

# withinReach

Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits



## Amazing Achievements

Raising  
awareness  
through  
fundraising



Winter 2016 | Issue 133



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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/reachcharity](https://www.facebook.com/reachcharity)

Registered charity no. 1134544



**withinReach** magazine is printed and distributed by NRM at Aldwick Road, Bognor Regis PO21 3QG

### Comments, articles, requests, ideas:

We welcome comments, articles, requests or suggestions for future editions of Within Reach.

### Letters:

Any letters for publication should include the name and address of the sender, but these can be withheld from publication if requested.

### Advertising:

Within Reach has a print run of 1,600 and is distributed to members, subscribers, health services and specialists. If you need to reach this key audience, we would be delighted to consider including your advertisement. Contact **Jane Garrett** on **01483 203237**

The views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of Reach and are not intended to reflect or constitute Reach policy, or in any way portray an official view.

### EDITORIAL DEADLINE

**Material for inclusion in the SPRING issue must be sent to the editor by 31st MARCH 2017**

### Reach membership

Membership of Reach is open to parents of children with upper limb deficiency and other individuals of 18 years and over who are interested in furthering the work of the association. Junior membership is given to children who have an upper limb deficiency. The UK subscription is from £36. You will receive three issues of the magazine a year by post or email if you live overseas.

### Reach Insurance

Reach membership entitles the Reach child/adult from aged two - 85 to benefit from our limb insurance for up to £50,000.

Please call Head Office for more details about the schedule of insurance.

### SHARED EXPERIENCES

This book, published by Reach, is extremely useful for families who have discovered they have, or are about to have, a Reach baby.

Shared Experiences is a collection of accounts by Reach families of their own real life experiences of having a child with an upper limb deficiency. Their stories are shocking, saddening, funny, inspiring and captivating. All in all, a brilliant realisation of life with an upper limb deficiency.

Contact Jo Dixon at HO to order your copy.





## NATIONAL COORDINATOR

Welcome to our new look Within Reach and the new look Reach!

We were so excited to finally be able to unveil the new Reach Brand at the Family Weekend in Glasgow in October. This includes a new look for Within Reach and we hope you have visited our much improved website with brand new content and shop.



It's all part of our plan to continually improve the service we offer our members, and boost our profile so we can continue to attract the funding that helps us run important events for families. Most importantly Reach remains the friendly supportive organisation we have always been.

Our trustees want a brand that brings Reach right up to date and that projects the positivity and opportunities our members tell us Reach gives them. Whether you see a ray of hope in a cloudy sky or a little hand reaching for a star, we hope you love it as much as we do. We have lovely new collection tins, balloons, buckets, banners, t-shirts, running vests and other materials to help our fundraisers and supporters to raise their profile.

We'll also be continually improving our new website, if you have any suggestions for features that will help you, or would like some fundraising materials, please drop us a line at head office by email or phone.

It all means we have had some very hectic months recently at Head Office! Combining the arrangements for the Family Weekend 2016, writing the annual report - and overseeing the development and writing of materials for the brand new website as well as re-branding Reach with a totally new look has been a challenge.

But we managed it and I hope you like the new resources we have. This herculean task could not have been finished without the help of some key individuals including trustees, volunteers, staff and contractors; together we form a great team.

Abby and I had a great time meeting lots of members in Glasgow, I particularly enjoyed meeting up with Scottish families I met at the activity weekend at Ardronaig in August.

The **2017 Family Weekend** will be in Bristol so please put the date - **October 20-22** - in your diary now.

Jo Dixon

## 2017 ADVANCING HEALTHCARE AWARDS

**SUPPORT AND NOMINATE YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS WHO KEEP YOU MOBILE, INDEPENDENT & DEXTEROUS**

Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan MP, Chair to the Westminster Cross Party Limb Loss Group says: "I welcome the launch of the 2017 Advancing Healthcare Awards for Allied Health Professionals, Healthcare Scientists, Apprentices, Support Workers and Technicians.

"Such initiatives are excellent opportunities to allow our Forum to reach out to share, promote and celebrate the achievements of our many many caring Healthcare Professionals whose skills, knowledge and experiences continue to help many people improve their mobility, independence and dexterity. So I encourage everyone to support and nominate appropriately."

**Gary Phillips, who is a member of the Westminster Cross Party Limb Loss Group says: "We welcome these long standing national awards and in particular the NHS Employers award for the outstanding achievement by an apprentice, support worker or technician in their local limb centre, given that many of the children with upper limb loss benefit greatly from their many skills, expertise, experience, and individual care, which is so important as the children grow.**

**"So we would encourage everyone to consider either acting individually or perhaps working with a healthcare professional to make suitable nominations."**

The closing date for entries for the awards is 13 January 2017 and the awards will be presented on 31 March 2017 at a central London venue.

Categories include:

Welsh Government's *Prudently Advancing Practice* award;  
NHS Employers Award for *Outstanding Achievement by an Apprentice, Support Worker or Technician* working alongside an AHP or healthcare scientist;  
HSL *Rising Star* award;  
HEE and NIHR awards for *Research Champions*;  
Chamberlain Dunn Learning award for *Entrepreneurship*.  
The Academy for Healthcare Science award for *Innovation*  
The Scottish Government's award for *Driving Improvement, Delivering Results*;  
Faculty of Public Health and Public Health England Award for *Contributions to Public Health*  
The Scottish Government's award for *Improving Quality: Measuring and Demonstrating Impact*  
The Northern Ireland award for *Maximising Resources for Success*.

