:

- an accessibility audit of all rail stations
- clearer audible and visual announcements on buses
- introducing legislation for taxis and private hire vehicles in Parliament
- £1 million to improve access at seaports

"Thousands of Scope supporters have backed calls for this vital step towards transforming a system that sometimes makes travel unnecessarily hard, if not impossible, if you are disabled," said Mark

Hodgkinson, Scope Chief Executive.

"Public transport should be accessible for everyone and this charter will help disabled passengers better understand their rights, the standards they should expect across the network and how to hold providers to account when travel goes wrong."

Once developed, it will be published online, providing a one-stop shop on passenger rights and complaints procedures.

"I am delighted that we will be partnering with Scope to develop a charter for disabled passengers that will help boost confidence across our road and rail network," said Wendy Morton, Minister of State for the Department of Transport.

"This practical guide will pull together disabled passengers' rights so they understand how they can get from A to B with the dignity and ease they deserve.

"Scope research suggests that passengers who travel frequently are faced with a multitude of documents about their rights, which can be unclear. Acting on this feedback, the charter will collate existing information for passengers and centralise it into one coherent and easy-to-use format." ●

**SCOPE**  
= Equality for disabled people

## DISABILITY SPORTS CALENDAR

### MAY

1-15: Summer Deaflympics, Caxias Du Sol, Brazil

### JUNE

2-7: Women's Blind Football European Championship, Pescara, Italy

4-13: World Shooting Para Sport World Cup, Chateauroux, France

8-18: Men's Blind Football European Championship, Pescara, Italy

12-18: World Para-Swimming Championships, Madeira

### JULY

28-8 August: Commonwealth Games, Birmingham

### AUGUST

3-7: Para-canoe World Championship, Halifax, Canada

10-14: Para-dressage World Championships, Herning, Denmark

11-14: Para-cycling Road World Championships, Baie-Comeau, Canada

26-4 September: World Para-athletics Championships, Kobe, Japan

### SEPTEMBER

24-29: European Open Para-powerlifting Championships, Tbilisi, Georgia

### OCTOBER

10-16: Wheelchair Rugby World Championship, Vejle, Denmark

### NOVEMBER

1-6: Para-badminton World Championships, Tokyo

3-17: World Shooting Para Sport World Championships, Al Ain, UAE

6-12: World Para-table tennis Championships, Granada, Spain

29-4 December: Wheelchair Fencing European Championships, Krakow, Poland

### DECEMBER

3-14: Boccia World Championships, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil ●

# Reach for the

# SKY



**L**EARN TO FLY and there is no limit to what you can achieve.

That's the overriding message from Aerobility – the UK charity offering disabled people, without exception, the opportunity to fly an aeroplane.

Just ask any of the 1,000 disabled people a year that take to the sky from Blackbushe Airport in Surrey or Tatenhill in Staffordshire what it means to take the controls and experience the ultimate feeling of freedom and escape from the restrictions of disability.

For some, just the first time soaring through the clouds is enough to change their outlook on disability forever and inspire them to ask themselves what else they could do.

Others relish the greater challenge of learning to fly solo, securing their Private Pilot Licence and even aspiring to a career in commercial aviation.

“When I’m flying and I’ve established myself in the cruise, the aircraft is settled and I have a few moments to look out into the distant horizon, I can think to myself, I’ve done it, I’m doing what I’ve always wanted to do – that’s to fly an aircraft,” said Damian Hunter, who despite having athetoid cerebral palsy, completed his life-long dream of acquiring his Private Pilot Licence thanks to Aerobility.

“You know, that thought of flying an aircraft caused me to leap with happiness, and just filled my whole soul up with such a great feeling of hope.”

The driving (or maybe that should be ‘flying’) force behind Aerobility knows all about the magic and wonder of flight as an able bodied and disabled flyer.

Mike Miller-Smith has always had a passion for flying and was training as a commercial pilot when he developed muscular dystrophy, which over the years has completely taken away his ability to move. He permanently uses an electric wheelchair. But Mike has never been grounded by the debilitating condition.

He continued to be closely involved with aviation as part of the British Disabled Flying Association (BDFA), later to become Aerobility, and has been ▶





This course is funded by the brilliant BBC Children in Need and it gives young people knowledge and experience of the aviation industry, airport operations and flying.



*The flying force behind Aerobility  
Mike Miller Smith MBE.*



instrumental in developing the organisation to become the UK's leading representative body for disabled flyers.

"My interest in flying started as a child, when I was visiting airshows, meeting pilots and being surrounded by the sounds and smells of aviation," said Mike.

"From there, it didn't take much to convince me to learn to fly and then it wasn't long until I was competing in international gliding competitions. Even though in my twenties, the onset of MD made it more difficult, I continued to fly.

"Taking the controls of an aeroplane reminds us all what we are capable of, irrespective of who we are, where we come from or whatever our abilities are.

"Today, I make sure anyone, with any disability has access to aviation, as I know only too well what joy and benefits aviation can bring. It truly changes lives with a positive impact that reaches far beyond the airfield."

## **A Surprise Gift**

It hasn't been an easy journey though. The BDFA was set-up in 1993 but it wasn't until 2003 that it really took off – thanks to a chance conversation 10 years earlier. The late King Hussein of Jordan was presenting a member of the BDFA with an award at the Royal

International Air Tattoo. After the ceremony the man jokingly asked Prince Faisal, the king's son, if he would like to donate one of his planes.

So, when four military Bulldog training planes were flown in direct from the prince, it came as something of a surprise.

"I was aware of the BDFA but it wasn't until I read about the planes arriving from the Royal Jordanian Air



*Damian Hunter  
takes the controls.*

Force that I went to a meeting about rebuilding and adapting one of the planes specifically for disabled flyers that I got involved,” said Mike, who to date has notched up more than 2,000 flying hours.

“It turns out that flying a plane is the easy, safe bit – getting into the plane and adapting controls for specific disabilities are by far the greater challenges and present the most dangers.

“Aerobility currently operates a mixed fleet of five aircraft offering different modifications and accessibility so that we can work with as broad a range of disability types as possible.”

But that number of planes and the number of disabled people and injured ex-military personnel who will benefit from flying high with the charity is set to increase dramatically.

Motor gliders that used to train thousands of RAF Air Cadets will get a new lease of life following the charity’s successful bid to acquire 63 decommissioned Vigilant T1 aircraft from the UK Ministry of Defence.

The first batch of gliders will be modified and refurbished by German company GROB Aircraft SE to meet civil certification standards. Aerobility plans on showing off its first Grob 109B Able plan at this year’s Farnborough Air Show.

“We will more than double our fleet with eight Vigilants thanks to a grant from the Department for

Transport (DfT),” explained Mike “It means we will be able to help about 2,600 people into the air every year compared to 1,000 currently.

“Other gliders will be sold to raise vital funds for the charity. It costs us £1/2 million a year to stay operational and much of that funding comes through various fundraising initiatives, ensuring disabled people fly for a fraction of the commercial rate.”



Even when the charity couldn’t take to the sky during the Covid pandemic, it put on a free-to-view live streamed Armchair Airshow from Biggin Hill Airport, featuring interviews, cockpit footage and highlights of shows and displays from around the world.

Alongside the show a live auction took place, with bids for items, including a Spitfire flight courtesy of FlyaSpitfire.com, a private jet experience to Newquay and a signed model of a MiG-29, signed by Russian test pilot Anatoly Kvotchur, raising life changing funds for the charity that secured eight flying scholarships.

The live Armchair Airshow was so successful that Aerobility will be broadcasting again from Biggin Hill on May 28th.

The charity receives enormous support from the aviation industry and works closely with manufacturing companies, airlines, airports and the Civil Aviation Authority on a series of initiatives.

Its Aviation Education Programme is a nine-month course for disabled youngsters to grow their aviation knowledge.

“Aviation isn’t all about pilots. Hundreds of people are responsible for ensuring that aircraft, airports and the skies run smoothly and safely,” said Mike.

“Over sixteen sessions participants learn about a range of aviation elements including air traffic control, engineering, metrology, navigation, fire and rescue, airport development and flight. They see the theory in action through flight simulator sessions, interactive activities and experiments.”

## Up Up and Away

One youngster who got the flying bug is 24-year-old Harvey Matthewson, who on an initial visit in 2012 refused to get in the plane. But when he returned eight years later there was no stopping him.

Harvey suffers from quadriplegic cerebral palsy and admits at the time he was lonely, suffered from depression and didn't know what he wanted to do with his life. Aerobility, where he now works full-time as Aviation Activities Officer, changed all that.

"I know first-hand the amazing experience that learning to fly can give a disabled person.," said Harvey.

"When I was first diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at two years old, I don't think anyone would have ever imagined that I would now hold a Private Pilot Licence - but that is exactly what finding Aerobility allowed me to do.



Harvey Matthewson.

"Flying gives me total independence. It levels the playing field and without sounding too dramatic gives me a reason to live," said Harvey. "When I'm in the air I'm a pilot, just another voice on the radio."

The charity runs a Junior Aspiring Pilots Programme for disabled youngsters aged 12 to 18. The four-part course is specially designed for disabled children to get a fascinating and exciting introduction to aviation.

"This course is funded by the brilliant BBC Children in Need and it gives young people knowledge and experience of the aviation industry, airport operations and flying," explained Harvey.

"Flying is about a team of people working together, which means participants practise and develop their

team-working skills. One of the other main outcomes we see in all participants is a huge boost to their self-confidence and a completely different view on personal ability, all of this translates into benefits that reach far beyond the airfield."

Always looking to the future, Aerobility has partnered with the Vertical Flight Society to challenge university students to design electric air taxis that accommodate passengers with reduced mobility.

The competition challenges students at universities worldwide to design an electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft that accommodates passengers with a broad spectrum of mobility difficulties or other disabilities for urban air mobility (UAM) missions.

"The opportunity to encourage tomorrow's designers to consider accessibility at the birth of a new transport mode is very exciting," said Mike. "One can only imagine how different air travel today would be for people with disabilities if this had been done at the birth of commercial aviation."

## Blue-Sky Thinking

A theme reiterated by Aerobility in a joint White Paper published with The Civic Air Transport Association (CIVATAglobal) on ensuring future urban air mobility is inclusive and accessible.

"We are on the edge of a transport revolution," said Mike. "Electric air taxis and drones will soon be improving the lives of millions of people around the world by adding a new dimension of affordable, green and accessible transport services to urban living. But if the promise - and full market value - of this new transport era is to be fully realised, it can only be done so on the basis of inclusivity.

"From the very start, Urban Air Mobility and Advanced Air Mobility Services need to be planned with the needs of those who stand to benefit most from its introduction - disabled communities. Passengers will be able to fly from origin to destination, in ways which seem only appropriate to science fiction... but this transformation in mobility, must be done correctly from the outset."

Mike was awarded an MBE for his services to



disability within aviation and received the Honourable Company of Air Pilots Barnes Wallis Medal for his work in developing technology and techniques for disabled people to learn to fly.

He has recently been appointed Aviation Ambassador for the Department for Transport (DfT). ●

To find out more about Aerobility go to [www.aerobility.com](http://www.aerobility.com)



Love the initiative to create clothing suited for wheelchair users. It's great that the joggers fit properly around my legs and ankles, unlike some un-adapted ones. The fit on the waist is good, they are really great quality too!

**Karé Adenegan, Paralympian**

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**George, @thewheelife\_**



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## Inclusive Homes in East London

Leaside Lock is a thriving new community in Zone 2 Bromley-by-Bow, East London. At Guinness Homes' flagship development, residents will be able to enjoy a range of unbeatable amenities on site, including a health and fitness studio, co-working space, a café, a gym\* and a convenience store.

Our final wheelchair accessible two-bedroom apartment remains in the current release at Leaside Lock, with more accessible homes launching later this year.

Designed with inclusivity in mind, the development offers wide doorways opening into well-sized living areas, including a spectacular roof terrace exclusively for residents' use,

accessible via lifts. Contemporary kitchens are complete with integrated Bosch appliances, while bathrooms and en suites are finished with sleek sanitaryware. Underfloor electric heating is fitted in all apartments, and all residents will have access to a spacious podium garden. A selection of apartments enjoy spectacular views of the London landscape, overlooking Canary Wharf, the City and beyond.

Set in the heart of buzzing East London, Leaside Lock has a plethora of popular restaurants, coffee shops, bars, art galleries and shops on residents' doorsteps. Mile End, Shoreditch, Stratford and Hackney are within

reach, with nearby Hammersmith & City and District Line services running to central London.

Prices for the wheelchair accessible homes in the current phase at Leaside Lock start from £130,000 for a 25% share (full market value £520,000). Visit [leasidelock.com](http://leasidelock.com) to register interest or call 0203 288 1907 and quote A-8-3.

\*Gym is currently proposed within plans for Leaside Lock Phase 1

LEASIDE  
LOCK

# Everyone Deserves a Fair Shot

**B**IANCA TAVELLA WAS three years old when the seed to develop her inspiring passion and commitment to help others was sown.

Attending her local church of St Thomas of Canterbury Fulham she remembers being transfixed by a priest giving a sermon and simultaneously using sign language to connect with deaf people in the congregation.

That, along with her parents' involvement in setting up a support group for families with children with a learning disability, set Bianca on a path to founding the Fair Shot Café.

But this stylish high-end coffee shop nestling in London's bustling Mayfair is so much more than a great place to stop for a coffee and a focaccia sandwich – it's a café with a conscience.

This unique social enterprise



café offers training and future employment to young adults with learning disabilities.

"I was brought up to appreciate everyone's differences and unique qualities, as well as the importance of kindness," said 27-year-old Bianca.

"I was with a friend, Zachary, 10 years ago and we started talking about our dream job. He happens to be autistic but said he wanted to open a restaurant. I tried to put myself in his shoes and knew it would be so difficult for him to obtain and maintain employment.

"I remember telling my parents later that day I wanted to open a café for young people with learning disabilities. The thought stayed with me through university and during the first few years of my working life in International Development and with non-governmental organisations."

Our mission is to change the way that people think about people with learning disabilities in the workplace.





At 23 Bianca took a job in a café to learn all she could whilst working on her Fair Shot business plan.

“I wanted to do something that had never been done, to give young people with learning difficulties a fair shot at obtaining and maintaining employment,” she said.

“Currently in the UK, young people with a learning disability face 94% unemployment and for those that do find employment, 80% are either fired or leave due to inadequate support and training.

“They are simply conditioned to fail and to become isolated and marginalised. But if we can make an impact with business owners on how to hire, train and support individuals they will soon see how extremely willing and capable this community can be.

“If they are treated fairly, with

patience and understanding they can become confident, valuable members of a workforce. I just wanted to prove it.”

### *Not Just a Dream*

After cutting through a lot of red tape and persuading people it was an idea that would work, raising £300k from grants and donations, pitching to landlords for the right deal on premises and recruiting a likeminded team, Bianca’s dream became reality last year.

The Fair Shot training programme is a work experience initiative for young people aged 18-26 with mild to moderate learning disabilities and autism who want to find a job in the hospitality industry but who lack the skills, experience or behaviours sought by employers.

It’s an opportunity to gain real-life work experience as a trainee before moving onto an apprenticeship and finally permanent paid employment.

“We have 12 trainees working at the Fair Shot Café working four six hour shifts a week and making up 80% of the staff,” explained Bianca. “They spend one day back with our partner organisation West London College and are supported throughout the process by job coaches from Action On Disability.

“Yes, it’s challenging for them. We’re running a café in the heart of London and that means busy days, exposure to lots of customers and of course the pressure of getting things done and to a high standard. It is literally life-changing for these young people. To see them grow in confidence as they learn new skills

and come to the realisation that they truly have something to offer is as rewarding for me and my team as it can get.”

### **On the job training**

During the 11-month programme training is given in barista skills, till work, food preparation, customer service, food hygiene, interview practice, CV writing skills, English, Maths and digital competency

skills. Formal qualifications include SCA Barista and a Level 2 in Food Hygiene.

Trainees are then supported in finding an appropriate position in mainstream employment and for the first six months in that job they continue to be supported by the Fair Shot team and a job coach.

Bianca believes that to fight for the rights of young

people with learning disabilities is to fight for the justice and prosperity of everyone.

“Our mission is to change the way that people think about people with learning disabilities in the workplace and contrary to people’s opinion prove that it is truly possible for them to get a job and for them keep the job,” added Bianca.

The Fair Shot Café is at 17 South Molton Street, London, W1K 5QT.

[www.fairshot.co.uk](http://www.fairshot.co.uk) ●

**Fair Shot Cafe  
Ambassador and  
model Ellie Goldstein  
(left) with founder  
Bianca Tavella.**



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# SIGN-UP TO BE A SUPERHERO

IT'S BIG. IT'S bold. It's gutsy. It's the UK's one and only disability sports series for the everyday Superhero!

Founded by Paralympian Sophia Warner, the Superhero Series of mass-participation sports events for people with disabilities is back live in 2022.

There are no rules. The events are solely for people with disabilities – AKA Superheroes – to have fun, call the shots and not to worry about cut-off times or equipment restrictions.

The Superhero Series started in 2017 but the seed was sown nineteen years earlier when Sophia struggled to compete in sports events on equal terms.

“I have cerebral palsy and was the first disabled person to enter the London Triathlon back in 1998,” explained Sophia. “Even as an elite athlete I found it

hard to keep up and had to ask other participants for help with my wetsuit and to get my bike down from the bike rack.

“Over the years I've taken part in fun runs where the roads have re-opened and organisers have started clearing up before I've had a chance to finish. People clap and cheer extra loudly just because you're disabled. But none of that is what disabled people want.

“Equally, not everyone who has a disability wants to be a Paralympian. So, I set about creating a sporting event where people with all kinds of disabilities can feel part of a strong community, where they can feel confident and, crucially, be part of the majority rather than the minority.”