To nominate someone or for more details go to [www.AHPandHSawards.co.uk](http://www.AHPandHSawards.co.uk)



This will be my last report as Chairman, as I am now stepping down from the role though I will be remaining as a Trustee on the board.

Reach has been on an intense journey these last few years with the governance of the charity being reviewed and changes being made to improve our service to you the members, and to improve the efficiency of the running of such an active charity. I feel now that we have reached a point where this work is complete and the charity needs to change direction.



The last meeting of the Board was a very productive and also a pleasant one. We started discussing the projects which we have often desired to do but have never had the resources or funds to implement. We came up with a wish list of things we wanted to achieve and we will further discuss these at our Trustee Strategy Weekend in December.

This exciting prospect has been enabled largely by getting our house in order and knowing what we have and what we need in both resources and finance. We will shortly be starting to work on a fundraising strategy to enable the projects we decide to action first. This will also be made easier by a forthcoming significant legacy Reach will be receiving. More about this when we have had confirmation from the executors of the estate.

I look forward to being a part of the Board as we progress this next phase and wish the new Chairman and Vice Chairman all the best as they steer the ship onward. I would like to thank you, the members, for all your support over the last few years as Chairman. It has not always been easy but I hope I have left Reach in a more stable and influential position.

**Gary Phillips Chairman**

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## FUNDRAISING

Sharon Payne Stuart has just added up the final results of their great fundraising effort and the total so far has come to a fantastic £3,075! Well done!

Our picture shows Ava with one of our brand new collection buckets. It looks really good and should have a positive impact when shaken at fundraising events. The bucket is only one of a whole range of branded equipment to help you organise successful fundraising. Please don't feel you are on your own when you raise money for Reach, we offer lots of practical and moral support.

Contact Head Office for fundraising equipment including Reach branded clothing for sporting events and stewarding, marketing and publicity tools, printer cartridge recycling envelopes, foreign currency collection boxes and donations in memory collection boxes. We also collect used stamps.

So get in touch with Jo or Abby at reach@reach.org.uk.



## INTERNET SECURITY

Two recent issues of **withinReach** featured adult Reach members on the front cover. They are stunning photos of successful professional women fulfilling their career potential in the public eye without regard for their limb difference.

Like the Paralympians, they help to raise the profile of limb difference and challenge the idea of what makes a person disabled. They raise important questions about expectations, assumptions, perceptions and prejudices. Undoubtedly the Paralympics in particular have had an extraordinarily powerful effect on attitudes to disability and difference right across the world. But all people in the public eye have that potential to be role models and change the way people think.

Celebrating difference, celebrating achievement in the face of physical disadvantage, has to be the way in which society becomes more inclusive, accommodating, caring and intelligent. In Reach, we believe in celebrating the achievements of our members. They are inspirational role models to our younger members and their families. In Within Reach, and on our members' only Facebook groups, we share their triumphs and their milestones.

But the public eye is a dangerous place and so there is a health warning attached to publicity.

It is well known that actresses, news readers, academics, politicians – anyone creating attention – sometimes end up stalked, either in person or online. There are internet trolls who get a kick out of persecuting people online. Children are at risk of being groomed online by paedophiles disguised as children their own age. You do not need to be disabled or a particular age group to attract the wrong kind of attention.

That is why our Facebook groups are restricted exclusively to people known to Reach. Every person is checked to ensure that our members are safe. But families need to extend that kind of security awareness to their online activity at home too.

Reach member Charlotte Fielder chaired a fringe meeting at the Family Weekend in Glasgow drawing attention to a particular type of online threat that is specific to our members and which families should be aware of. There are some people who are sexually attracted to people with a missing limb. They are known as Devotees and their practices range from collecting photos of disabled people on their special amputee websites to striking up personal relationships and even marrying and controlling a disabled person.

So families with limb different children and the individuals themselves, need to tread a sensible line between promoting difference as acceptable, and laying themselves open to abuse.

The key thing to remember is that everyone is potentially at risk online – internet security is hugely important for

everyone and all young people need to be cautious about putting personal details on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. We just have to be aware that for Reach members, the existence of Devotees adds an extra reason for internet caution.

“I would encourage all parents to make the leaders of local groups their children attend, aware of any specific requirements for their own children in regard to photo sharing in all media, including the internet,” said Jo Dixon. “Other organisations need to be made aware of this issue of Devotees so that they can also be vigilant. Like Reach, most youth organisations such as Scouts, Guides and Cadets will have closed Facebook groups and safeguarding policies, but the need for caution extends beyond those closed groups.”

**If you would like to find out more about the potential threat posed by the Devotee communities, contact Charlotte Fielder at [charlottefielder@btinternet.com](mailto:charlottefielder@btinternet.com).**

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The University of Leeds is looking to recruit Reach parents of children five years or under to help with a research study. The researchers want to understand the experiences of parents when their child's limb difference was first identified and they would like to carry out phone interviews lasting 45-60 minutes.

If you are interested in finding out more, visit the Facebook page [@UoLImprovingHealthcare](https://www.facebook.com/UoLImprovingHealthcare) or contact the research supervisors Dr Judith Johnson at [J.Johnson@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:J.Johnson@leeds.ac.uk) or Dr Jane Heyhoe at [Jane.Heyhoe@bthft.nhs.uk](mailto:Jane.Heyhoe@bthft.nhs.uk).

Reach member Charlotte Fielder is also involved in the project and she is at [CharlotteFielder@btinternet.com](mailto:CharlotteFielder@btinternet.com).

## A BIT OF DIY AND LEILA CAN PLAY THE FLUTE!

There was a positive story from Leila Hanley's school recently. Her (year 4) class were trying out playing the flute and the music teacher found a video of an adapted stand with clips. She showed the caretaker and asked him to make a version so that Leila could try playing with the flute clipped onto a stand. It worked. Caretakers are great!



## TRENT INTERNATIONAL PROSTHETICS SYMPOSIUM

In September, the world renowned upper limb conference TIPS (Trent International Prosthetics Symposium) was held in Glasgow, and was attended by 200 delegates.

There were a series of presentations about advances in upper limb prosthetics, including key note speakers who had been specially invited to the 2 day event. Prosthetic suppliers held workshops, exhibited their latest components and delegates submitted poster presentations.

TIPS is a fantastic chance for likeminded people from all over the world including Prosthetists, Consultants, Occupational Therapists, Surgeons and product suppliers to come together in this unique setting to discuss and exchange working practices, to learn, and develop new improved ways in which we can deliver upper limb services to the our patients .

The focus of this year's conference was 'Advances in our Understanding'.

Many of the presentations focused on advanced techniques such as Osseointegration, a surgical process of connecting the prosthesis directly to the skeleton which

can be used for more complex patients, and is proving to achieve very good outcomes.

Targeted Muscle Reinnervation (TMR), the redirecting of nerves to other muscles groups, is now being more widely trialled and is allowing patients with very high amputation or limb loss to have the chance at using myoelectric prostheses.

There were several presentations on phantom limb pain, highlighting new evidence of understanding the cause of phantom limb pain and how we can treat this, as well as several studies on the use of virtual reality as a tool for rehabilitation.

Technological developments now allow improved connection of the prosthesis, and the ultimate dream is that the user will control their device through intuitive control; instinctively or to do so without conscious thought, making the process more natural and less automated.

With this new research and development, upper limb prosthetics is moving into a phase which we never thought possible, watch this space! **Elaine Smith, Prosthetist**

## APPLY ASAP FOR GRANTS FOR SPORTS PROSTHESES

Parents are being urged to act now to avoid missing out on £1.5m worth of Government grants for children's sports prostheses.

Ottobock has drawn attention to the announcement by The Department of Health that this money earmarked for the provision of children's sports prostheses and research has been ringfenced and is now available for limb centres to access.

Parents in England can now take their children to NHS Limb Fitting Centres to be assessed for eligibility. The funding is open to children and young people under the age of 18. Currently £750,000 has been set aside for the sports limbs with a cap of £5,000 per limb.

Limb centres across England can apply for funding up until March 2018 and there are currently no plans in place for future funding, however this is being investigated. It is therefore advisable that parents act fast before the money is gone.

The Department of Health will be working with the charity Limbpower who has been chosen to carry out an administrative role to support Limb Centres and families throughout the application process.

Philip Yates, Managing Director at Ottobock said: "This is great news and goes some way to ensure children with limb amputation or congenital limb deficiency can lead healthy and active lives. It will give children and young adults the opportunity to participate in sport with a blade like the ones from our sportline.

"We believe it is important to encourage children to take part in sports and this funding will help make that possible. We want to see children lead full lives where they can play alongside their peers and we hope that this funding will be

taken advantage of sooner rather than later."

The NHS advises that in order for children to stay healthy or to improve health, young people need to do three types of physical activity each week: aerobic exercise and exercises to strengthen bones and muscles. Providing children with the opportunity to participate in sporting activities with their peers not only ensures they get the exercise they need for healthy development as they grow, but also helps to develop their social skills and builds their confidence.

The funding will ensure that hundreds of children have the chance to participate in sport. They will no longer need to sit out because their prosthesis isn't suitable for sports like football, cycling or running. Ottobock hopes that the Government goes further and ensures that there is future funding so all children are offered the chance to be able to participate in sports with their peers.

### Eligibility

Access to funds is dependent on:

- The child being under the age of 18 at the time of application.
- The child has suffered limb loss or congenital limb deficiency
- The child is medically fit to engage in the physical activity or sport that the components are requested for; this is to be verified by the rehabilitation consultant.
- The child has demonstrated an interest in the physical activity or sport in question e.g. member of a club and has sought information on the sport.
- A trial of the limb has been carried out if possible e.g. running limbs.