*Superheroes close in on the finish line.*

## Leading by Example

Sophia's athletics career began in 1996 when she made her international debut in the 100m and 200m. She went on to pick up gold in both for Great Britain at the 1998 World Championships.

At the 2012 Paralympics, after 16 years of hard work and dedication, Sophia ran a lifetime best 200m time in front of 80,000 people. She finished fourth in both her 100m and 200m.

Sophia retired from elite sport after the World Championships in 2013 and after a stint working as Commercial Director at UK Athletics, Sophia began to plan her Superhero Series.

"My own experiences, combined with meeting so many disabled people who were crying out for the opportunity to be part of a mass participation event specifically for them, was the inspiration for this series," said Sophia.

"I wanted to not only hold inclusive, fun and bold sporting events, but also create a safe space and community for people that don't always feel as though they're a part of something.

"I also loved the idea of creating a series where people with all kinds of disabilities could come

together and compete alongside like-minded individuals who face similar daily experiences and challenges.

"I know first-hand what a hugely positive impact sport can have on a person's life and I believe everyone should have the chance to enjoy momentous and often life-changing events."

The Superhero Series challenges are based on a triathlon - swimming, cycling and running - but participants can do a whole triathlon or choose to do just one or two stages as a relay with disabled and non-disabled family and friends. So as little as you wish, with as much or as little support as you need.

"The idea is simple," said Sophia. "To create fun, gutsy inclusive events where people with disabilities call the shots. If they need flippers or floats in the water, or want to use their powered wheelchair, we make it possible. In fact, as far as I'm concerned, anything goes."

This year's live events will be held at Dorney Lake in Windsor - Superhero Tri on August 20 and Winter Wonderwheels on December 4 - powered as always by MARVEL, the American media and entertainment company that publishes Marvel

Comics. Participants can cycle, walk, run or push to complete 1km, 5km or 10km.

Superheroes entering solo events must consider themselves to have a disability, whether it be physical, intellectual, sensory or invisible. No classifications are needed. People can enter a team, as long as at least one team member has a disability and teams up with 'Sidekicks' (non-disabled family and friends) to take on the unique challenges with as much or as little time and support as needed.

### Stay at Home Superheroes

As well as the live events there will be two virtual 'at home' events – At Home Superheroes from July 23 to August 20 and At Home Winter Wonderwheels from November 19 to December 4. These proved a life-line for the disability community during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

“During the pandemic people with a disability reported that the lack of activity was leading to a deterioration of their physical and mental health, with feelings of loneliness and social isolation,” explained Sophia.

“It’s the reason we are so passionate about sport and disability inclusion. Being active and being a part of a community is a lifeline for many of our Superheroes. It was therefore important that we devised our ‘at home’ events.

“It worked well during the pandemic, with families from 22 countries taking part. We soon realised that a lot of disabled people will always be unable to get to our live events, but want to take part and be a part,

so the ‘at home’ events will continue.”

The series was launched in August 2017 with Superhero Tri, which had 1,000 participants and 4,000 spectators. The debut Winter Wonderwheels took place in December and had 750 participants and 1,500 spectators. These numbers have more than doubled since the debut, with participants aged from two to 72.

“The Superhero Series is still very much in its infancy, but I would love to take it to a different level and build something powerful for the community,” added Sophia. “Similar to how I think Pride is an amazing platform for the LGBTQA+ community where they can be themselves and feel powerful within society and still have a space for themselves. I would like the Superhero Series to not just be a sporting event, but a movement in itself.”

To find out more and to enter a Superhero Series event go to [www.superheroseries.co.uk](http://www.superheroseries.co.uk) ●



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If it seems unusual that the PUC £1 - a stamp used to promote a conference about international co-operation - features a very elaborate, yet violent, design showing St George attacking a dragon. It is because this design was not originally intended for this stamp.



Living with Disability 27

# Access Solution to Humble Hut after Six Centuries



**T**HE ICONIC SHEPHERD'S Hut is having quite a revival as it proves a popular solution to people's space problems.

With many of us spending more time at home during the Covid 19 pandemic and happy to carry on doing so as life gets back to normal, space in which to live, work and play is at a premium.

The Shepherd's Hut can be used for a wide range of purposes, including office, garden retreat, workshop, play den, holiday glamping accommodation and even a full-time home – albeit somewhat restricted in terms of accessibility for disabled people. Until now.

Thanks to a young craftsman's more inclusive approach to traditional construction techniques,

dating back to the 16th century, Shepherds Huts are now a viable option for disabled people.

Rob McFagan has been manufacturing huts for three years, but it wasn't until a couple turned up at his Sussex based workshop that he realised how inaccessible the huts were for anyone with mobility issues. Especially getting into one.

"The husband had been a soldier and had lost a leg below the knee and an arm when an improvised explosive device exploded under his vehicle in Afghanistan," explained Rob.

"He was happy to manoeuvre himself up the steps into the hut, but it made me think about all those who wouldn't be able to.

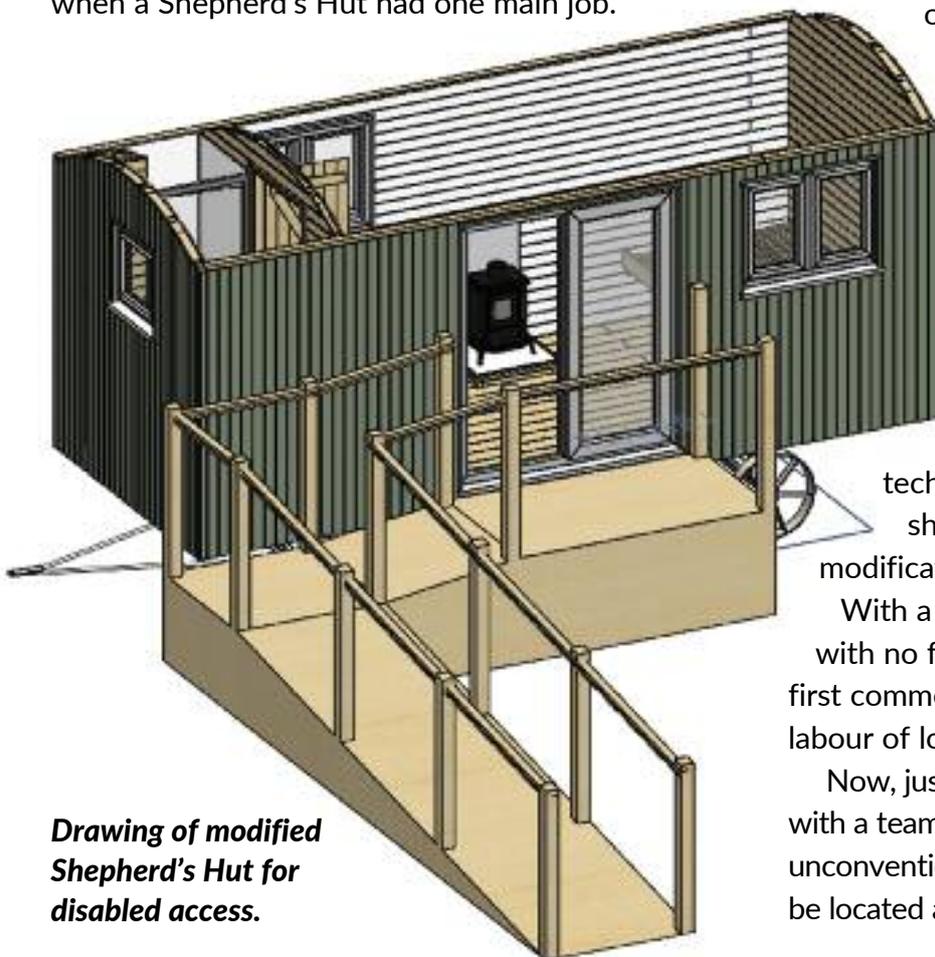
“Huts are traditionally set quite high requiring a step, or number of steps, leading up to a narrow main entrance at one end. So, I set about ensuring we could adapt the centuries old designs to offer a more inclusive approach.”

## Easy Access

Rob’s modifications can include:

- A lower chassis to allow for a gradual disability/ wheelchair ramp.
- Low threshold to allow a wheelchair to easily pass-through double doors on the side.
- Wider toilet room door internally for wheelchair access.
- Disability ironwork in toilet.
- Electrics at building regs/disability heights for ease of access.
- On counter sink for people who have back problems and have difficulty bending.

All a far cry from what was needed in the past, when a Shepherd’s Hut had one main job.



**Drawing of modified Shepherd’s Hut for disabled access.**



Measuring around 12ft x 6ft they were handcrafted by skilled carpenters to be used as a practical place for shepherds and farmers to shelter and stay over while raising sheep and guarding flocks. Although designs would vary slightly, the hut would act as a bedroom, kitchen, dining room, sitting room, workplace and storeroom all rolled into one.

Rob still builds huts from traditional timber construction designs, on four iron wheels and with corrugated iron tops. But he uses more modern manufacturing techniques to meet customers’ outdoor sheltered space needs of today, including modifications for disabled access and use.

With a £2,000 start-up loan from his dad, and with no formal training in carpentry, he built his first commercial timber-framed Shepherd’s Hut as a labour of love aged 21.

Now, just three years later, Rob is working 24/7 with a team of five to meet the huge demand for unconventional stand-alone space on wheels that can be located at home – but away from the house. ▶



**Rob McFagan  
at work.**

## Award Winner

To mark an extraordinary year for the Sussex born businessman, Rob McFagan's Holmes Hill Shepherds Huts company won the Start-Up of the Year award at the Sussex Business Awards. At just 24 he became the youngest winner ever of the prestigious award. He was also a finalist in the Business Growth Award.

From building that first Shepherd's Hut, in a rented marquee on a small industrial estate in 2019, Rob has moved to a 1600sq ft unit to craft more of the rumbling wagons that used to roll through Britain's country lanes and fields.

"I've always had a keen interest in vintage agricultural machinery and steam traction engines and after leaving school I took a two-year BTEC in Agriculture Engineering," said Rob. "It was while studying that I made my first Shepherd's Hut, mainly to make sure I didn't have to stay in a tent when attending agricultural shows!

"It was certainly a case of learning by trial and error, as I perfected a mobile, waterproof, nice-to-live in hut. I always remember at the time seeing a quote that woodworking is one third planning, one third execution and one third figuring out how to change your plans to cover up that mistake that you just made during execution. So true.

**30 Living with Disability**



"But I loved working with wood, the feel and smell of it, the weight of the hand tools and of course running my hand over the end result.

"When I left college, I drifted for a while, reluctant to commit to a well-planned out career path. I sprayed steel for a local company and turned my hand to general maintenance – neither of which lasted long as my dad convinced me that as I clearly wasn't shy of hard work, I should give manufacturing Shepherds Huts a go.

"My first commission was for a small hut that the customer wanted to use as an office space. As a self-taught carpenter, plumber and electrician with only basic tools it took six weeks rather than the six days it would take to build today. But I was in business.

"Through a combination of responsible material resourcing, the latest computer technology and skilled workmanship, we are able to produce products that are approximately 50% less costly than like-for-like products on the market.

"I'm determined to ensure the dream of owning personal or commercial Shepherds' Huts is within the reach of all and accessible for all."

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# The Results Are In



**A**CCESS FOR DISABLED people is worse than it was pre-pandemic according to the results of a survey by disabled access charity Euan's Guide.

More than 2400 respondents took part in the charity's annual Access Survey, with 59% of disabled people believing that Covid-19 has made disabled access worse.

The survey, of disabled people and their friends, families and carers, showed 73% of respondents had experienced a disappointing trip or had to change plans due to poor accessibility and 56% actively avoided places that didn't share their disabled access information.

The Euan's Guide Access Survey is the largest and longest running survey of its kind and is

currently supported by Motability Operations, the UK's leading car scheme for disabled people.

Questions in the latest survey included how lockdowns and Covid-19 measures impacted those with accessibility requirements, what were the barriers to getting out and about and what people thought about disabled access at all types of venues from pubs to castles to stations – and everywhere in between.

The survey also tackled the essential topic of toilets and asked people's views on the most common problems they encounter with accessible loos.

"We started the Access Survey to find out what disabled people thought about disabled access in the UK and with the support of Motability

Operations this has enabled us to amplify the voice of disabled people,” said Euan MacDonald MBE, co-founder of Euan’s Guide.

“The pandemic has had a massive impact on everyone but especially disabled people. A majority of the respondents thought disabled access got worse due to Covid. We have heard and continue to hear concerns from our community about social distancing, mask wearing and access to accessible toilets.”

### *The biggest Covid concerns highlighted by the survey were:*

- Places and spaces where people are not respecting social distancing (75%)
- People not wearing masks (68%)
- Toilets being shut (68%)

### *The solutions respondents suggested to make it safer and easier to visit places were:*

- Providing accessible routes that disabled people can navigate independently (67%)
- Clear markings to encourage people to keep their distance (61%)
- The requirement for staff and visitors to wear masks (53%)

“However, there have also been things that have changed for the better, such as remote working and studying becoming an accepted norm and online screenings meaning that events and performances can be more accessible to many disabled people,” said Euan.

Covid and lockdowns aside, the survey gauged people’s opinions on disabled access generally. Information remains key and 92% of respondents stated that they try to find disabled access information before visiting somewhere new, with 56% avoiding visiting a venue if it has not shared their disabled access information.



*Euan MacDonald MBE.*

73% of respondents reported that they found information on a venue’s website to be misleading, confusing or inaccurate and this was echoed by 73% of respondents who had experienced a disappointing trip or had to change plans due to poor accessibility.

Accessible parking and accessible toilets remained a top priority for disabled visitors with 81% and 80% of respondents respectively reporting that they would help improve confidence when visiting new places.

“These results emphasise that we at Euan’s Guide still have a lot of work to do,” added Euan.

“We can’t do it alone though and we need your help. If you are a disabled person, friend or family member, please share your disabled access experiences so more people can find accessible places to go. Likewise, if you own, run or work with a venue please ensure that you are promoting your welcome to disabled visitors”.

Euan’s Guide was founded in 2013 by Euan, a powerchair user, and his sister Kiki after Euan was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease and a lack of disabled access made everyday experiences stressful.

The pair soon realised that having access to good quality disabled access information inspires confidence and removes the fear of the unknown. It breaks down the barriers of exclusion and makes it easier for disabled people to find great places to go.

To find our more visit [www.euansguide.com](http://www.euansguide.com) ●



# Pollyanna En Pointe in Inspirational TV Ad

**A** TEENAGE BALLERINA with only one leg has performed in front of millions of people as part of a television advert.

Pollyanna Hope stars in and narrates Toyota's 'Beautiful Movement' advert that has been aired throughout the UK and Europe to communicate the company's mission to encourage mobility for all.

After she lost a leg in a bus crash when she was just two years old, Pollyanna's story shows just how people can realise their potential and achieve their seemingly impossible dreams.

Since that life-changing day she has undergone around 20 surgical procedures and used 25 different prosthetic legs, many provided by the NHS, as she has grown up.

Despite her disability, Pollyanna has become a ballet dancer, using a special prosthetic leg made for her by Dorset Orthopaedic that's fixed in the en pointe position to enable her to dance alongside able-bodied ballerinas.

She currently trains at the London Contemporary



Dance School with the CAT (Contemporary Advanced Training) scheme and has been a dancer in the English National Ballet Youth Company since September 2021.

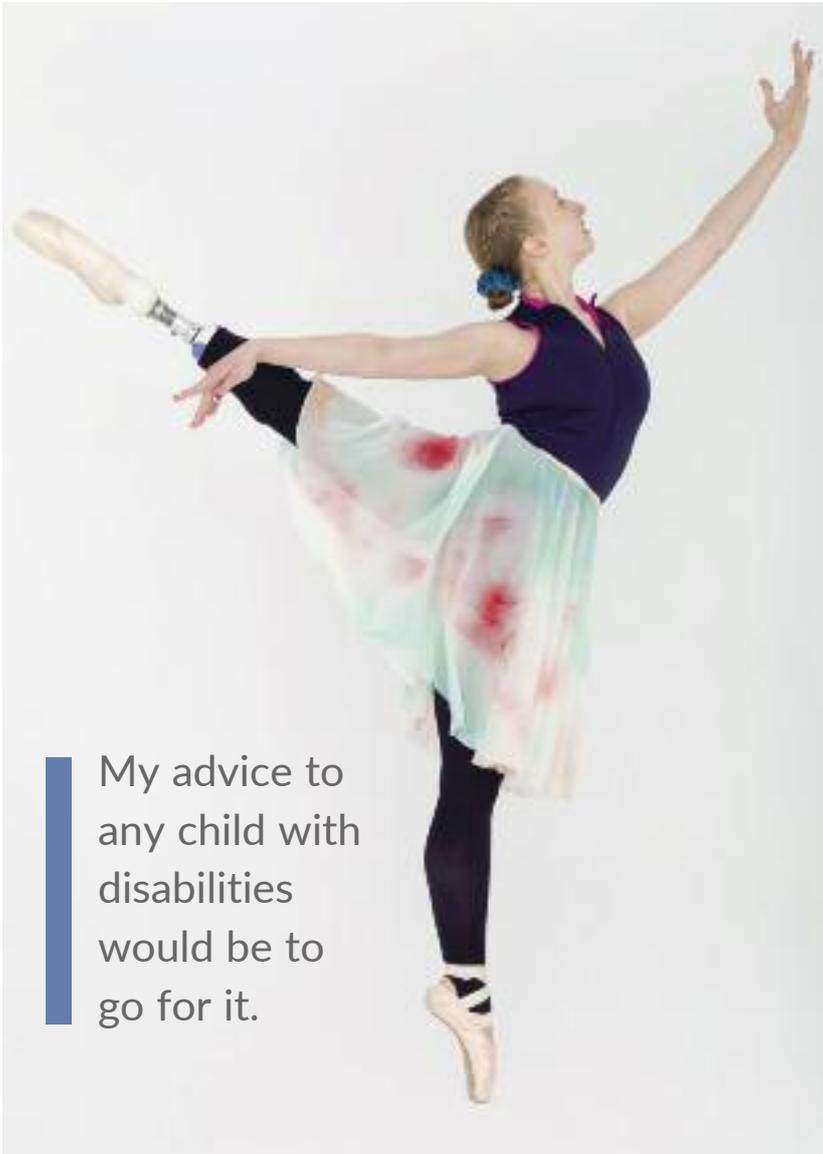
## *Fairy Tale break*

Speaking from her Hertfordshire home, the inspiring 17-year-old explained how she was contacted about appearing in the Toyota advert after the production company spotted one of her Instagram posts.

"It was all pretty surreal really," she said. "I had to do a number of audition tapes, zoom calls with the producers Saatchi and Saatchi in Los Angeles and then fly to Slovenia for the shoot.

"Which was of course great. It was a three-day shoot and we were treated so well, with people spending so much time and care on things like our hair and make-up. I met so many great people and the whole experience felt like a fairy tale."

In the film, the movement of everyday life is frozen in time: Olympic skater Alysa Liu is captured in mid-leap, spectators are immobile as they watch ▶



My advice to any child with disabilities would be to go for it.

advert – which she did at recording studios in London and New York.

Now back in a more ‘normal’ routine Pollyanna divides her time between school, where she is studying politics, drama and philosophy A Levels and dance training – which she does up to 10 hours a week. She also enjoys designing and making her own clothes, particularly smart dresses.

“It does mean I’ve had to hone my time management skills,” quipped Pollyanna. “I do all the same dances as everyone else and my training is always the same, so the physical strain of dancing leaves me exhausted but it is so rewarding.

“My advice to any child with disabilities would be to go for it – there is no limit but what you think you can achieve. If you believe in yourself all else will follow”.

“For me that means pursuing my dream of being a dancer. I would love to go on to train full time in dance and then hopefully join a ballet or contemporary company.” ●

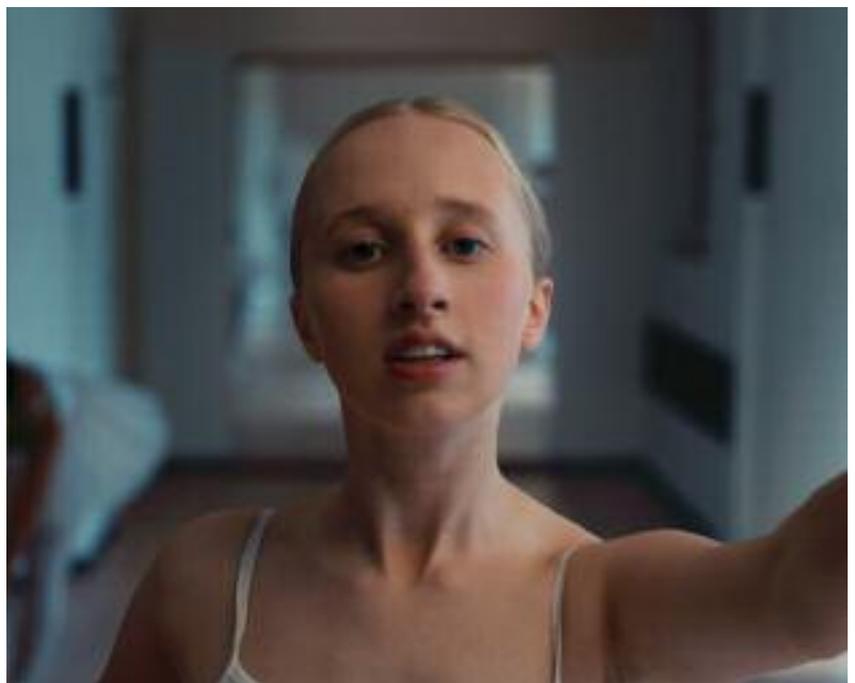
To see the advert go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdtfmMWPWEM>

an ice hockey match on TV and confetti is suspended in the air as a newly married couple approach their wedding car. It shows people in a new way and how mobility products help them move.

### *Pollyanna’s busy life*

The action shifts to a ballet class, with several girls frozen in mid-move. The camera then reveals Pollyanna with her prosthetic leg. As the world begins to move again, Pollyanna turns and dances, joining the other ballerinas on her own ‘impossible’ journey.

It wasn’t until Pollyanna was back in the UK that the producers rang to ask her if she would also do the voiceover for the



# School Welcomes Back Bionic Teacher



“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”

Christopher Reeves, actor

**W**HEN TEACHER KATH Tregenna left school half an hour early because she was feeling unwell she certainly didn't think it would lead to the loss of all four limbs.

Within hours of getting home she felt that it might possibly be a bit more than a cold and rung NHS 111. An on the ball operator recognised the possible signs of sepsis, sent an ambulance and Kath was rushed to hospital.

The life-threatening condition deteriorated rapidly as her body went into severe septic shock

and she suffered multiple organ failure. After a series of cardiac arrests Kath's family were brought to the Wexham Park Hospital in Slough to say their goodbyes.

“It still breaks my heart to think what my partner Alvin, children and father went through to be called in the early hours of the morning to be told I was dying,” said Kath. “Up until then I had been a fit, healthy and active partner, mum, daughter and full-time teacher.”

But despite slipping into a coma in November 2019, the 45-year-old mother of two fought back from her brush with death to regain consciousness in time to open Christmas presents with her children – although she remembers nothing from that time.

“I vaguely remember arriving at hospital but then nothing until probably early January when the doctors informed me that they needed to ▶

amputate both legs below the knee and both arms below the elbow to save my life,” explained Kath.

“By that time my legs, arms, feet and hands were black and withered from loss of blood – now being pumped to save my more vital organs from sepsis.”

Sepsis happens when a person’s immune system overreacts to an infection and starts to damage the body’s own tissues and organs.

I was truly overwhelmed and grateful to be alive, to be with my family and to be able to enjoy simple things such as sitting in the garden.

For Kath it meant a series of operations to amputate her limbs in early 2020 at Wexham Park and Frimley Park hospitals. An in-patient period at a specialist unit in Oxford was then planned for her to get used to prosthetic legs and arms.

“Covid-19 put paid to that though and after an uncertain period for everyone I was allowed home in a wheelchair in May of that year,” added Kath.



*Kath's Hero Arms.*



*Kath Tregenna gets used to her prosthetics.*

“By then all I wanted was to be at home and the pandemic gave the whole family the time to be together, to come to terms with what had happened and to learn to live with my disability.

“My partner was working from home, my father had stayed in our family bubble to help and my children were doing home schooling, which as I could do little else gave me a focus and, as a teacher, a purpose.

“People always ask how I coped in those first few weeks and months at home with coming to terms with what I had lost. For me, knowing how close I had come to dying it was very easy to focus on what I had. I was truly overwhelmed and grateful to be alive, to be with my family and to be able to enjoy simple things such as sitting in the garden.”

Weekly visits to the Oxford Centre for Enablement (OCE) slowly introduced Kath to walking again on prosthetic legs – although she had to leave them at the hospital between visits until she was completely proficient. By now she had also been prescribed NHS arm hooks to help with everyday tasks.



She was also looking to the future.

“In my heart I knew I wanted to go back to teaching but I knew I wouldn’t be able to do that with heavy hooks and a wheelchair,” said Kath.

“My friends and family were constantly reading up about prosthetics and researching the latest innovations. I got to hear about Open Bionics, a company using custom 3D printing and scanning to create the Hero Arm, a bionic limb that uses myoelectric sensors to detect muscle movements and convert them into intuitive hand movements.

It’s really great to be back doing the job I love and so satisfying to actually be teaching some of the children I almost left behind.

“Thanks to the kindness and generosity of people at my school who set-up a Go Fund Me page when I was in a coma I could consider a private option for prosthetics. Being able to get one and then a second Hero Arm has changed my life, again.

“When I have two Hero Arms on and am lifting things around the house, I feel much more in control and my posture is so much better.”

Living with Disability featured Open Bionics’ Hero Arm in our 10th edition and you read the article at [www.livingwithdisability.org](http://www.livingwithdisability.org)

Kath is now back teaching three days a week as

**Kath back at school.**



part of the Learning Support team at the International School of London and credits her new Hero Arms for her return to the classroom.

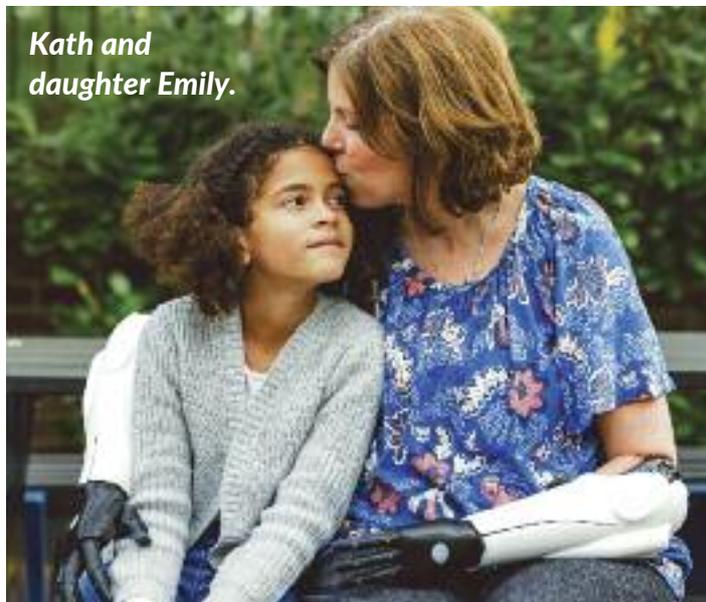
“It’s really great to be back doing the job I love and so satisfying to actually be teaching some of the children I almost left behind,” added Kath.

“I guess it shows that anything is possible and that you can overcome any obstacles in your way if you have the right attitude. You can’t rush it and it certainly won’t be easy, so talk to those around you and always accept their support.

“Celebrate today the smallest things that you couldn’t do yesterday. Over time you realise how much they all add up.”

To find out more about the symptoms of sepsis in children and adults, and where and when to get help go to [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) ●

**Kath and daughter Emily.**



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# With an Eye on Looking Good

**A**N NHS PATIENT has become the first person in the world to solely use a 3D-printed prosthetic eye.

Steve Verze, an engineer in his 40s from London, tried the new eye alongside a traditional acrylic prosthetic at Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust before going home with just the printed version.

Doctors at the world-renowned hospital now hope that the new technique will prove successful in

cutting waiting times for patients who need prosthetic eyes.

A 3D printed eye is a true biomimic and a more realistic prosthetic, with clearer definition and real depth to the pupil. Unlike traditional methods, it uses scans of the eye instead of an invasive mould of the eye socket, so difficult for children that they can need a general anaesthetic.

Crucially, the production process is much faster. Traditional acrylic prosthetic eyes are hand-painted and take about six weeks to complete. With 3D printing, once a scan has been taken, the prosthesis can be printed within two and a half hours. It is then sent to an ocularist to finish, polish and fit. The whole process takes just two to three weeks.

The 3D-printed eyes have clearer definition than hand-painted prosthetics and allow light to travel the full depth of the eye in a more natural way.

“I’ve needed a prosthetic eye since I

was 20, and I’ve always felt self-conscious about it,” said Steve. “When I leave my home, I often take a second glance in the mirror, and I’ve not liked what I’ve seen. This new eye looks fantastic and, being based on 3D digital printing technology, it’s only going to be better and better.”

## *Making a difference*

Prosthetic eyes are used by people whose own eyes failed to develop normally from birth or have been removed following an accident or as a result of a condition such as cancer.

“We are excited about the potential for this fully digital prosthetic eye,” said Professor Mandeep Sagoo, consultant ophthalmologist at Moorfields Eye Hospital and professor of ophthalmology at the NIHR Biomedical Research Centre at Moorfields Eye Hospital and UCL Institute of Ophthalmology.

“We hope the forthcoming clinical trial will provide us with robust evidence about the value of this new technology, showing what a difference it makes for patients. It clearly has the potential to reduce waiting lists.”

Part of the funding for the 3D printed eye project was donated by the Drayson Foundation, of which Lord Drayson, the businessman, amateur racing driver and Labour politician born with one eye, is a trustee. ●

**Steve Verze.**



**Moorfields  
Eye Hospital**  
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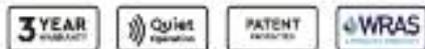
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# Mencap's Myth Busters

A stunning series of portrait photographs representing the diversity of the learning disability community has been unveiled.



*Sarah Gordy.*

**T**AKEN BY PHOTOGRAPHER India Whiley-Jones they capture 18 new Mencap ambassadors, showing them living happy, healthy lives and challenging the stigmas and misconceptions about what living with a learning disability looks like.

Some familiar and famous faces have signed up as one of The Myth Busters, including a dancer, an actor, a model, a football coach and a rock star, to represent the 1.5 million people with a learning disability in the UK.

### Front and centre

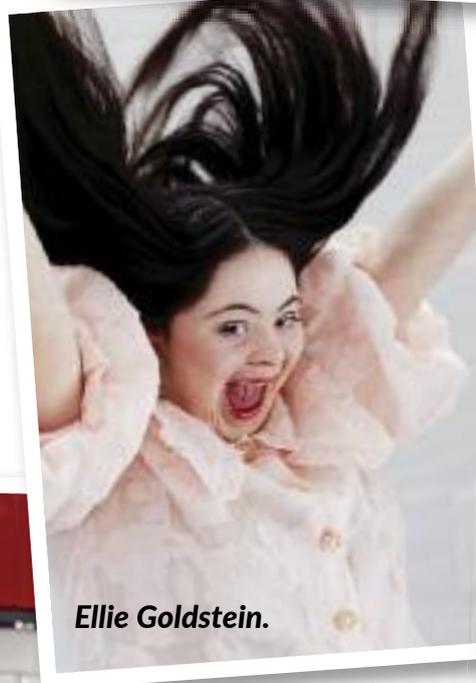
The new initiative comes after a recent survey by Mencap revealed that two in five people in the UK (42%) hadn't seen someone with a learning disability in the media in the past year, highlighting how much representation matters.



**Sophie Potter.**



**George Webster.**



**Ellie Goldstein.**



**Tommy Jessop.**



**Michael Beynon.**

The Myth Busters are a group of people that demonstrate just how unique learning disability is and how everyone in the community deserves to be equally seen and heard, including:

**Michael Beynon**, the first man in Wales with Down's syndrome to run a marathon and who set-up his own successful business producing Welsh cakes. **Sophie Potter**, a self-identified 'party girl' who

loves going dancing on nights out with her sister, and **Ellie Goldstein**, the face of Gucci and Glamour Magazine's 'Gamechanging Model of the Year'.

Alongside them are celebrities such as Line of Duty's BAFTA Award-winning **Tommy Jessop**, actor **Sarah Gordy** OBE and **George Webster** who took CBeebies by storm as their


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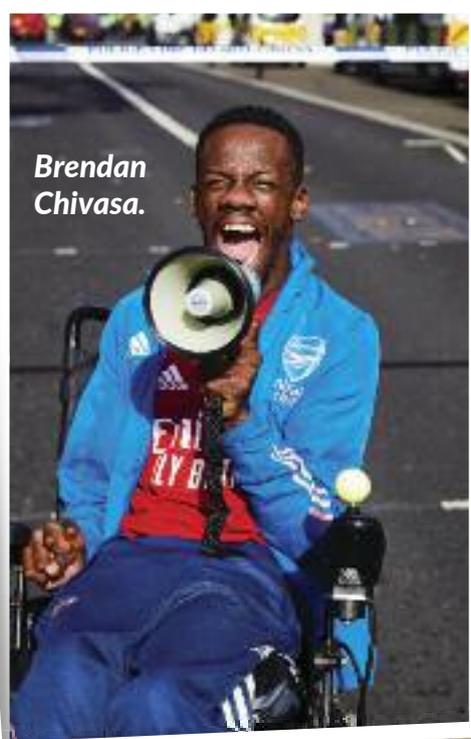


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**Freddie Latham.**



**Brendan Chivasa.**



**Nigel Smith.**



**Heidi Crowter.**



**Sas Granville.**

Others who will be making a difference are **Alastair Smith**, a skater, raver and all-round-life-enthusiast who runs a creative print-making and t-shirt printing shop and **Nigel Smith**, a hockey player, magician and the joker of the squad.

"I want people to understand the difference ▶

**Brendan Chivasa and Heidi Crowter** and football coach **Sas Granville**.

"The thing I'm most proud of in my life is being a Myth Buster and being in Cosmo magazine recently talking about my life and dating with a learning disability," said Sas. "I even had stars shaved into my hair especially before the Myth Busters photo shoot because I want to show everyone that people with a learning disability are all stars."



**Alastair Smith.**

first children's TV presenter with Down's syndrome.

"It's a myth that people with Down's Syndrome are always happy," said George. "I want to show that we are just people; we feel the full spectrum of emotions just like everyone else."

Also signing up as Myth Busters are marathon runner **Freddie Latham**, activists



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## Lancashire School Branches Out

**A** Lancashire SEN school will plant more trees than any other school in the red rose county this spring.

Blackburn's Newfield School is one of 40 Lancashire schools participating in the PLaNT project run by Ribble Rivers Trust (RRT).

Newfield pupils will plant 312 trees in the school grounds, contributing towards almost 4,000 trees being planted at schools across Pennine Lancashire.

"Newfield is very excited to have joined up with River Ribble Trust as part of our whole school drive to enhance our outdoor spaces to create environments that will support outdoor learning and develop an understanding and love of nature," said deputy headteacher, Jenny Riley.

Newfield is a school for children aged 5-19 with physical and learning disabilities who don't always find it easy to access the wild outdoors so it is hoping to create accessible, but wild areas in the

grounds to enable the pupils to experience a landscape that's educational and also helps with their well-being.