**Contact your limb centre to find out more.**

# LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN WITH CONGENITAL UPPER LIMB DIFFERENCES

**Bran Sivakumar, Consultant Paediatric Hand Surgeon at Great Ormond Street Hospital, has over 15 years' experience in specialist trauma and elective hand surgery. Elected a fellow of the Royal College (FRCS Plast) in 2010, his specialist training in children's hand surgery was done at Boston Children's Hospital, Massachusetts, the Red Cross Children's Hospital, Capetown and the 'Institut de La Main' in Paris.**

**Mr Sivakumar continues to be involved in medical research and supervises both MSc and PhD projects at University College and Kings College London and the National Institute of Medical Research. He is an honorary senior lecturer at the Institute of Child Health. His main research interests are embryology of the upper limb and children's hand conditions. He has published extensively in both scientific and clinical journals. As well as working at Great Ormond Street Hospital and The Portland Hospital Mr Sivakumar also works as a Consultant Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon at the Royal Free Hospital Foundation Trust where he specialises in adult hand surgery following cancer treatment. He is thus able to provide complete long-term care for his paediatric patients through to adulthood.**



## FOLLOWING THE DEBATE ABOUT TOES AND TRANSFERS IN THE LAST ISSUE OF WITHIN REACH, BRAN SIVAKUMAR LOOKS AT MAKING THE DECISION

Making medical decisions on behalf of your children, when they are young and cannot be involved in the decision-making process themselves, is a daunting task. I hope this article provides some clarity for parents having to make the decision as to whether their child should undergo a thumb or finger reconstruction using a toe to hand transfer.

Toe to hand reconstruction is a well established technique that was first used in the 1960s. It has gained popularity around the world and is now one of the gold standard treatments available for patients with congenital hand differences. The procedure involves transferring the second toe from a child's foot to their hand with its blood and nerve supply. It is usually applicable to children who are missing a thumb or three or more of their fingers. It allows the creation of a new type of grip or pinch which can be a great functional advantage. It has a very high rate of success and outcomes have been shown to be very positive in all studies.

Despite all of the positives we understand that making the decision to go ahead is still very difficult.

It is important that parents are aware of all the positives and negatives. It is also important that parents are not rushed and are not put under pressure. Improved function is always our goal. Improved cosmesis is also very important.

When I counsel parents about toe to hand transfers, often their main initial concerns surround the foot donor site. When their child already has a hand difference they are understandably very reluctant to agree to anything that affects another part of their body. However the donor site issues are minimal. Taking the second toe away does not affect a child's function in any way. It will not affect their child's footwear, walking, running, participation in sport etc. even in the long term. Also the cosmetic effect is minimal as the gap between the second and third toes is narrowed and the scar on the top of the foot is easily hidden. Interestingly even though a large part of the initial consultations about a toe transfer revolve around the donor site when I follow patients and their families up after the procedure the foot is mentioned very little. I think this reflects the fact that the donor site issues are minimal.

A second major concern is how the toe transfer will look on

the hand. The toe transfer when it is on the hand will always resemble a toe but it will work like a finger or thumb with the rest of the hand. I try to explain to parents that there is a difference between what we call 'static' appearance and 'dynamic' appearance i.e. when their hand is being used. It is important for a child's hand function to be as good as it can be so that they are able to incorporate both their hands into as many tasks as possible. A child who uses their hands effectively and confidently will often find that other people do not notice that they have a hand difference. Therefore by improving their hand function with a toe transfer so their dynamic hand appearance is also improved.

“ A child who uses their hands effectively and confidently will often find that other people do not notice that they have a hand difference. ”

Parents also often remark upon the fact that their child has adapted to the absence of fingers or thumbs and is able to do everything that they want to do. This may be the case and a toe to hand transfer is not for everyone. However it must be remembered that as children grow so their activities become more complex and demanding. The aim of all treatment is to optimise a child's hand function. It is about providing them with the optimal functional repertoire and a toe to hand transfer can help achieve this. The toe transfer will gain sensation and will grow with the child. Therefore it becomes part of them and is more functional than prostheses which do not have the same sensory feedback. Hand prostheses are evolving and can be very useful. A toe transfer does not prevent a child from being fitted with a prosthesis. Therefore by saying yes to a toe transfer you are not closing any doors.

Long-term studies such as the one from Leeds General Infirmary have shown a high levels of satisfaction from both parents and patients in relation to appearance, function, donor site and psycho-social well-being. Every child's case is individual and therefore treatment must be tailored to suit them individually. A toe transfer is not always the answer and at first may seem unappealing. But in order to make a fully informed stable decision, families must be made aware of all the longterm advantages and true rather than imagined disadvantages.

A useful reference

Toe to hand transfer in children: Ten year follow up of psychological aspects. M. Bellew\*, J. Haworth, S.P. Kay 2010 Journal of Plastic, Reconstructive & Aesthetic Surgery (2011) 64, 766e775

**Bran Sivakumar**



# Help your child to hit the ground running!

ottobock.

Sports and activity prostheses for children are now available from NHS England Limb Centres.

Fully funded by the Department of Health, children under the age of 18 can now benefit from Ottobock's full range of products specifically designed to meet the needs of the active child.

Whether playing fun games with friends, becoming more involved in PE at school, participating in organised sports or aspiring to be a Paralympian, you'll #beyourownhero in no time at all.

To see Rio enjoying his new Runner Junior sports prosthesis, follow **bladeboyrio** on Facebook or **@bladeboyrio** on Twitter.

Don't miss out, ask your Prosthetist for more information on the range of Ottobock sports prostheses available to your child.

Visit [www.ottobock.co.uk](http://www.ottobock.co.uk) for more information.

#beyourownhero



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## TELEVISION STAR OSCAR



Oscar Fradgley is becoming a media star! He has been in the papers after being awarded the manager's Player of the Year 15/16 at WBA disabled football team.

AND.... he is on television!

Oscar starred

in **The Big Life Fix** on BBC Two on December 15. This programme brings together engineers and technologists to create workable practical solutions to help the thousands of people across Britain who struggle with simple tasks because of a physical disability.

Presenter Simon Reeve and a team of inventors were given the challenge of designing a bicycle for Oscar, who was born without hands or feet. The actual filming took place in the spring and was 'interesting, exciting and daunting', according to his mum!

His family are just a bit proud!



## DETERMINATION PAYS OFF FOR JACK ISAAC

"I wish to inspire the youngsters that are maybe having a hard time dealing with the fact they are different, whether they like it or not.

I am aware that may sound harsh but I was brought up in a competitive atmosphere surrounded by more able people.

Now I excel in the areas they used to trump me in, just through perseverance and hard work.

I was determined to prove people wrong, and show that anyone with the right mindset can achieve beyond belief. **Jack Isaac**





## SCOTLAND GAVE REACH FAMILIES A VERY WARM WELCOME IN OCTOBER

There were lots of kilts on display at the Family Weekend, marking it out as a particularly Scottish event this year, but families came from all over the UK as well. There was a good cross section of ages too, from tiny babies to young adult Reach members. It's always great to see them catching up with old friends as they are the role models for the younger ones.

### A REAL FAMILY AFFAIR

The most important role of the Family Weekend is to provide the opportunity for Reach children and their parents to come together to make friends and give peer group support and reassurance.

The quality of the speakers, availability of information and friendships were also singled out as high priorities.

The line-up of speakers for the conference this year was inspirational. What came across loud and clear was the need to speak up and speak out about limb difference as a positive thing. Communication skills are vital and they come with confidence gained from activities such as sport. Matthew Phillips gave a brilliant speech to a large audience - something he would not have dreamed of doing a few years ago.

Other speakers included Joel Gibbard of Open Bionics who is working on sophisticated prosthetics that will eventually be available on the NHS; James Thompson, Reach member and professional commercial pilot; Rozi Clarke who works as a Paediatric Staff Nurse in Glasgow; and of course Matthew and his climbing colleague Bella Walsh, both part of the British Paraclimbing Squad.

There was a good exhibition of prosthetics thanks to representatives from Ottobock, RSL Steeper, Opcare and West Marc NHS OTS. David Bickerstaff was there from the Douglas Bader Foundation and Janet Minns from Working Families, the UK's leading work-life balance organisation which helps working parents and carers and their employers find a better balance between responsibilities at home and work.

The One Handed Musical Instrument Trust brought a range of instruments for children to try and ran workshops during the morning. The trumpets proved a real success. And in the afternoon families were able to learn how to assemble a 3D printed hand thanks to the expertise of Stephen Davies and Drew Murray from Team Unlimbited.

For the kids there was football at Goals Glasgow and Treezone at Loch Lomond and craft workshops and magic. Something for everyone.

The dinner dance had entertainment by Reach DJ Cyrus Bourne with Matt Howes on stage too. The Ceilidh Band got everyone dancing and it was lovely seeing whole families taking to the floor and having a great time.



### THE SUE STOKES AWARD



Matthew Phillips is the winner of the 2016 Sue Stokes Award.

He has never let his little arm slow him down. He started off as a very competitive swimmer before switching to climbing and reaching the British Paraclimbing Team.

He is also a fantastic ambassador for Reach.

## THE OPEN HAND PROJECT

Joel Gibbard of Open Bionics wowed the Reach audience last year with his passionate commitment to sharing the latest exciting developments in high tech prosthetics.

He leads the Open Hand Project and returned to the Family Weekend to talk about the progress being made and to appeal to Reach members to play a role in the research by providing data on their limbs and by testing new prosthetics.

"It's been a really great year, fun and lots of hard work," he said. "We hoped the hand would be ready for sale in 2016 but now we are aiming for mid 2017. Our mission is to democratise prosthetics using the latest technology in 3D printing and scanning.

"In the exhibition hall we have prototypes and we are collecting muscle data so we can further improve our software. We also have 3D scanning tools for limbs so we can improve our fitting process, so your help is needed.

"All our work is available on Open Source. We have been selling a development kit for a low cost robotic hand and we can sell that all over the world from our website. We have sold 100 mostly to universities and research centres. People are working all over the world on improving upper limb prosthetics.

"We are helping people experiment. We have also got NHS trials coming soon in 2017 at the centre in Bristol. We want local people to come forward and take part in the trials. The NHS has been incredibly supportive of us and it is keen to work with us and make these products more accessible through the NHS.

"We are trying to change attitudes about limb difference. Our prosthetics are not skin coloured to make them look like a human hand. We think it is better to wear a cool piece of technology. We have worked with Disney and made an Iron Man hand with lights in it. We have tested bionic hands with 10 year old children and next year's products might be small enough for a child of eight.