All pupils will be invited to engage with the tree planting sessions and some of the older children will be involved as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

"The children will benefit from learning how trees grow, the different types of trees and the habitats these trees can create for wildlife. Planting these trees and hedgerow species will allow the children resources to use in subjects such as maths and the arts but also create spaces that they feel safe and happy in," Jenny explained.

RRT has joined forces with the Prospects Foundation and Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale Borough Councils to deliver the Pennine Lancashire Treescapes Project (PLaNT) which involves planting nearly 40,000 trees this winter.

Newfield's trees have been chosen to ensure they have no thorns which could hurt the pupils or wild berries that could cause illness if eaten. They include alder, English oak, hornbeam, silver birch, hazel, field maple and goat willow.

There's also apple trees and a Merryweather damson plum tree – all producing fruit that can be eaten straight from the tree.

"Like the tree planting done at other schools, we hope that the children at Newfield will take on a sense of responsibility for the trees which they plant themselves," said RRT'S education and engagement officer, Christi Lloyd.

"Particularly for children with autism or adhd, it can be calming to be out in nature and helps them find a focus."

The PLaNT project has been funded by the Forestry Commission's Local Authority Treescapes Fund and Trees for Cities.

PLaNT aims to create micro woodlands to help combat historic and ongoing losses of trees caused by urbanisation, pests and diseases.

between care and support for people with a learning disability,” explained Nigel. “I love being independent. Supporting me means teaching me to do things myself, not just doing them for me. It helps me live my life. I also want to see more people like me on TV; that would be brilliant.”

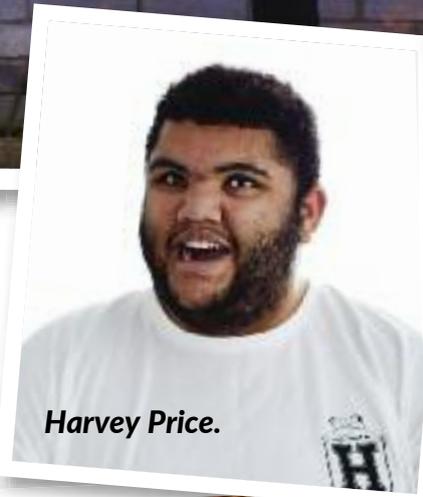
The group is completed by **Aisha Edwards**, a 27-year-old theatre usher from London, dancer **Andrew Self**, who hit the headlines when he competed on the BBC’s The Greatest Dancer show, rock popstar **Daniel Wakeford**, student **Harvey Price**, artist **Tara Halvai** and British paralympic swimmer **Jessica Jane Applegate** MBE. ▶



*Andrew Self.*



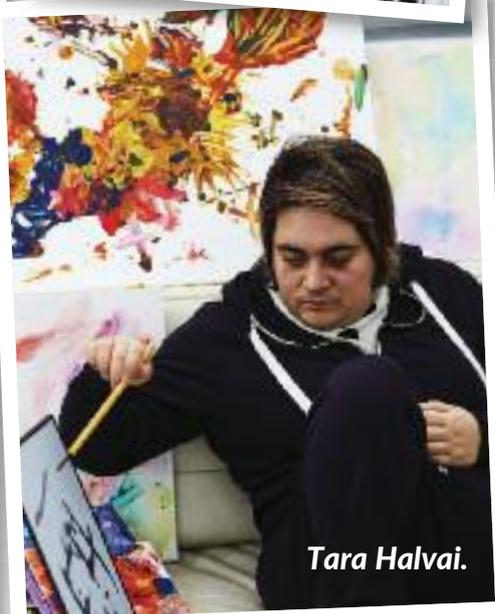
*Daniel Wakeford.*



*Harvey Price.*



*Aisha Edwards.*



*Tara Halvai.*



*Jessica Jane Applegate.*

Each and every one of these Myth Busters is amazing and I can’t thank them enough for joining the Mencap family.

# Every Picture Tells a Story

**T**O WELCOME THE new Myth Busters Mencap commissioned India to showcase them living happy lives and busting myths at the same time, demonstrating the diverse range of ages, ethnicities, different types of learning disability and regionality each member of the group uniquely brings to the charity.

## Behind the lens

"I've grown up with my Auntie Frances who has a learning disability and she is the life and soul of my family," said India.

"I've also spent my whole life helping out at the nightclub my grandma runs for people with a learning disability - dancing with the people and generally being very involved in the community. When Mencap approached me about capturing these amazing Myth Busters on camera, I was really keen to be involved.

"I wanted to be part of this campaign to show the amazing personalities that exist in the learning disability community. I loved working with each and every one of the Myth Busters - hearing all their stories, learning about their passions and getting to know them while shooting. It was great fun and everyone was amazing. I also loved meeting the families and carers and seeing all the special and unique relationships unfold on set."



## India Whiley-Jones.

Late last year, Mencap released some statistics which revealed that two thirds of people in the UK cannot correctly identify a learning disability as a reduced intellectual ability, with 40% of people thinking it's dyslexia and 28% believing it to relate to a mental health issue. The survey also revealed people would feel more comfortable talking to someone with a learning disability if they saw them featured more often in the media.

These statistics prove just how important representation and inclusion is. Those who were surveyed also revealed they'd be more likely to engage with people with a learning disability if they lived on their street (39%), worked on their local high street (37%) or participated in local sports activities with them (29%).

It's Mencap and the Myth Busters' hope that by showcasing this diverse mix of people as ambassadors and giving them all a

platform to talk about what living life with a learning disability means to them, they'll increase the visibility of people with a learning disability not only in the media but also in wider society.

## Pleasure and privilege

"Each and every one of these Myth Busters is amazing and I can't thank them enough for joining the Mencap family," said Edel Harris, Chief Executive of Mencap.

"To have this diverse group of unique, talented, interesting, energetic, and fun people on board to help us shatter misconceptions, reduce stigma and campaign for societal change and greater inclusion of people with a learning disability is a real pleasure and privilege. We want the UK to be the best place in the world for people with a learning disability to live happy and healthy lives and I'm delighted the Myth Busters are helping us to make this a reality."

For more information on The Myth Busters go to [mencap.org.uk/mythbusters](http://mencap.org.uk/mythbusters) ●



# Get Back to Nature

Time outdoors experiencing the natural world around us can make us feel better.

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Here in the UK, we have some stunning countryside and some of the world's best accessible nature reserves and wetland habitats. So, if you're looking for a great day out close to home or as part of your staycation, we've teamed up with The Wildlife Trusts and Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust to suggest a few accessible sites.



No matter where you are in the UK, there will be a Wildlife Trust inspiring people about nature and standing up for wildlife.

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It looks after more than 2,300 nature reserves, covering 98,500 hectares, and operates more than 120 visitor and education centres in every part of the UK, on Alderney and the Isle of Man – so there’s bound to be one close to you



“Disabled access is a priority for The Wildlife Trusts, as we believe that everyone should have access to nature, and that time spent in nature can be of great benefit to health and wellbeing,” said Miriam Bentley-Rose, Strategic Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at The Wildlife Trusts

“We have some beautiful accessible places to visit and are working to ensure even more of our nature reserves can be visited by all, including those with physical disabilities, communication difficulties, sensory impairments, and those who are neurodiverse.

“We recognise that access isn’t always about the physical environment, and our Wild About Inclusion team supports all 46 of Wildlife Trusts as we work to ensure everyone has the opportunity to experience the joy of wildlife in their daily lives.”

You can find a list of The Wildlife Trusts accessible nature reserves at

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/visit/accessible-nature-reserves> but here are a few of the highlights.

## Essex Wildlife Trust

Essex WT have an all-terrain mobility scooter at their Fingringhoe Wick nature reserve, allowing those with limited mobility to access the reserve all year round and enjoy the variety of wildlife Fingringhoe has to offer – from the hunting barn owl to the elusive kingfisher. To use this, or for further details:

[fingringhoe@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:fingringhoe@essexwt.org.uk).

They also have SEND events on offer at their centres to bring the outdoors to life for children of all ages and abilities. Thorndon SEND Forest Fun is available monthly for children with special educational needs and disabilities from the ages of 5 – 16. For more information: [thorndon@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:thorndon@essexwt.org.uk)



Essex WT also have two accessible bird hides available: Monty’s lookout in Two Tree Island and Lyster Bird Hide at Hanningfield Nature Discovery Centre.

## Hereford Wildlife Trust

Volunteers are the backbone of all the Wildlife Trusts, generously offering time and skills. They

achieve great things for conservation, so The Hereford Wildlife Trust is offering them extra support through its Nature, Nurture, Nourish project. By taking on additional staff, it can spend more time working with volunteers who need a little more support, from those who are visually impaired to those taking their first steps back into the world after suffering from poor mental health.

Volunteers are involved in all aspects of the Trust’s work, from getting stuck in on its nature reserves to helping in its charity shop. Staff take the time to ensure every volunteer finds a role to suit them and is given support and a chance to develop their skills and confidence.

## Tees Valley WT

Tees Valley WT have a project called “Sensing the Wild” which takes groups of blind and visually-impaired people out to experience wildlife and nature. Full details of the project can be found here: <https://www.teeswildlife.org/what-we-do/current-projects/sensing-the-wild-connecting-visually-impaired-people-to-nature/>

## Wiltshire WT

As part of its Coombe Bissett Down project Wiltshire WT has created a British Sign Language video to introduce the nature reserve, alongside a pre-arrival guide, an easy read guide and a large print guide.

Walking trails of different difficulties plus a tramper route have also been mapped. For more details see: <https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/coombe-bissett-down-salisbury>

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Scott started as a wildfowler and learned to protect first the birds, and then their wetland habitats. He set up the first Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust centre for science and conservation at Slimbridge and opened it to the public so that anyone could enjoy getting close to nature.

Every site – Arundel, Caerlaverock, Castle Espie, Llanelli, London, Martin Mere, Slimbridge, Washington, Welney and Steart



*Barnacle Geese in flight.*

Marshes – has information about accessibility, including videos, on their specific websites.

WWT's jewel in the crown centre at Slimbridge won gold earlier this year in the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Award category at the Bristol, Bath and Somerset Tourism Awards.

“Winning gold in the Accessible and Inclusive category was a massive achievement for us as all of WWT’s wetland centres exist to fulfil our founder Sir Peter Scott’s vision of connecting people with nature and aim for wetlands and wildlife to be accessible to everyone,” said Fran Penny, Slimbridge Visitor Experience Manager.

“The award recognises that we provide a truly memorable visitor experience for everyone - particularly those with accessibility requirements and demonstrates excellence across every aspect of our business.” Accessibility at Slimbridge includes:

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- Hearing induction loops available and enlarged maps.
- All of the WildWatch videos, created monthly to give an update on both what has been happening out on the Slimbridge reserve, as well as within its living collections, are subtitled.



*Accessibility WWT.*

- Manual wheelchairs and mobility scooters are available for hire and the grounds are fully accessible to scooters with level access on all paths and step-free entry to most of the bird hides. There are 6 accessible toilets across the site.
- There are volunteers who can accompany somebody with visual impairment around Slimbridge, while giving interesting facts and insights about its wildlife.
- Portable induction hearing loops have been set up to help visitors who wear hearing aids by amplifying the staff member they are talking to at the admissions or membership desks.
- Accessible highlights at Slimbridge include the Wild Safaris which are wheelchair-accessible and provide a wider ▶



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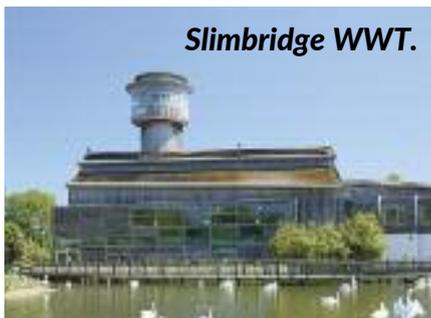
Look out for our exciting Gladiators Exhibition opening in October 2022.

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[coriniummuseum.org](http://coriniummuseum.org)

access to the 800-acre reserve, the fully accessible Estuary Tower Hide and Summer Walkway and viewing platform with access to the banks of the Severn Estuary.

- Slimbridge host changing facility Mobiloo during busier periods - a vehicle to provide even more inclusive visitor access. Mobiloo provides all the amenities to support visitors with a variety of toileting needs.
- 2021 saw the completion of our Living Wetland Theatre, Waterscapes Aviary and Mission Possible exhibits as part of the Slimbridge 75 project which are wheelchair accessible and include new accessible toilets including unisex facilities.



**Slimbridge WWT.**

- Extra promotional initiatives over the last two years at Slimbridge have included Mindful Photography for wellbeing and Autism-friendly Lego workshops.
- To improve the disability and accessibility awareness of the staff there's been training on dementia awareness with 2gether NHS as well as training on disability inclusion with Active Impact.



**W**WT'S Sir Peter Scott was also the inspiration for David Mills MBE to found one of the finest collections of native species in Britain.

With over 40 species of wild animals living in large natural enclosures the British Wildlife Centre is the inspiring realisation of David's childhood dream to create



**Hedgehog.**

his own zoo, specialising solely in British wildlife.

He felt that there was a need to educate the public about native species and the challenges they face living wild in Britain today. And on a visit to BWT it soon becomes apparent that conservation is at the heart of everything they do.

It also becomes abundantly clear that the centre's contented animals, including polecats, mink, stoats, weasels, owls, badgers, otters, foxes, harvest mice, deer and Scottish wildcats, live in a carefully thought-out environment.

Similar careful thought has gone into making sure that the environment is accessible to disabled users – at least from the outside of the animal's enclosures looking in!

That includes access to The Copse, the country's first enclosed walk-through red squirrel experience. An elevated wooden boardwalk – accessible via a ramp – leads the visitor through the trees for an opportunity to view the



**Fallow Deer.**

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Short Breaks is a bespoke service for young adults with special educational needs, autism, and disabilities, and the experience is tailored to each guest's needs.

Derwen College offers Short Breaks respite care for over 18s for 51 weeks a year including day trips, social activities and independence skills. Though separate from College campus, guests have access to the exceptional College facilities which include a gym, sports hall and swimming pool.

Each guest is a carefully assessed so that staff can understand medical needs, behaviour plans, as well as likes and dislikes. Guests and

their families are invited for a look around to get to know the accommodation and staff to make sure they feel happy about their new surroundings.

Short Breaks has room for a maximum of six guests at a time, with an average of four or five staying at one time – perfect for getting to know new friends, while in a cosy, comfortable environment.

One parent told: "Our son loves to take part in the trips and activities at Short Breaks and appreciates that staff listen to his opinions and preferences. He has made friends of a similar age and learnt some home-making skills too. As parents, we can rest easy knowing that he feels safe and is having fun in a home from home."

Guest reviews for short breaks are also overwhelmingly positive, with many returning time after time. Josh told us, "I like Short Breaks! I like the staff, the food, and the days out!"

To find out more about Short Breaks, email [shortsbreaks@derwen.ac.uk](mailto:shortsbreaks@derwen.ac.uk)

free-ranging colony of over 16 squirrels. Various feeding stations offer the kind of close-up viewing which is almost impossible in nature.

“As 98% of the UK population now live and work in towns and cities, many people have become so distanced from nature that they are not really aware of the changing seasons or the creatures that live among us,” said David.

“They may see the odd urban fox or a grey squirrel on the bird feeder, but not much else.

“With television programmes such as the BBC’s Springwatch and Countryfile proving so popular with the viewing public, there is a huge interest in Britain’s wildlife out there. People quite naturally want to go out and find it for themselves. But where?

“My ambition has always been to find a way to share my personal wildlife experiences with everyone, so they too can learn



*Badger.*

about and enjoy nature. By bringing together a collection of native animals kept in natural surroundings, I have gone some way to achieving my ambition.”

Today the British Wildlife Centre can boast one of the finest collections of native species in the country, from the tiny harvest mouse right through to Britain’s largest wild land mammal, the magnificent red deer.

The centre, near Lingfield in Surrey, is open to the public at weekends and during school holidays. At all other times the

focus is exclusively on school and special group visits.

The opportunity to observe the creatures at close quarters and to hear about them from their keepers, in a calm, peaceful, uncrowded environment, means the BWC is a popular choice for special schools.

“We have visited the British Wildlife Centre twice over the last few years,” said Karen Aldridge, head of specialist provision for students aged 16-19 with moderate learning difficulties at Cheam High School in Surrey.



*Harvest Mouse.*

“Our students enjoy visits and trips in the community as part of their Life Skills course and the additional needs of our students are always considered.

“On our last visit I found our guide Tom to be very knowledgeable and clearly experienced in delivering information to different audiences. He spoke to the group in a clear voice whilst giving them



*Otter on the bank.*



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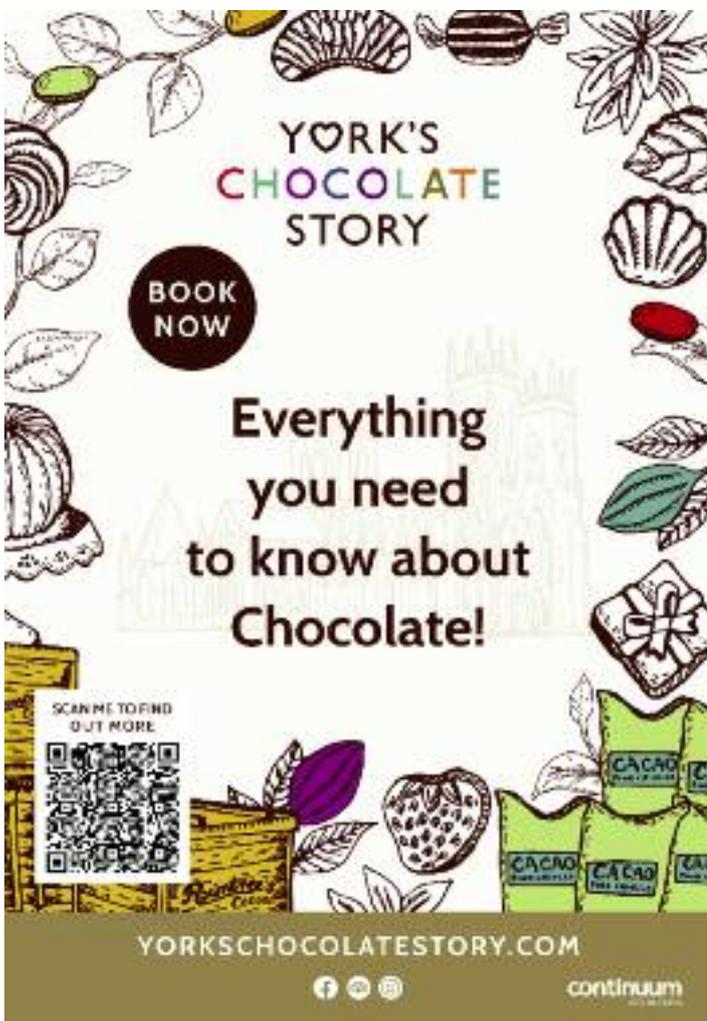
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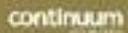
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information in bite sized chunks that they could process before adding more information. There was plenty of time for questions and we did not feel rushed or hurried as can sometimes happen with group visits.

“It is particularly nice that the centre is not open to the general public during school weekday visits as this makes for a more relaxed visit with lots of places for the students to view the animals from, without a crowd of people around.

“Our students all enjoyed finding out more about native British animals and seeing many of them close up, which is something that many had never had the opportunity to do before. For students with a learning disability, activities that are away from classroom-based learning are particularly valuable as many learn through doing and experiencing rather than information delivered in a classroom setting.

“The facilities at the centre are all suitable for our needs and there is ample parking for the school minibus. We found the site to be wheelchair friendly and accessible.”

The BWC's is a non-commercial, specialist visitor attraction that provides a unique insight into the world of nature and the animals that share our living space. A great place to visit, whatever age. And if you are disabled, they have it covered.

- The main car park includes five designated disabled bays, located no more than 34m (37 yards) from the Visitor Centre entrance. The pathway from these bays to the Visitor Centre is on tarmac.
- The Visitor Centre (which houses the admission desk, coffee shop and gift shop) is on ground level.



David Mills MBE.

The entrance is by double doors, with a ramped threshold and no steps.

- A carer assisting a wheelchair user is admitted free of charge. Other essential carers are admitted free on production of a letter or card proving registered carer status.
- Visitors are welcome to bring their own wheelchairs and electric buggies for use at the Centre. There is one manual wheelchair and one electric wheelchair available to use free of charge. Please call, in advance, to ensure they are available.
- All internal areas (Visitor Centre, The Barn, The Hedgerow and Lecture Theatre) are on ground level with step free access.
- Outdoor areas of the Centre are step free. Paths are smooth tarmac plus two wooden boardwalks. The areas immediately surrounding the animal enclosures are gravel, but good views of the animals are afforded from the tarmac path. The two picnic areas are on grass.
- There is a unisex accessible toilet located outside the coffee shop with a ramped access. This has a horizontal handrail to the left of the toilet and a vertical handrail to the right. Vertical handrails are provided to the right of the basin and the hand towel dispenser. This toilet includes a baby changing unit.
- Although we love dogs, we cannot allow assistance dogs. This is because if our wild animals get a sniff of a dog they will immediately rush to hide in their habitat and nobody will see them for some time.

To find out more go to [www.britishwildlifecentre.co.uk](http://www.britishwildlifecentre.co.uk) ●

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**Mountain View Lodge**  
Conway Centres, Anglesey

Mountain View Lodge is a modern single storey residential building that is situated in the grounds of the Conway Centre close to the M501. It is a great place to provide accommodation for families with disabled or disadvantaged children to enjoy short breaks away. Situated in 70 acres of National Trust Parkland, Mountain View Lodge was commissioned by Waring High for Disabled Children who are part of Cheshire West and Chester Council.

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# It's Showtime

Rose Ayling-Ellis' success on the BBC's popular dance show *Strictly Come Dancing* has shown that deaf people can take centre stage.

**A**S THE PROGRAMME'S first deaf contestant, Rose used sign language in some of her spectacular dance routines with pro-partner Giovanni Pernice. By winning she showed that deaf people can achieve anything that a hearing person can.

Her appearance on the show has been seen by many as a breakthrough moment, including Paula Garfield who runs the deaf theatre company Deafinitely, where as a 17-year-old Rose began to learn her stagecraft and come to terms with her deaf identity.

"I'm sure when she joined our Youth Theatre

and saw people like myself and other deaf directors and actors that it was a great inspiration for her," said Paula. "Rose had a really strong stage presence even then but her performances on *Strictly* have had a profound impact on how deaf people are perceived.

Frustrated that mainstream theatre didn't know how to deal with deaf actors and directors Paula co-founded Deafinitely Theatre in 2002.

"To an extent they still don't and there are plenty of barriers and difficulties for deaf people to overcome if they want to succeed on stage or in television and film. Rose's success has certainly ►

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helped to break down some of those barriers.”

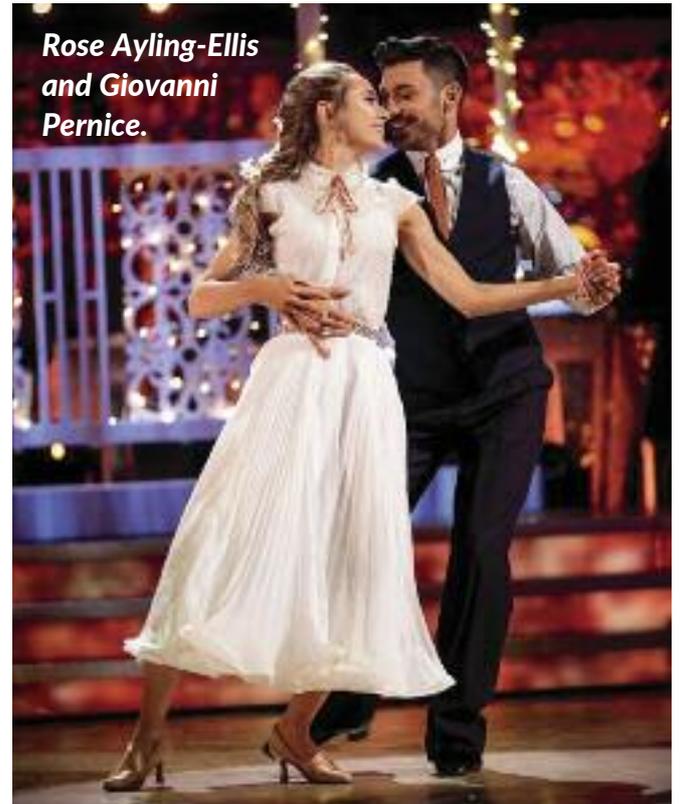
Paula, herself deaf, went to a mainstream school where sign language was seen as a negative and she spent a lot of time in speech therapy. But she says that’s simply society trying to get deaf people to fit in.

“Actually we have our own language – sign language,” said Paula. “It’s a beautiful, rich language and that’s what deaf people should be taught.”

Deafinitely Theatre was the first deaf launched and deaf-led theatre company in the UK that works bilingually in British Sign Language (BSL) and spoken English, producing work that caters to audiences of all ages.

“The aim is to build bridges between the deaf and hearing community by showing that we have a culture, a community and a language.”

Deafinitely will be celebrating its 20th anniversary this year with a new play written and ▶



*Rose Ayling-Ellis and Giovanni Pernice.*

*Paula Garfield taking a rehearsal.*





directed by Paula, Everyday, based on interviews conducted with deaf women and non-binary people who have survived domestic abuse.

## On tour

The production, in BSL and spoken English for a deaf and hearing audience, opens at London's New Diorama Theatre on 20 May and runs until 11 June, ahead of a national tour visiting Birmingham Rep (16-18 June) and York Theatre

Royal (21-22 June) before culminating at Northern Stage (24-25 June) in Newcastle.

Under the title Talking Heads, the theatre currently has three short films posted on its website in British Sign Language about the deaf experience of the Coronavirus pandemic - I Still Blame Myself by Lianne Herbert, starring Kelsey Cherie Gordon; Keeping Hope by Melissa Mostyn starring Nadia Nadarajah; and Lockdown Hairy written and performed by EJ Raymond.



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A further two films in the series - Life, It Goes On by Abigail Gorman, starring Bea Webster and The Woman I Am written and performed by Samantha Pearsall - will be released online in the summer.

As for 27-year-old Rose Ayling-Ellis, she has made mention of the Deafinitely Youth Theatre many times in interviews following her Strictly success. She joined the youth programme in 2012.

And it's still an exciting opportunity today for those aged 14-25 to take part in drama activities, meet other deaf young people and learn more about getting involved in theatre.

The youth theatre travels the UK providing drama taster workshops to a variety of deaf schools, theatres and community centres.

Throughout the summer holidays, it provides a fun and exciting week of workshops on a variety of

subjects, such as Improvisation, BSL & Acting on Stage and Film, Introduction to Puppetry, Physical Theatre, Comedy and Visual Vernacular.

To find out more about Deafinitely Theatre go to [www.deafinitelytheatre.co.uk](http://www.deafinitelytheatre.co.uk)



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**ADVERTORIAL**

**Disability-led charity, Attitude is Everything, has awarded the Theatre Royal & Royal Concert Hall Gold in their Live Events Access Charter.**

In addition to the Nottingham venue's well-established core access support services and facilities, recent improvements have led to it achieving a Gold award.

These include the installation of a Changing Places accessible toilet, Wi-Fi enabled MobileConnect service offering audio enhancement, backstage areas adapted for wheelchair access, lowered sections at bars and merchandise stands and a visual story to help customers with access needs.

These new services are in addition to providing alternative brochure formats, tactile signage, an assistance dog sitting service, a range of Assisted and Relaxed performances and regular staff training.

Find out more about access support at the Theatre Royal & Royal Concert Hall Nottingham here: [www.trch.co.uk/access](http://www.trch.co.uk/access)



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To find out information on local facilities, access to employment opportunities and general provision of services across the Council please visit our website at:  
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Our website can be accessed here - <https://www.gmp.police.uk/> and vacancies for police staff and police officers can be found here - <https://www.gmp.police.uk/police-forces/greater-manchester-police/areas/greater-manchester-force-content/careers/careers/>

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# Working Home or Away

**A** COVENTRY UNIVERSITY academic has launched a project to investigate how the shift to working from home impacts people with disabilities and neurodiversity.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced millions of people across the UK to work from home and many want to continue doing so, for at least some of the time.

Dr Christine Grant, a researcher in the Centre for Healthcare Research at Coventry University, is leading on Remote4All, a project designed to fully understand the impact of working from home.

Working with the NHS in the south-east of England, Vodafone, Coventry City Council, Leonard Cheshire, Dyslexia Box, SEND and other disability charities, Dr Grant's aim is to use the project's findings to help design policies and practices for inclusive work environments.

This research will provide valuable insights into the remote working experience of people with a disability and those with specific needs.

"During the Covid-19 pandemic, homeworking increased rapidly, with 46% of working adults working from home by April 2020," said Dr Grant.

"As we emerged from lockdown, many employers looked to continue remote e-working, permanently or in combination with an office-based arrangement.

"These new work arrangements might be ideal for some but not all, therefore, evaluation of remote working is essential to implement adjustments to accommodate all workers' needs, while ensuring both productivity and wellbeing are maintained.

"There is a considerable lack of scientific knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of remote e-working for individuals with disabilities. People with a disability and specific needs might be overlooked by employers, feel invisible and not valued as members of their work community.

"We believe information is needed, to give an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of people with disabilities or neurodiversity, and to



*Dr Christine Grant.*

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gather insightful information for the design of policies and practices for inclusive work environments from employers and key stakeholders.”

The Remote4All team will use reviews of existing academic research and in-depth online interviews with employers, employees and stakeholders to identify challenges and resources for the creation of inclusive work environments. The findings will be used to advise on the main recommendations and guidelines for the future.

A toolkit will also be developed to support individuals, organisations and practitioners that can feed into guidance to influence wider societal and government policy.

Vodafone have shifted to a model which enables more remote working and Carl Clarke, Vodafone Group Director of Talent, Learning & Skills explained their involvement.

“We are delighted to be working with Coventry University on the Remote4All project,” he said.

“As we embrace the transition to hybrid working, we want to ensure everyone has access to the benefits of remote working. This research will provide valuable insights into the remote working experience of people with a disability and those with specific needs, enabling us to better support all our employees and provide an inclusive remote working experience for all.”

For more information see: <https://digit-research.org/research/innovation-fund/> ●



Unite is the union for the 21st century, meeting the greatest challenges facing working people today. It is a democratic and campaigning union, which fights back for employees in the workplace, protects worker’s rights and takes trade unionism out to millions of unorganised workers.

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We provide a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process and offer an interview to disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for the job. We support disabled colleagues with a desire to progress and can adapt training as required.

We support our colleagues to manage their disabilities or health conditions through workplace adjustments such as flexible working and workspace adaptations. All colleagues have access to our Employee Assistance Programme and occupational health service and can access face-to-face counselling should they require it.

For more information about us and to see our latest vacancies, please visit our website at [www.communityhousing.co.uk](http://www.communityhousing.co.uk)



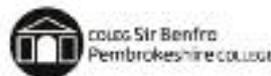
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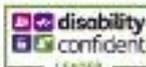
We offering at least one activity to get the right people in our business and at least one activity to help and develop our people.

When recruiting we guarantee an interview to anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum selection criteria for the post. By making offers, we mean that you must provide us with evidence in your application form that you meet the minimum level of competence required as well as meeting any of the qualifications, skills or experience defined as essential.



## POSITIVE ABOUT DISABILITY

[www.pembrokeshire.ac.uk](http://www.pembrokeshire.ac.uk)



## Access to Work

Employment Service at Generate

### What is Access to Work?

Access to Work is a government funded grant scheme that aids people to go to work. Access to Work helps those with a disability and/or long-term health condition to enter and/or remain in work. The scheme supports those who are Employed, Self-employed, About to start new work or New.



### How will Access to Work help?

- Our employers are legally obligated to make 'reasonable adjustments' for their employees that have a disability/health condition.
- Access to Work will provide funding for any extra costs to aid them to carry out their role.
- Specialist equipment
- An Employee with support worker/job coach travel to and from work
- Communication support
- Adaptation to existing buildings

### Where does Generate come in?

At Generate, our main role is to provide job coaches and support workers.

- We support you with the application process and creating a support plan for Access to Work.
- Providing you with a targeted interview.
- We recruit the best suited employment support worker/job coach for you.
- Pay for support worker/job coach, holiday and overtime pay, and supply them with a weekly wage per hour.
- We offer the benefits of service you receive from your own current support worker/job coach.
- Compiling Access to Work employment support worker costs to date.

"Before Generate I found it extremely difficult to find an appropriate support worker to assist me to carry out my work."

- Alan

"Generate not only made the support possible they also manage the paperwork which is a huge help. I am really pleased with Generate's support and how this has improved my work."

- Alison M



Regardless of where in the UK you are, we are here to support you!

For more information or a quote, please visit our website [www.generate-uk.org](http://www.generate-uk.org) or alternatively please call or email Felthana Jayarajah on 02082766333, [Felthana.Jayarajah@generate-uk.org](mailto:Felthana.Jayarajah@generate-uk.org)

## greater.jobs



If you are looking for employment in Greater Manchester, all our local authorities are Disability Confident, offering an interview to all disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria.

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# Championing Neurodiversity in Business

**A** NEW BUSINESS forum has been set up to encourage and support greater neurodiversity in the workplace.

Neurodiversity in Business (NiB) will make use of the extensive knowledge of neurodivergent experts and leading companies to share best practice and improve the employment and experience of the neurodiverse workforce.

Neurodiversity (ND) is a concept where neurological differences should be recognised and respected just like any other human variation. That differences don't have to only be looked at as weaknesses. They're not problems that need to be 'fixed' or 'cured'. They're simply variations of the human brain.

## *Waking up to the benefits*

A neurodiverse workforce consists of both neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals, people who associate with Autism, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, ADHD, Dyspraxia and Dysgraphia, amongst other conditions.

The differences in neurological make-up, or 'brain-wiring', often come with distinct strengths and sought-after skills, from process structuring to creative problem solving. Between 15-20% of the population are estimated to be neurodivergent (around 10-13.5 million in the UK). Yet just a small proportion of this group are in employment.

"We are thrilled that after months of hard-work with an array of experts, the neurodivergent community and our partner organisations, Neurodiversity in Business is finally up and running," said Dan Harris, NiB CEO.



*Jacqui Wallis, CEO Genius Within.*

"Businesses around the country are waking up to the enormous benefits that having a neurodiverse workforce can bring to the table. Neurodivergent individuals can bring single-mindedness, attention to detail, innovative thinking patterns, diligence and creativity to bear on any number of practical business matters. But they need better support than is currently available.

"NiB and its members know that by making reasonable (and often easy) modifications to the workplace it is possible to improve neurodiversity in the workplace and be more sustainable too. That is where NiB will help - by sharing best practice and acting to support businesses and individuals."

The CEO of leading neurodiversity specialists Genius Within, Jacqui Wallis, said the launch of NiB was a milestone moment in bringing neurodiversity at work into the mainstream. ▶



“We welcome the enthusiasm and engagement of so many of the UK’s largest businesses to ensuring that the world of work is an inclusive and welcoming place for neurodivergent individuals,” she said. “We champion systemic change, across our social systems, governments and throughout organisations. Neurodiversity in Business will establish a wide-reaching collective who can make that change happen.”

### Project partners

A selection of the forum’s founding members include: Accenture, ARM, AstraZeneca, Capita; Deloitte, Hiscox, IBM, Kimberly Clark, KPMG, Lloyds Banking Group, Metro Bank, NatWest,



**Dr Nancy Doyle, Chief Research Officer, Genius Within and Fiona Barrett, Director of Operations, Genius Within.**

Network Rail, Openreach, Oracle, Orange Rolls Royce plc, Sky, TalkTalk, The Open University Unilever, Virgin and Media/O2.