"We have also partnered with the games manufacturer of Deus Ex as their game franchise is centred around people with a limb difference. They gave their designs and we made these really cool sci-fi robot arms in real life and they really help with confidence.

"People are working on brain interfaces and more sophisticated AMG sensors and in the next three to five years you will have full control over a bionic hand.

"We want to work towards getting sensors of pressure and temperature that will be fed back to the wearer too."



Rebecca Kavanagh was one of the volunteers who came forward to help Joel with his research. He 3D scanned her little arm and measured her and she experimented with using her arm muscles to control the prototype myoelectric hand.

## ENGINEER DADS ARE GREAT

Andrew Grace said his daughter Jessica wanted a 3D printed hand so badly that he bought a printer in order that he could make her one. Lucky he is an engineer! Lucky girl!

"We had to research the different hands that were available," he said, "We downloaded a couple but the one we did most recently was a Team Unlimbited one. We have made a couple of them and they are the easiest to do. We have done about four now.

"The plastic comes as 2km of plastic filament costing £10 and the machine melts it. It comes in all colours and a reel will make up to six arms. They take three hours to assemble with fishing wire and loom bands.

"Jessica was involved in every stage of production and she took the first one to school where it was the talk of the staff room! She came home 8ft tall she was so thrilled."





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## FLYING ONE-HANDED (PLUS PROSTHETIC!)

Airline pilot: It's a dream job, to be in charge of a plane full of passengers as well as crew and cabin staff, cruising the skies at 30,000ft. Not many people make the grade and when you are short of a limb – the odds of getting a commercial licence lengthen dramatically.

Captain James Thompson, however, has proved that long odds do not mean things are impossible to achieve. He is a busy commercial pilot, flying for Flybe despite having a missing hand and forearm.

"It is my dream job," he said. "There are many mornings when I wake up at 4am and think why am I doing this but when I get above the clouds and see the sun rising or setting, I know I wouldn't want to be doing anything else."

James has been a Reach member since he was a child and like other Reach children he was keen on activities like rock climbing and he joined the ATC at 14. Talent and determination enabled him to train as a pilot but he explained there are always going to be difficulties, as well as company, national and cultural attitudes to overcome. Being a one-handed pilot is definitely not an easy career option.

"When I moved to a single flight I had to have special things and they wanted to do extra testing to make sure I

could do the job. I was in touch with a 60 year old private pilot and another pilot who was in the airline industry and there had to be a precedent for things.

"I use a silicone sleeve on my little arm with a ratchet attachment. There is a clamp on the steering wheel and I clip in and out. There is also a tiller steering device and they have all been bespoke made. I can't just jump in and use any gear stick. All the adaptations would have to be changed. The overriding importance is a safe flight.

"The best thing for me was being born in the UK. It allowed me to become a commercial pilot. I couldn't fly in Dubai because of medical laws and I couldn't fly Air France as all pilots are French, so I will carry on in the UK.

"My arm is only approved by the CAA for the Dash 8 aircraft and I have a condition attached that I can't fly with a co-pilot with any other health issues such as diabetes. This last year I had to rely on the airline and the CAA to compile a safety case and a risk assessment, to show that I am capable of flying an aircraft and mitigating risk. That took the best part of a year before I could get promotion.

**“The best thing for me was being born in the UK. It allowed me to become a commercial pilot.”**

"It put me at a disadvantage against my able-bodied colleagues but that is something I have had to deal with. Flying it's all about having the right tools for the job. I have a Steeper forearm made of carbon fibre with an Ottobock wrist attachment. The sleeve is bulked up with a cotton sock to ensure I get the best feel out of the steering wheel.

"When I went for First Officer I was flying from the outer seat and so everything had to be readapted for the other side. But it is satisfying being at a disadvantage and getting on with it and actually doing a better job than a fully-abled guy or girl. Passengers don't know about my arm. I keep it as low key as possible and wear a long sleeved shirt and I don't go and greet passengers. It's not something I like to disclose as I don't think the world is ready for it."

**“I enjoyed the inspiring speakers and I tell my kids about them so that my Reach child especially does not think there's nothing she can't do!!”**

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAID

"The feedback so far has been really positive. 80% had been before, and 20% were first timers who we were delighted to welcome in Glasgow," said Jo Dixon

"The new format was well received by the majority and many told us that they enjoyed the less rushed afternoon session on Saturday with exhibitors and workshops to attend and we hope to build on these next year. Everyone who fed back enjoyed our choice of speakers this year, as did we!

The Friday evening reception wasn't universally liked so we will think of ways to improve this and the Saturday afternoon workshops. Over all there were some lovely comments, and also some constructive ones that we will be taking notice of when planning 2017.

The most useful parts of the weekend were reported to be Reach children meeting other Reach children, hearing from the inspiring speakers and making new friends, which are our key aims of the weekend, so we are gratified to be doing this. Siblings meeting others comes a close 4th so we are very pleased to be meeting our goals.

Winner of the randomly selected prize for completing the survey is Liz Rowan from Glasgow! Three of the four speakers are on youtube (follow the links from the Reach website. They are worth a listen.

## TEAM UNLIMITED ARE STARS!



Stephen Davies and Drew Murray organised a 3D printed hand assembly session - a real eye opener for families who had not done anything like it before!