For further information as to how to join NiB, please visit

[www.neurodiversityinbusiness.org](http://www.neurodiversityinbusiness.org) ●

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At Practice Plus Group we embrace diversity, with over 6000 staff we have colleagues from all walks of life, including those living with disability. We operate supportive workplaces, with structures and development programmes in place for you to shape the career you want. We offer a competitive package of pay and benefits. We also recognise the value of a healthy work-life balance – we always try to be flexible, helping you fit your working life around your home life. At present we have vacancies for both clinicians and non-clinical staff.

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**20 players from Everton in the Community's disability teams have taken their first steps into football coaching, thanks to funding from the Club's technical partner, hummel.**

As part of its commitment to helping change the world through sport, hummel has pledged to fund an education and training initiative which sees participants from Everton Football Club's official charity undertake the FA's Play Maker and Introduction into football courses, creating opportunities for future employment as disability coaches.

Everton in the Community's Disability programme provides disabled people of all ages across Merseyside with access to bespoke sport and physical activities, alongside volunteer, work placement and accreditation opportunities - helping to address the barriers that

disabled individuals experience resulting in poor health outcomes and reduced social interaction opportunities in mainstream society.

The programme - the oldest targeted project within Everton in the Community - celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year, with players from Everton's disability teams starring in the launch of the Club's 2020/21 hummel third kit. The initiative was recognised at this year's Football Business Awards, scooping the 'Best Club Marketing Activation and Best Brand Activation Involving Football - Premier League.'

Having already embarked on the first stage of the course, with all 20 participants completing the 'Playmaker' qualification online, the budding coaches will now start to take part in practical delivery, as the Club's Disability Manager, Steve Johnson explains:

"All participants were required to take a four-and-a-half-hour online course. For some, it was a challenge as they hadn't used a computer before, and some players can't read and write, so we sat and talked them through it with one-to-one sessions.

"We're delighted that all participants have received their certificate, and they'll now start their role as coaching assistants - shadowing our staff, gaining experience and making a real positive addition to the Club's workforce."

Steve is also hoping the 20 strong team of coaches can encourage the next generation of disabled people into coaching roles: "Traditionally, there's been low expectations of disabled people, so we want to create positive role models for other disabled people and inspire them to say, 'I can achieve that too.'"



# Where there is a will there is a way...

For every person with a learning disability to have a purposeful and fulfilled life.

**N**OT AN UNCOMMON vision of support workers, but one that at Nickel Support is a tangible reality for many of the people using the unique service.

Set up in 2012 by Elena Nicola and Nick Walsh after they had become disillusioned by the learning disability sector, Nickel Support set out to offer support in a much more dynamic way. To put the needs of the clients first.

They felt that people with learning disabilities deserved more and were being short-changed by some of the more traditional services.

“It seemed that many services were just trying to get numbers through the door, with little regard for the needs of the very people they were meant to be supporting,” explained Nick.

“Our vision is to change the way learning disability services are run forever, offering respect and the chance for people with learning disabilities to shine.”

With that in mind the pair put together a business plan, quit their jobs, invested their own money and in the early days went without wages to set up a community interest company, supporting adults with learning disabilities to develop and run their own social enterprises.

Fast forward 10 years and Nickel Support employs 17 staff and five trainees in paid employment. Since last year it has been based in high profile premises in Carshalton, South London, that were adapted and refurbished with funding from The James Trust.

The Richard James Hub is set over four floors and is fully wheelchair accessible. It has been finished to a high specification with a modern spacious feel, making it a wonderful place for the trainees to work.

A newly fitted kitchen on the top floor allows Nickel Support to spend more time developing products for its food enterprises, whilst trainees involved in



**Nickel Support**  
**founders Elena Nicola**  
**and Nick Walsh.**

# INTERESTINGLY DIFFERENT



upcycling furniture are enjoying a new light and spacious workshop on the first floor. To one side of the hub is the upcycling shop and to the other a studio/café space.

## Interestingly Different

“One of our core goals is to increase paid employment

opportunities for adults with learning difficulties,” said Nick. “With less than 6% of people with learning difficulties in paid employment, something needs to be dramatically altered to improve the low statistic.

“We have therefore developed various enterprises to harness the skills and qualities of the trainees. This has allowed us to develop a range of products that we can sell to the public. Any profits



*Cooking up a delicious jam.*

that are generated from our Interestingly Different initiatives can then be used to offer paid employment.”

An enterprise selling up-cycled furniture alongside vintage and antique pieces from a shop and various online outlets. Trainees can work there up to four times per week, assisting with all aspects of the day to day running of the initiative.

A range of delicious jams and relishes made by the trainees, with the expert guidance of a qualified chef, are available to buy direct from Nickel Support or several local and online retailers.

The Nickel Support pop-up café opens every Friday, serving fresh coffee, cakes and treats baked by the trainees. It is supported by people from the local area who get to learn and understand what the trainees are capable of.



*Home made treats on offer in the Nickel Support cafe.*

“The success of these enterprises proves that with the right support, training and drive how amazing people with a learning disability can truly be,” said Nick. “Our whole aim is to give them the tools and confident social skills to take ownership of the enterprises.

“So, the sessions we deliver throughout the week have a real purpose to them. They not only contribute to the overall growth of the trainees, but they are also integral to the development of the enterprises.”

Sessions run for two hours during the morning or afternoon, five days a week, and include upcycling, product development, food enterprises, retail work, online sales, the café, yoga, dance, exercise and cookery. But there’s more to it than that at Nickel Support.

“Over the years we have had contact with many people with learning disabilities and their parents or carers and we believe that we can put what is most important to them into three distinct areas – health, relationships and employment - that we refer to as Purpose Pods,” explained Nick.

“These three areas are integral to what we are aiming to achieve. We believe that growth in these areas is the key to people with disabilities having a more fulfilled life.



“So, we are always wanting to make sure we are progressing our trainees and we do that in various ways to ensure that we are setting appropriate goals and measuring them effectively.

“However, it is our impact measurement tool ‘Upshot’ that really allows us the opportunity make tangible change. Focussing on their Purpose Pod, it

allows us to track trainees’ growth when they are with us.

“Staff are able to track and adapt goals in real time, with the ability to offer detailed reports of every trainee as and when needed, for example in annual reviews.”

With 70 regular clients and a growing waiting list for sessions, Nickel Support has committed to opening a second hub in Cheam on the Surrey and London border this month. To find out more go to [www.nickel.org.uk](http://www.nickel.org.uk)



## RYAN'S NICKEL JOURNEY

**R**YAN HAS BEEN attending Nickel support for five years now. His mum, Annette, tells us about her son's experience at Nickel.

"Before Ryan started at Nickel he was facing several challenges, he had sustained a broken arm and had not accessed any services for seven months, he had lost his Nana who had been a major influence in his life and was undergoing changes to his routines and having to adapt to new carers.

"This had left him feeling very unsettled. In addition to this I had been diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer, so it was a challenging time for the whole family.

### *Proud Nickel trainee*

"Ryan previously attended another organisation. It was a large organisation, so could be a bit clinical and difficult to develop relationships with staff. It was difficult to book sessions, communication was not always good and it was an expensive service.

"Nickel is completely different to other services. When you join the team, you are welcomed into the Nickel family, you feel supported and cared for, and you are instantly comfortable that your adult son will be accepted and will be stimulated mentally, as well as physically. There is constant communication. If there

are any behavioural issues, we can adopt the same strategy at home that Nickel use.

"I like Nickel as a service because there are a lot of working parts. They provide emotional support to the trainee's parents and carers, they have also expanded the service to include upcycling, bath bomb making, baking, dance studio as well as the furniture shop and café. As the service is constantly evolving and growing Ryan continues to learn new work skills and develops his social skills.

"Through attending Nickel, Ryan has developed many friendships. Ryan and the family enjoy the social events like the 'Nickels' awards, and lunches for the parents and carers.

"In particular he has got to know and formed a good friendship with Kieran who he met at Nickel Support. They have since gone on holiday together and



*Ryan and Annette.*



regularly go out together at weekends.

"Nickel has been an integral part of Ryan's development. They have helped him learn how to regulate his loudness, encouraging him to take time out, breath and calm down. They have provided Ryan with a framework to set boundaries, and reinforced positive behaviour.

"I have seen a real change in Ryan since starting Nickel, he has become more confident and he is enthusiastic about starting new projects. He is willing to try new activities and is comfortable with other trainees and tries to speak to them more.

Both his physical and mental health has improved through the dance and Yoga classes.

"He is proud of being a Nickel trainee, so much so his Nickel t-shirt is hung up in his room from Sunday!

"To anyone thinking about joining Nickel I would say it is like a big family, a place where adults with disabilities can meet their potential and grow and learn in a safe environment without being prejudged. I would not hesitate in recommending it." ●

# Find your perfect place.

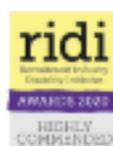
As a leading recruitment outsourcing provider, Guidant Global can offer you direct and exclusive access to great jobs with some of the UK's top employers.

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](https://jobs.guidantglobal.com)



We've equality at our core.

We've been named as a disability confident employer by Jobcentre Plus and have a positive attitude towards job applications from disabled people.

As we progress, we'll continue to improve the way that we support our staff, customers, and stakeholders, regardless of disability, gender, ethnicity, age, religion, or sexual orientation.



Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy is a priority at RoS. It's not a one off or an event, it is an ongoing process, and we will work for our colleagues to feel safe, supported and included at work.

We want to be an employer of choice, attracting and retaining the best and widest possible pool of talent.



#### ADVERTISEMENT

“The more diverse your team is, the bigger wealth of experience you have.”

Responsible for keeping public registers of land, property and other legal documents in Scotland, Registers of Scotland (RoS) offer a range of support to employees, helping them to thrive in the workplace. Sue Rees has worked across multiple departments of the Disability Confident employer that offers flexible working hours and continuous training and development opportunities.

Sue is a carer for her son and also lives with a primary immune deficiency. Throughout her years at RoS, Sue has benefitted from the employer's positive attitude towards support for disabled colleagues, but this became especially important when she had to prioritise her health during winter 2019. As flu season began Sue was given the opportunity to take on a temporary role with the human resources team that would allow her to work from home and protect her health.

When the coronavirus pandemic made home working the norm, Sue's years as an employee made her the perfect fit to join the colleague experience team, a position she has remained in ever since.

#### Employee Support

"We are really focused on inclusion and diversity as an employer because we recognise that it actually makes us stronger," explains Sue. "The more diverse your team is, the bigger wealth of experience you have."

#### Communication

From the services RoS provides to the organisation's offices, accessibility and meeting employee's needs have always been a priority, but the creation of an employee forum and steering group has generated even more resources. "Our chief executive takes it very seriously and that makes all the difference: the people at the top of the organisation really care," stresses Sue. "I know that with any new plans or policies one of the first steps will be to reach out to people with protected characteristics and ask for their input."

Find out about career opportunities with RoS at [www.ros.gov.uk](http://www.ros.gov.uk)

# Recognition for Business Championing Diversity

**A** UK BUSINESS has become the first ever business outside of the United States to be accredited as a Disability Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE) by Disability:IN.

Based in Wales, Delsion is a multi-award-winning People and Development consultancy that works with businesses to maximise on opportunities to promote diversity and support inclusion.

It is now also the first organisation outside of America to have gained accreditation as a DOBE from Disability:IN, the global organisation driving disability inclusion and equality in business.

As organisations seek to diversify their supply chains and the organisations that they work with, the DOBE accreditation opens up the way for Delsion to work with globally recognised brands.

## Disability Equality Index

Disability:IN compiles the prestigious Disability Equality Index, which recognises the accomplishments of nearly 400 international and large-scale businesses dedicated to supporting disability, including through their supply chain.

Delsion founder, Julian John, became disabled through brain damage, following a high-level career in human resources. His experiences have included having to learn to stand, walk and talk again, long-term unemployment and homelessness.

He set up Delsion to use his knowledge and experiences to support organisations and to focus on the abilities and advantages of having a diverse workforce, rather than the difficulties and barriers.

Julian said of the Disability:IN DOBE accreditation: "I'm really passionate about finding opportunities to support diverse entrepreneurship and enterprise wherever possible," said Julian.



Julian John.

"I sought this accreditation to help demonstrate the best practice that is happening at a global level, as well as right here in the UK. This accreditation shows how Delsion is able to compete on the world stage through the work that we do to support organisations in becoming more inclusive and promoting diversity generally.

"It's also a great opportunity for UK businesses to increase diversity in their own supply chains as a result of Delsion's breakthrough accreditation and to learn from the knowledge and insight that will come with it into the British market as a result.

"Our approach to helping organisations become more diverse and inclusive comes from our extensive experience of people and culture change, and importantly from our lived experiences of disability and the very issues and barriers that Diversity & Inclusion activities are aimed at eliminating.

"Having such a recognised accreditation is a clear sign of how effective this approach is to others considering working with us."

Delsion helps people and organisations reach their true potential through the provision of training models, people-oriented solutions and

other development programs, created with a view to promoting maximum inclusion at all times.

Jill Houghton, President and CEO of Disability:IN, "We are proud to expand our DOBE program to the UK as we recognise the global economic impact that self-employment brings to people with disabilities," said Jill Houghton, President and CEO of Disability:IN.

"Delsion is a role model for disability-owned businesses and now has the third-party accreditation needed to bring its people training programs to UK businesses looking for diverse suppliers."

For more information on Delsion visit [www.delsion.co.uk](http://www.delsion.co.uk). ●



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# Connecting with Nature

How two keen nature lovers have helped people with dementia to connect with the world around them.

Over the past two years, many of us have reconnected with the natural world on our doorstep. But how often have you heard birdsong and wondered what it was exactly?



Or heard some snuffling in a hedgerow or grassy bank, but you don't know your mole from your vole? Those issues are more pronounced for people with dementia, for whom correctly recognising natural sounds can bring back vital, life-enhancing memories.

Help is at hand thanks to Caz Buckingham and Andrea Pinnington, two keen nature lovers who write and illustrate nature guides for their company, Fine Feather Press.

Caz and Andrea started the company with children in mind – producing beautifully illustrated, easy-to-understand nature guides for younger enthusiasts. Now they've discovered their books help a much wider range of readers, including the blind and visually impaired and those with dementia. Many of Caz and

Andrea's books come with beautifully curated, prolonged sound recordings to help identify wild animals and birds.

## *Just the right note*

The talented pair already knew their books were popular with younger readers with disabilities thanks to the multi-sensory approach they encourage.

But it was while checking their online reviews, they discovered they'd opened up new worlds for older readers with disabilities too.

"Bought for dad who has ▶



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Ontex, a leading, global provider of continence care products has launched an ambitious new environmental policy to become a carbon neutral operation by 2030 with zero waste to landfill in the same year.

To achieve this ambitious goal the company has set out an upscaled sustainability strategy with three clear goals:

**Recycling and recycled packaging** - 100% of all packaging will be recyclable by 2030 and they will increase renewable and recycled plastic in their plastic packaging.

**Zero production to waste** - By 2030 all Ontex production sites will have zero waste to landfill and they will be in a position to turn waste into resources.

**Circular solutions** - Circularity will be a prime design consideration for absorbent hygiene products.

**For further information** - Visit [ontex.com/sustainability](http://ontex.com/sustainability) or search 'Ontex Sustainability Strategy' on YouTube.

To find out more about the iD range of incontinence solutions, visit [id-direct.com](http://id-direct.com) or call 0800 3896 185.



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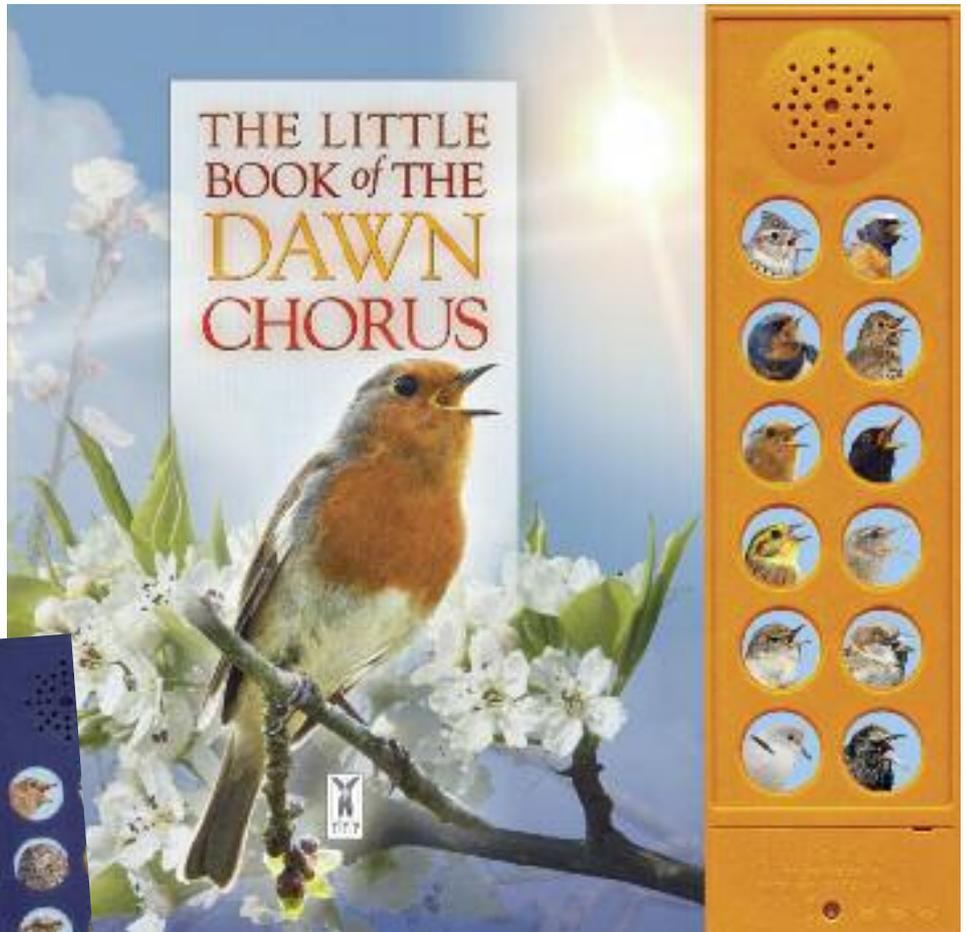


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dementia and loves wildlife. It's not just a quick burst of indistinct noise, it's a prolonged proper birdsong. Dad loves it," explained one reviewer. "I've purchased these for myself and a few other "elderly" family members—we love them!! Easy, quick bird reference with excellent quality bird songs, so we can easily identify our favourite birds. When you have arthritis and bad eyes, these are the best!!," said another.



ability to see, hence the books' popularity with older audiences.

Other readers have heaped praise on the books for being an

ideal way to introduce blind and visually impaired readers to the sounds of nature, helping them to enjoy reading along with a companion, and learning at the same time.

### More to follow

"We've been surprised and delighted to discover that the books appeal to such a broad range of readers," said Andrea and Caz. "They've humbled and

encouraged us to grow our range of books bringing the best of nature to your bookshelf."

To find out more go to [www.finefeatherpress.com](http://www.finefeatherpress.com)



The books are especially easy to access because they extensively feature the colour green – as you'd expect with books focusing on the natural world. Green is the most visible colour to the human eye which means it's also the most restful for a whole range of readers with disabilities. Green is also the last colour that people with dementia lose the

# Dr Peter J Corr

BSc(Hons) MSc DClinPsy PGDip CPsychol AFBPsS



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:-

- **Neuropsychological and Cognitive Functioning** – including IQ assessment, neuro-psychological assessment and profiling, memory assessment, planning and problem solving.
- **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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From our salt cave to our hydrotherapy pools, we are proud to offer a wealth of facilities and an innovative approach to enhance the lifestyles of the people we support.

Windermere House is part of Silverlake Care which has been managed by Healthcare Management Solutions, the UK's leading care home management and consultancy business, since autumn 2021.

Following an inspection by the Care Quality Commission in December, our team were delighted to hear that Windermere House had been rated 'Good' in all areas.

Please call our friendly, professional team on **01403 327 500** to find out how we can help you or visit [silverlakecare.co.uk](http://silverlakecare.co.uk)



## An extraordinary purpose-built environment in West Sussex.

Expert, person-centred care in Horsham, devoted to enhancing the lives of the people we support, including 24-hour nursing care for those with long-term neurological conditions.

Our team is highly skilled in supporting those living with acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis, stroke and motor neurone disease.



[www.silverlakecare.co.uk](http://www.silverlakecare.co.uk)

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Care at home



A D V E R T O R I A L



**Nurseplus**  
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**A**t Nurseplus Care at home, we understand that choosing the right homecare can be overwhelming, which is why it's important for us to make the process as simple as possible.

We have been recruiting trained and friendly homecare workers, support staff and nurses since 2005 and now have a network of more than 50 branches nationwide. We're hugely proud of the homecare we offer and understand this is only possible due to the extraordinary people we have delivering expert care. It's these great people that have contributed to us achieving consistent ratings from the CQC throughout our domiciliary services.

Our experience means that we understand everyone's care needs are different and that finding the right type of care begins with identifying what's important to you. The first step is deciding what kind of support is needed. The flexibility of Care at home and one-to-one companionship is designed to enable you to live safely and independently in the comfort of your own home.

We will work closely with you and your loved ones to create a tailored support plan that fits your health and lifestyle needs. From companionship to mental health support, mobility assistance to learning disability support we can provide you with the support you need.

We know that allowing someone into

your home can be daunting, that is why our carers are handpicked for you. We take into account your likes and dislikes, hobbies and interests to match you with carers who are like-minded, allowing you to genuinely connect with your support team and continue doing all things you love, such as staying active, socialising or cooking your favourite meal.

Care at home offers a practical and affordable alternative to moving into a residential setting helping you to keep your independence. Whether you require weekly, daily or Live-in care, we can build a unique plan that empowers you to continue living life just the way you want and provide reassurance when you need it most.

To find out more about our homecare and how we can help you or your loved one, speak to a member of our friendly team today on 08000 44 88 48.

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National Sales Manager, Simon Thomas believes 'in the design of every aspect of the Geberit AquaClean Mera Care and at all levels of product development, we have focused on the needs of the end users – and the new five-year warranty underscores our confidence in what is a next generation product. Thanks to its outstanding functionality, this new product is not only beautiful to look at, it also makes life easier and more comfortable.'

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

- Mobility equipment, such as mobility scooters, electric wheelchairs and manual wheelchairs.
- Aids for the home, such as profiling beds, riser and recliner chairs, bath lifts, hoists and specialised computer equipment.
- 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 are a member of the RAF Family, or if you know someone who is, please visit [rafbf.org](http://rafbf.org) or call **0300 102 1919** for more information to find out more about the support available.



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*Ann from Kent, November 2022*

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# Prison Achieves Highest Autism Accreditation Accolade

**H**MP PARC HAS become the first prison to achieve an Advanced Autism Accreditation.

The category B men's prison and young offender institution in Bridgend, south Wales, has been recognised by the National Autism Society (NAS) as a 'beacon of autism best practice'.

Since establishing a dedicated unit for autistic people, people with learning disabilities or significant brain injuries, the prison has seen a significant reduction in violence, self-harm, rule breaking, and substance misuse.

Parc takes a person-centred approach which sees offenders assessed during induction to



identify any additional needs. The prison then makes some simple changes to support neurodivergent people, including:

- providing a sensory room
- offering eye masks and ear plugs
- painting wings and landings different colours
- allowing people to collect food or medication at the start or end of queues
- and putting up signs reminding visitors not to slam doors.

"What Parc has managed to achieve is fantastic," said Christine Flintoff-Smith, NAS Head of Autism Accreditation.

"The whole prison approach has been really good and required a high level of inter-departmental cohesion.

"Parc has set the bar high as a beacon of autism best practice for other prisons. It goes far above and beyond what is considered best practice and is a really positive sign for the criminal justice system as a whole.

"We understand how difficult it is for prisons to even achieve initial accreditation. Parc has invested time, resources and

how fit



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As Spring 2022 quickly approaches and longer, warmer days are upon us, make sure that you don't have to spend those precious days worrying about your estate planning.

A Will is an immensely important piece of documentation and having one in place could mean the difference between a good or a bad year for your loved ones.

Writing your Will doesn't have to be a difficult and laborious process. Members of The Society of Will Writers are trained and insured to make sure that you receive friendly, up to date, and professional advice tailored to your specific needs.

To find a member of The Society of Will Writers in your area, contact the office today on 01522 687 888 or visit [www.willwriters.com](http://www.willwriters.com) to search our find a member page.



## Home Health Diagnostics – easy and accurate

Growing numbers of people are reaching for the new generation of self-diagnosis kits available from their local pharmacy. It saves the end consumer time and money while avoiding the interminable waiting for GP appointments. In fact, by having your own easy-to-use and highly accurate blood pressure monitor, you can free up precious time for other GP patients.

CIGA Healthcare are a UK firm trusted by the NHS, which they supply with a variety of such devices. The company say that every five seconds someone uses one of their tests. Company chief Irwin Armstrong says the devices are now so reliable and affordable, they will soon be in every home.

Irwin says: "We have been in business since 2005 and in that time, we have seen a huge growth in self-reliance and self-diagnosis, principally thanks to the accurate technology now available for home use."

He continues: "These devices are hospital grade so users can rely completely on accurate results. One of the most important conditions to monitor for people over 50 is blood pressure. The Suresign blood pressure monitor can detect irregular fluctuations in pressure and also measures pulse rates."

CIGA Healthcare's range of Suresign diagnostic kits and devices includes a broad range of family health screening tests which can detect illness or infection mainly relating to the heart, liver, kidneys and urinary tract, as well as vitamin D and iron deficiencies.

The kits are available at local pharmacies or online. Visit [suresign.com](http://suresign.com) to find out more.

It's worth getting advice from a health professional before purchasing a self-test kit, as using a self-test kit may not be appropriate for you. If you have any concerns, speak to a healthcare professional, such as a pharmacist, practice nurse or GP.



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**KEY FEATURES**

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For more information call 02032 690112 or email [freewills@rnbt.org.uk](mailto:freewills@rnbt.org.uk)

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challenged archaic prison attitudes to implement some major developments that give offenders the best chance.

“Other prisons should look to follow the innovative work taking place at HMP Parc. The same support should be available to every autistic person in custody.”

### *Finding the Right Path*

Arianwen Selway, Parc’s Learning Disability Nurse, explained that many people go through the justice system without knowing they are autistic or have an additional learning need.

“If these aren’t identified and supported, it can have a significant impact on physical and psychological well-being as well as their ability to complete their sentence and reintegrate into society,” said Arianwen.

“Prison can be an overwhelming environment and the bright lights, noise and unfamiliar faces are disorientating for some of those in our care.

“We have men who can’t tell the time, get confused by which landing they are on because everywhere looks the same and they can struggle to comply with complex prison rules and processes which can lead to confrontations and incidents with staff and other offenders – so it’s paramount that reasonable adjustments are made.”

In July 2021 a report, commissioned by the then-



Justice Secretary, Robert Buckland MP, called for more coordinated and effective support for neurodivergent people, including autistic people.

The review found better assessment, treatment and support in prisons could help break the cycle of crime and the National Autistic Society urged the Government to accept the report’s recommendations in full.

We have men who can’t tell the time, get confused by which landing they are on because everywhere looks the same...

“The team have risen to the challenge in creating a specialist unit to support those in need, and have worked tirelessly to deliver high quality support services,” said Ian Coles, deputy director of the G4S-managed prison.

“The National Autistic Society has highlighted the excellent and

creative work carried out by staff to deliver person-centred support and it is fantastic that their hard work has been recognised.”

The Autism Accreditation Programme is UK’s only autism specific quality assurance programme of support and development for all those providing services to autistic people. Achieving accreditation proves that an organisation is committed to understanding autism and setting the standard for autism practice.

In 2015, HMP Feltham was the first prison in the UK to go through the accreditation programme after working with the NAS charity to develop standards.

HMP Parc, HMP Wakefield, HMP Whatton and the National Probation Service in Lancashire followed in 2018-19, and Parc has now become the first to achieve advanced accreditation.

To find out more go to [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

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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.



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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# Let the Memories Live Again



*Dr. Mei Yii Lim.*

**A**N ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) companion is being developed by researchers at the National Robotarium to aid memory recollection.

The ground-breaking AI companion will tell personalised stories to prompt memories, boost confidence and combat depression in people living with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

The idea for the ground-breaking 'Agent-based Memory Prosthesis to Encourage Reminiscing' (AMPER) project originated from Dr. Mei Yii Lim, an experienced memory modelling researcher.

"AMPER will explore the potential for AI to help access an individual's personal memories residing in the still viable regions of the brain by creating natural, relatable stories," explained Dr Lim.

"These will be tailored to their unique life experiences, age, social context and

changing needs to encourage reminiscing.”

Memory loss in people with Alzheimer’s disease occurs in reverse chronological order, with pockets of long-term memory remaining accessible even as the disease progresses.

While most current rehabilitative care methods focus on physical aids and repetitive reminding techniques, AMPER’s AI-driven user-centred approach will focus on personalised storytelling to help bring a patient’s memories back to the surface.

Difficulties in communicating with others and decreased confidence are commonly experienced by people living with dementia and can often lead to individuals becoming withdrawn or depressed.

## Quality of life

By using AI to aid memory recollection, researchers at the National Robotarium hope that an individual’s sense of value, importance and belonging can be restored and quality of life improved.

The National Robotarium, a partnership between Heriot-Watt University and the University of Edinburgh, is part of the Data-Driven Innovation initiative and is supported by £21 million from the UK Government and £1.4 million from the Scottish Government through the £1.3 billion Edinburgh and south east Scotland City Region Deal - a 15 year investment programme jointly funded by both governments and regional partners.

It has also been awarded £450,000 of funding by the



Professor  
Ruth Aylett.

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

## AI the way ahead

Project partners include the charity Sporting Memories, which delivers reminiscence therapy to people with dementia through video footage in day care centre settings, NHS Scotland Neuroprogressive and Dementia Network, and the Latin American Network for Dementia Research.

“One of the most difficult aspects of living with dementia can be changes in behaviour caused by confusion or distress,” said lead researcher Professor Ruth Aylett from the National Robotarium.

“We know that people can experience very different symptoms that require a range of support responses. Current intervention platforms used to aid memory recollection often take a one-size-fits-all approach that isn’t always suitable to an individual’s unique needs.

“AI technology has the potential to play a pivotal role in improving the lives of people living with cognitive diseases. Our ambition is to develop an AI-driven companion that offers

patients and their caregivers a flexible solution to help give an individual a sustained sense of self-worth, social acceptance and independence.

“Through projects like AMPER, we’re able to highlight the many ways AI and robotics can both help and improve life for people now and in the future. At the National Robotarium, we’re working on research that will benefit people in adult care settings as well as across a wide range of other sectors that will make life easier, safer and more supported for people.”

Once developed, the AI technology will be accessed through a tablet-based interface to make it more widely accessible and low-cost. The research team at the National Robotarium plans to separately investigate the use of a desktop robot to determine if there are benefits to be gained by having a 3D representation of a character. ●

For more information:  
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/research/the-national-robotarium.htm>

Follow @NRobotarium





# No Need To Mind the Step

**H**ARROW-ON-THE-HILL has become the 91st step-free London underground station.

It means a third of London underground stations are now step-free - improving access for customers with reduced mobility.

Four new lifts have been installed at Harrow-on-the-Hill station, providing a step-free route between the street and Metropolitan line trains.

In addition, station signage has been improved to assist people find their way around. Boarding ramps will continue to support customers boarding or alighting Chiltern trains, and with TfL's Turn-up-and-go service, staff will be on hand to assist customers.

Councillor Graham Henson, Leader of Harrow Council and Louise Weldon, Chief Executive of Harrow Association for Disabled People, joined the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and TfL

representatives recently to celebrate the opening of the four new lifts.

The completion of the step-free scheme at Harrow-on-the-Hill increases the total number of step-free London Underground stations to 91, meaning that one third of the 272 stations on the Tube network are now step-free - a 33 per cent increase since 2016.

## **Step-Free improvements**

In 2021, step-free access schemes were completed at Sudbury Hill, Osterley, Battersea Power Station and Nine Elms on the Northern Line Extension, Wimbledon Park, Ickenham, Debden and Amersham. In addition, Ealing Broadway was made step-free in preparation for the Elizabeth Line and Whitechapel became step-free when the original station entrance on

Whitechapel Road re-opened.

This year, TfL will complete a range of step-free projects that are currently under construction and began prior to the pandemic. These include step-free access to the Northern line at Moorgate, which became step-free to the Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines last year. TfL is also progressing step-free access work that will make busy Zone 1 stations partially step-free in 2022. These are at Bank (Northern line and DLR Interchange only) and Paddington (Bakerloo line only). The

current proposed designs for the redeveloped Euston station as part of High Speed 2 will also deliver step-free improvements to Euston and Euston Square station.

## Vital investment

TfL is currently reviewing the results of its recent public consultation to help shape future step-free access priorities, with final outcomes of the consultation released in the summer.

“I want all Londoners to feel comfortable and confident when using our transport system, and improving accessibility is a top priority,” said Sadiq Khan.

“It’s great news that a third of stations on the Tube network are now step-free, with more to come during 2022 - but unless Government provides TfL with the longer-term capital funding it needs, further step-free improvements are at risk. Such investment is vital to ensure public



*Mayor of London Sadiq Khan (centre back row) with Councillor Graham Henson, Leader of Harrow Council and Louise Weldon, Chief Executive of Harrow Association for Disabled People and TfL representatives.*

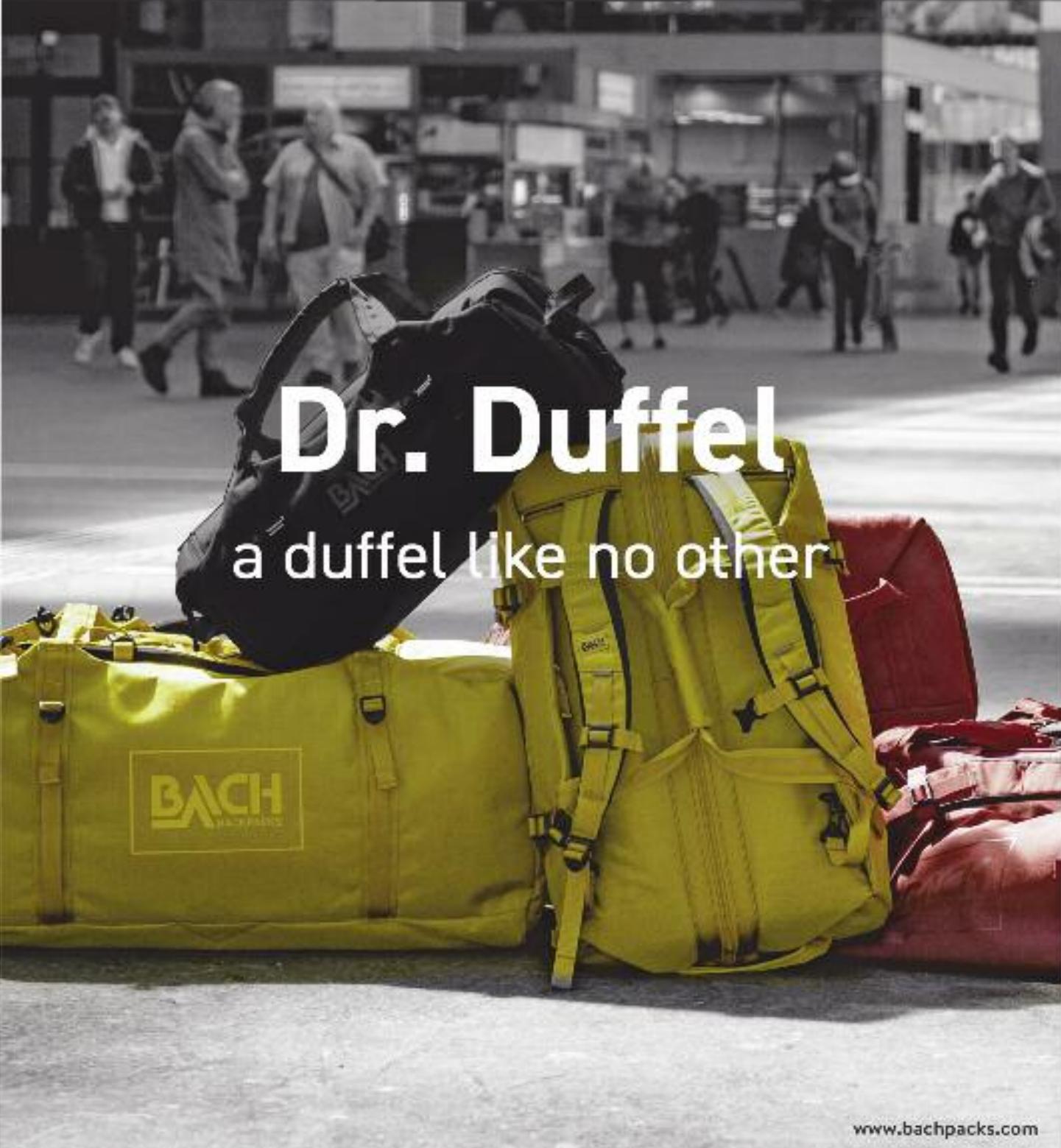
transport is an attractive, reliable option for all, and help London and the wider country recover from the pandemic.”