"We will do our very best to keep these esteemed partners on board with Reach!" said Jo Dixon

**“ It makes me feel I'm not alone. It's good to know (in a good way) there are other families with limb difference. ”**

**“ More open Bionics and Team Unlimited please ”**

## ROZI CLARKE, STAFF NURSE

"Seven years ago I applied to university. I had a myoelectric arm as a two year old and I have worn an arm since I was three months old. I have a pvc one for work and a silicone one for social life.



"My friends still call me Bionic Babe.

"At school an occupational therapist worked with me quite closely. At the start of every year I would go into the class and explain my arm and show them. I had a one handed recorder which got me into playing music and then I moved on to the trumpet. I got into dancing but the electric hand got too heavy and my muscles wasted away very quickly.

"I got a place at Glasgow Caledonian University and I detailed my arm and said how it had helped me and would give me an empathy with children and I got thrown in at the deep end at A & E in Glasgow. Three days into my placement someone noticed my arm and everyone got freaked out.

"So we worked out what was appropriate in the way of gloves and hygiene and at the end of the placement I left with a really good report. I went to the occupational health department and the first nurse was not the most appropriate person. She threw a pack at me and said open it. I was referred to a doctor who referred me to Tim Smith who gave me a lot of support. We researched other nurses like me and now I have a lot of information to help other nurses.

"My second placement I was in care of the elderly and my mentor again was negative. The university had to come out and provide me with support but I ended up doing things I should not have done until I was qualified. There was concern about me picking up babies and the university again had to come in and fight my corner.

"They were very very supportive. All my reports said there was no difference between me and able bodied students. I kept a diary of everything I had done to prove myself and my final placement was the ward I work on now.

"I graduated in 2013 and my first job I applied to was at Great Ormond Street. At the interview they never even asked about my condition. I have even looked after toe to hand transfer patients and it was a fantastic opportunity as parents could see I was just as capable as everybody else. I now work in the paediatric oncology ward at the Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow."

**Rozi Clarke**





## TWO MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH PARACLIMBING TEAM

Climbing walls clearly has an amazing effect on people. Reach teenager Matthew Phillips stood up at the Family Weekend conference and gave an incredibly lucid and powerful presentation, supported by his climbing colleague Bella Walsh, to a packed audience.

Matthew began climbing seriously in 2014 and is a member of the GB ParaClimbing Team 2016 having been extremely successful in competition. Bella only started climbing 18 months ago and proved a natural talent.

Matthew described the two strands to paraclimbing: top roping on climbs of increasing difficulty, and bouldering with no ropes but a with a safety mat. "I endeavoured to find a

sport that covered all the challenges," he said. "I went to the Castle Climbing Centre in London and came second. I was very impressed and exceeded my expectations. I turned up and had a go and everybody was very supportive.

"Climbing changed my life for the better. I have competed in two world championship and in competitions I have done better than I ever thought I could and found people very friendly. My competitors cheer me up the wall. I was a swimmer for six years and competitors glare at each other evilly and that is definitely not the same in paraclimbing.

"It helps me in so many ways. Two years ago I would never have dreamed of standing up here and speaking to an audience. My communication skills have improved immensely and I have made many good friends and met many new people. It has grown massively as a sport and will be in the Olympics 2020."

Bella is a new member of the British ParaClimbing team: "I started at university," she said. "I thought it sounded sufficiently dangerous and fun. I went to try it out and I really enjoyed it and found out I had been given a place on the GB team! That gives me the opportunity to compete internationally and that is scarier than the climbing!

"I study physics and use my prosthetic as a door stop and a Hallowe'en costume – partially eaten zombie, that kind of thing." Matt said he used a prosthetic when he was younger for bike riding and playing the trombone but no longer. "It's not what I wanted," he said.

## HAVING FUN



Sian received a standing ovation for her phenomenal effort in organising the Reach May Balls.

She raised around £100,000 over the years. Now we need someone to step into her shoes!



## STARTING A NEW JOB

I think it's appropriate to say I've had my fair share of part time jobs. I've worked a paper round, I've been a cleaner, shop assistant, receptionist, customer service advisor, ambassador; I've done it all. However, I have never worked in catering. I once applied to a cafeteria but the woman in charge told me I'd be a safety hazard because I wouldn't be able to carry a tray. And even after I had demonstrated to her how I can in fact carry a tray as well as any able bodied person, she still refused to give me a job. From then on, I avoided catering jobs and had a go at everything else instead!

I felt frustrated at the rejection because I knew I was perfectly capable of waiting tables and serving drinks. As everyone at Reach already knows, there's barely anything we cannot do. If you feel as though you cannot do something, take it from me, you probably can. Persevere and you'll find a way.

I think able bodied people assume that because we aren't carrying out a task in the same way that they do, we cannot do it. But you don't have to do it like them, you can do it like you.

I've been employed by people who have assumed I couldn't do a lot of tasks I actually carry out on a daily basis. I have also been employed by people who have accepted I am just as capable as everyone else. Obviously, the latter has always been a better work environment for me. Overall, employers want someone with a personality.

Therefore, as long as you present yourself accordingly and

are comfortable and confident that you can assist employers appropriately, that's all that matters.