With the completion of step-free access schemes on the wider TfL network, the average additional journey time required for step-free journeys has now been reduced to around 6.7 minutes. This compares to 9.5 minutes in 2016. The Mayor of London’s aim is to halve 2015’s additional journey time of 11 minutes by 2041.

“We are delighted that Harrow-on-the-Hill station is finally fully accessible to disabled people,” said Louise Weldon. “After a long campaign, the works are now complete and this will benefit our local community, especially disabled people.” ●



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# I Feel the Need... the Need for Speed

**D**ISABLED ATHLETES AND sports people invariably have to compete at a professional level in 'special' race or championship categories – for the disabled.

What if this wasn't necessary and the playing field was completely level? In motorsport that's exactly what is becoming a reality thanks to Team BRIT.

In 2015, former Royal Engineer Dave Player formed Team BRIT, with the aim of being the first ever all-disabled team to race in the iconic 24 Hours of Le Mans.

The team was created as a development of Dave's charity, KartForce, which supports injured military troops in their rehabilitation and recovery through motorsport. Dave created a set of hand controls that could be fitted into standard go karts and enabled disabled drivers to race on equal terms.

KartForce hosts karting events up and down the country and has been found to have a significantly positive impact on people living with PTSD or mental health conditions.



Being a racing driver is something I've dreamt of since I was a kid, and even more so when I was a teenager.

Some of the drivers who benefitted from the driving initiative asked Dave to explore options for stepping up into car racing and Team BRIT was formed.

With the help of technical experts, Dave re-developed the karting hand controls to become racing hand controls. This meant that drivers with a wide range of physical and psychological disabilities could compete in endurance races as part of the same team.

## Racing Ahead

The hand controls are now the most advanced in the world. From two drivers and one VW Golf in 2015, to nine drivers, a McLaren 570S GT4, an Aston Martin V8 Vantage GT4 and two BMWs in 2022, the team has grown incredibly, pushing forward with bold determination towards its Le Mans goal.

“When I look back at how we’ve grown since 2015, I’m beyond proud,” said Dave.

“We’ve created a team with the people, technology and sponsorship we need to form an infrastructure that works. This now means we have a ladder of motorsport opportunity for disabled drivers, from our eSports arm, eTeam BRIT, to our racing academy offering track day experiences for disabled drivers, and our competitive racing team.

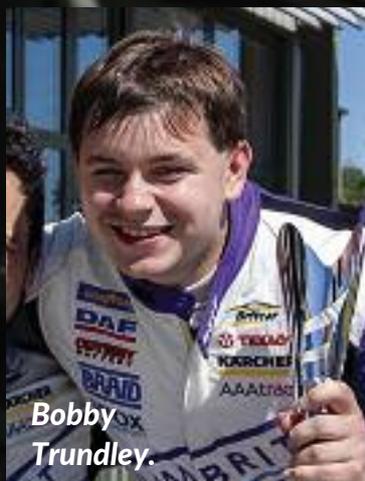
“Competing in this year’s British GT is the realisation of our long-term goals. Two of our drivers will race in what is the pinnacle of UK endurance racing, moving us very close to our Le Mans target. Alongside that, we’re welcoming more rookie drivers into the Britcar Championship where their skills and confidence on track can grow.”

For McLaren driver Bobby Trundley, motorsport has been life changing. Diagnosed with severe



**Dave Player.**

Photo credit: Peter Markwick.



**Bobby Trundley.**

autism aged four, Bobby struggled at school as the impact of his autism became more challenging and he was marked as being different from his peers. He discovered karting when he was invited to a birthday party at the age of 10, and having initially been too terrified to take part, he went on to win the race that day, before becoming a five times national karting champion.

He joined Team BRIT in 2019

and won four out of his five races in his first ever year of car racing. For Bobby, autism is an advantage on the track and he calls it his super power. He is the highest ranked autistic racing driver in the world.

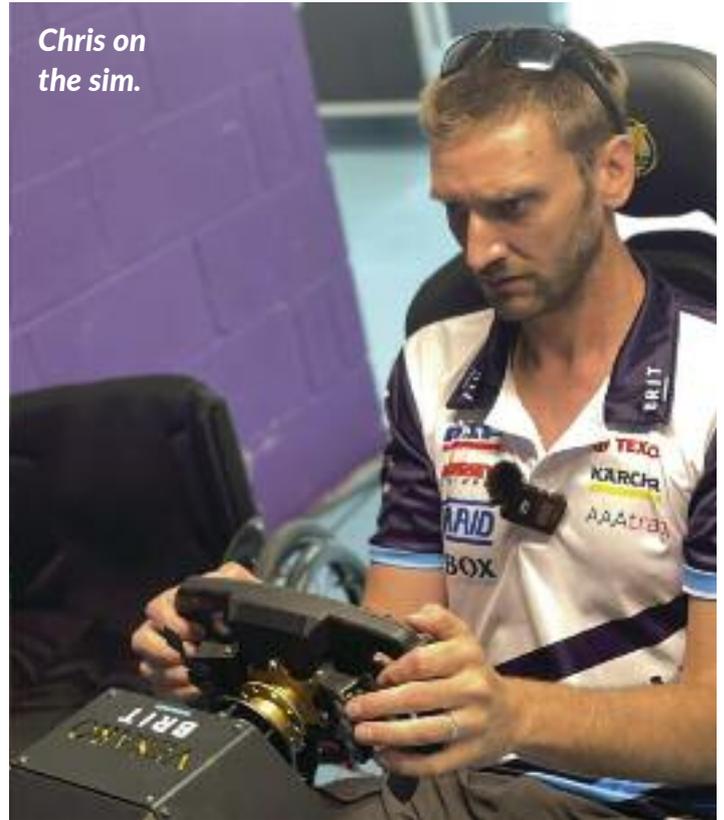
“I wouldn’t be who I am today without Team BRIT,” said Bobby. “When I joined the team I couldn’t go anywhere without my mum, I really struggled in social situations and I had no confidence. Now, I travel the country and across the world with the team, give presentations to 100s of people and I’m about to race in one of the top GT4 championships in Europe. I feel extremely privileged to have been given this chance.”



**Team BRIT’s BMW.**



Chris Overend.



Chris on the sim.

Photo credit: Peter Markwick

## The Road to Le Mans

For rookie driver Chris Overend, the team has given him the chance to realise a long-held dream. Chris was born with development dysplasia of the hips and as his condition deteriorated he had to give up his profession as a fashion photographer.

He started playing wheelchair tennis and had been heavily into racing simulation games (sims) for years. He found the team when looking for adaptive sim controls and was eventually assessed and offered a place in the team.

“It’s hard to sum up what this opportunity means to me,” said Chris. “Being a racing driver is something I’ve dreamt of since I was a kid, and even more so when I was a teenager, spending five or six hours a night racing sims.”

“It’s so surreal to be given this chance but I’m determined to work hard to get as fit and healthy as I can. I want to be part of the team that makes it



Anji-Silva-Vadgama

to Le Mans and I’ll be doing all I can to get there.”

Also working on her racing line is 32-year-old Anji Silva-Vadgama, who became the national disabled team’s only female member just two months after driving on a racetrack.

Anji was diagnosed with MS in 2018 and is on lifelong treatment to manage the pain and mobility problems caused by the

autoimmune condition, which also caused nerve damage to the back of her eye.

After being inspired by a TV documentary about the motor racing team, Anji arranged to meet staff at a track day at Silverstone where she also had a go at driving for the first time.

Feedback from the team coach encouraged her to return for another drive, after which she was offered a place on the team’s rookie development programme. She now has a couple of years to develop her skills in time for the Le Mans race, and to get her race licence.



Photo credit: Frozenspeed.

Anji said cars have always been a part of her life. Her grandfather was a rally driving champion in Kenya, winning the first ever off-road safari rally championship in Tanzania in the 1950s and her dad was a mechanic.

Whilst driving she will be using both the foot pedals and hand controls but may progress to hand controls if the strength in her legs deteriorates.

Anyone interested in finding out more about Team BRIT track or racing opportunities, or about bespoke hand controls should email [info@teambrit.co.uk](mailto:info@teambrit.co.uk). More information is available at [www.teambrit.co.uk](http://www.teambrit.co.uk) ●

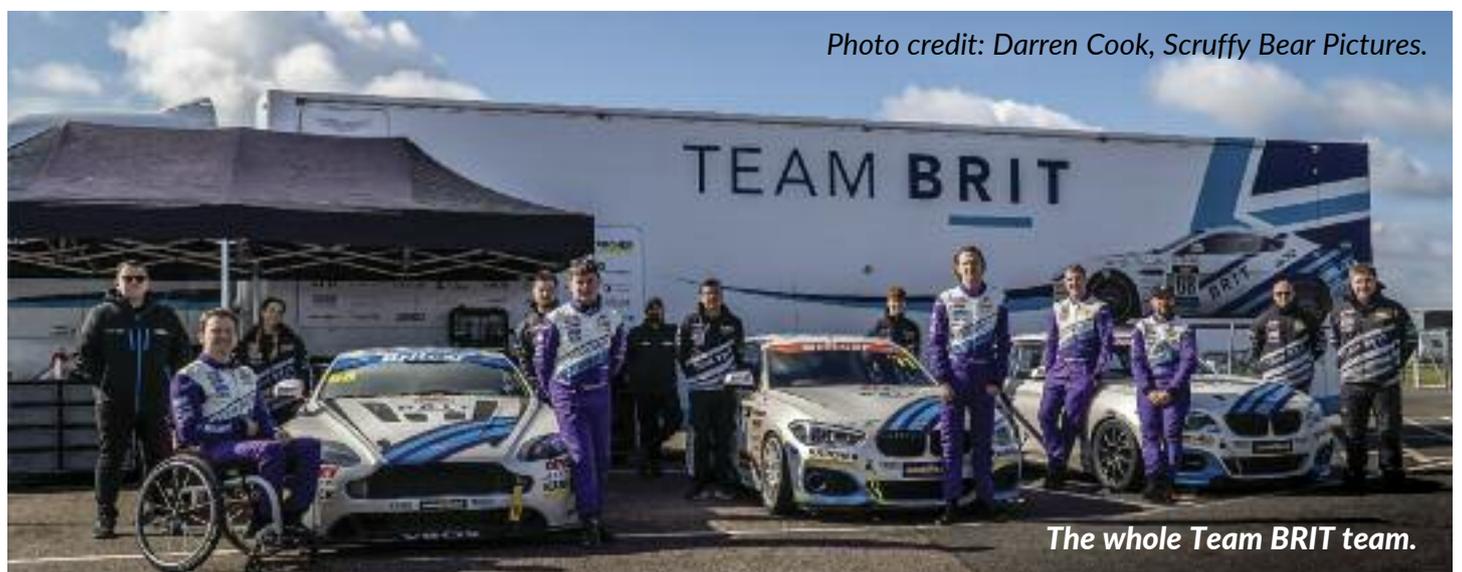


Photo credit: Darren Cook, Scruffy Bear Pictures.

The whole Team BRIT team.

# GB Paralympians Success on Piste



**A**N ARRAY OF outstanding performances ensured ParalympicsGB were more competitive in more sports than ever before at Beijing 2022.

A succession of memorable results saw the British team continue to build on the progress of recent Winter Games, winning six medals including some landmark successes and a host of top five finishes.

The team's youngest athlete, Neil Simpson, 19, guided by his brother Andrew, became the first British men to win a gold medal on snow with victory in the Super G and quickly followed that up with bronze in the Super Combined.

Menna Fitzpatrick, competing at these Games with guide Gary Smith, became the most decorated British Winter Paralympian in history with six medals in total after winning silver in the Super G and bronze in the Super Combined to add to the four she won at PyeongChang 2018.

**116** Living with Disability

*Menna Fitzpatrick.*



*Ollie Hill.*



Millie Knight and Brett Wild won ParalympicsGB's first medal of Beijing 2022, and now have four in total, with bronze in the Downhill on day one of competition.

Ollie Hill secured ParalympicsGB's first ever Para snowboard medal with a bronze in the banked slalom.

"These have been an historic games for ParalympicsGB with so many magical performances across the team," said Phil Smith, ParalympicsGB Chef de Mission.

"This was the most competitive squad we have ever taken to a Paralympic Winter Games and is testament to all the hard work, excellence and incredible resilience of the athletes and the support staff that I have the privilege to work with and call teammates.

"We couldn't have achieved this success without the support of UK Sport and National Lottery players and I would like to thank them for helping make so many sporting dreams come true to unite

and inspire the nation once again.”

But the medal success tells only half the story of the progress achieved in a range of Winter disciplines. There were 13 top five finishes (including medals) at Beijing 2022, which is the most ever by a ParalympicsGB team at a Winter Games.

ParalympicsGB had a team of 24 athletes competing at Beijing 2022, the biggest since Lillehammer 1994. There were an incredible 13 Paralympic debuts (David Melrose, Meggan Dawson-Farrell, Gary Smith, Neil Simpson, Andrew Simpson, Shona Brownlee, Dan Sheen, Alex Slegg, Callum Deboys, Hope Gordon, Steve Arnold, Ollie Hill and Andy MacLeod)

James Barnes-Miller and Owen Pick achieved top five finishes in Para snowboard. Hope Gordon become ParalympicsGB’s first ever female Nordic skier when she competed in the Women’s sprint seated cross country and Scott Meenagh achieved the best result of his Paralympic career finishing in sixth place in the long-distance seated Biathlon.

There was also a highest finish at his third Paralympic Games for James Whitley with sixth in the Giant Slalom, while the Wheelchair Curling team had some notable victories including an 10-6 success against the USA who finished fifth in the competition.

## Developing for 2026

“ParalympicsGB once again returned with an impressive set of medals and Beijing marks the third successive winter Games that a British athlete has reached the top of the podium,” said Katherine Grainger, Chair of UK Sport.

“That’s a positive sign of developing consistency and helps our wider aim for winter sports to become an ever-greater force in British sport.

“We are thankful for the role Government and The National Lottery continue to play in providing the financial support that enables athletes to pursue their dreams. Following the excitement and inspiration of these Winter Games we are optimistic for the future for winter sports and are committed to making them ever more relevant and accessible as we now look towards Milan-Cortina in 2026.” ●

# Access to Worldwide Snow & Slopes

ALSO LOOKING TO help the next cohort of winter Paralympians is ski and snowboard instructor provider Maison Sport.

The company has announced it now has lessons available to book on its digital platform across the disability disciplines, including sit ski, visually impaired, adaptive snowboarding and three track skiing.

Currently, the Maison Sport marketplace includes more than 364 resorts and over 1,300 trusted, qualified instructors across France, Switzerland, Italy and Austria.



“Everyone at Maison Sport is determined to ensure all skiers can access opportunities to enjoy the thrill of the mountains, and this includes all disability skiers,” said co-founder and former British Ski Team member Nick Robinson.

“We want to make ski lessons as inclusive and accessible as possible and so the

addition of disability disciplines to our offering is a very important moment for us. We hope to have over 100 instructors offering a variety of these services by the end of 2022.

“You don’t need to look far just now to be inspired by snowsport athletes with a range of physical disabilities, thanks to the dedication of all the amazing international competitors in Beijing. We’re very proud to be able to offer opportunities across disability disciplines and it is an area we will continue to invest in and grow in the future.”

One specialist disability sit ski instructor is Lizzy Benwell, an English and Dutch speaker with seven years of experience on the mountains and more than 16 in outdoor sports.

“I believe that everyone should be able to experience skiing all over the mountain,” said Lizzy.

“I specialise in adaptive skiing so, no matter what someone’s disability is, they can always enjoy that opportunity to explore the mountains. I have access to specialised equipment, such as sit skis and outriggers to make this dream possible and look forward to helping disability skiers enjoy the magic of the mountains in 2022.”

For more information visit [www.maisonsport.com](http://www.maisonsport.com) ●





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