I currently work as a supervisor for Flying Tiger Copenhagen in my hometown. I never had any doubts when applying for the job that I wouldn't be able to fill the criteria and I have felt completely comfortable working there from the beginning.

Occasionally, customers will make remarks or ask questions about my arm but my employer knows what I'm capable of and they're the person paying me so I decided everyone else's opinions are irrelevant. It's difficult because you can't hope, or even ask, that people will respect you. You have to show them you're able and are worthy of respect.

It's the same with starting a new school or meeting new people, once you've moved past the settling in stage, you're fine.

It can be frustrating if there are issues during this stage, especially if people are discriminating against you. However, discrimination in the workplace is illegal and any problems that you may fall into can be reported. Being vocal about this is important because most employers absolutely won't tolerate inconsiderate behaviour.

Most importantly, don't let rejection crush you. Just go out and apply for every other job going - exactly like I did!



“ You don't have to do it like them, you can do it like you. ”



## A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OUR WONDERFUL SUPPORTERS

REACH COULD NOT CONTINUE TO HELP OUR FAMILIES WITHOUT YOUR AMAZING EFFORTS!

Great Yarmouth Reach member Zak Atherton-Howlett's great granddad Derrick asked for donations to Reach in lieu of presents for his 90th birthday. He raised £135. Happy Birthday Derrick!

Kayley Pitfield from Maiden Newton raised £32 with a collection box at the Riverside Takeaway

Leah Jarrett from Cwmbran donated £10

A Phoenix Cards night raised £175 for Reach. Abigail Owen donated £40 - 10% from the sale of her cards and Sian Mitchell raised a further £135.25 with a raffle.

Joanne Taylor in Newbury raised £298.75 for Marla Trigwell's birthday.

Jenny and Simon Webster have some amazing friends and family – they raised £1,000 for Reach from the Joseph Strong Frazer Trust.

Sarah Pratchett managed to get Reach accepted for a Waitrose collection which raised £177.

Elaine Delaney, Connie Underhill's granny, donated £10.20 which was the proceeds from a collection box.

Sheila and Sam Humphreys sent a donation of £94 in celebration of their grandson, Lewis Humphreys' 13th birthday.

Costco Wholesale at Farnborough donated £25.

Mr and Mrs Greenhow from Leicester, Alastair Hume's grandparents, donated £25.

Geraldine Griffiths, Freya's grandmother, collected £100 in Reach boxes in Newport

**GRANDPARENTS -  
YOU ARE JUST AWESOME!**

# *Calling Disabled Musicians*



## **Bader's Big Band**

# *Needs You!*

The Douglas Bader Foundation is looking for disabled musicians to join **Bader's Big Band**. A core line up of vocalists, drums, bass, piano, saxophones, trumpets, trombones – but all instruments considered.

The band will perform together at airshows, festivals and other events.

Please email [charleydbf@hotmail.com](mailto:charleydbf@hotmail.com)  
or call 07805 172204 for more information



[douglasbaderfoundation.com](http://douglasbaderfoundation.com)



# PARALYMPIC MEDALS



Hollie  
Arnold

## RIO HIGHLIGHTS

Hollie Arnold won Gold in the Women's Javelin, smashing her own World Record.

Susie Rodgers won a Gold and Bronze in the pool and set a new European record in the 50m butterfly

Dame Sarah Storey claimed her 13th Paralympic Gold in cycling having switched from swimming in 2005.

Claire Cashmore took Silver in the 100m breaststroke.

Lee Pearson won Silver in the individual dressage and Sophie Wells won an individual Gold.

Laura Steadman took Silver in the debut of the Triathlon.

Being a full time athlete I am always in sports wear, but when I manage to get out of it I am a typical girl who loves makeup, clothes and styling my hair.

My brother Ashley who lives in Australia is a fan of Lovesick Clothing London and before Rio he ordered some T shirts to come to support me in Rio with. One did not fit so after Rio, mum got in touch with Lovesick to ask if they could return the T shirt. Mum got talking to the lovely co-owner Rachel who was very interested in the Paralympics and had been a volunteer at London Paralympics, and she said she would love me to do a shoot for them.

So the day after the London Homecoming for the Paralympics while I was in London I met up with Lovesick and did a shoot. It's something I have never ever dreamed of doing, but because Rachel and her husband Dan were so brilliant to get on with, I felt totally at home.

The photos he took blew me away and also boosted my self esteem more than you could imagine. I am now on Lovesick's Facebook Page and Instagram and am so grateful Lovesick were prepared to have a disabled model to promote their streetwear showing up much larger companies with their open attitude.



Kaitlin has a little arm like Hollie and meeting the Paralympian star has given a massive boost to her confidence.

Now they are best of friends!

## THE DOG ATE MY HOMEWORK



Following a post on the Reach Facebook page in May, Charlotte James applied to take part in the CBBC's children's programme **The Dog Ate My Homework**.

She was invited to an audition in July in Manchester and found out she was successful shortly afterwards.

She went to Glasgow recently to film it and really enjoyed the whole experience. It is likely to be shown in the new year, and we are just waiting for the BBC to inform us of the date. Here is Charlotte outside her dressing room.

## KOBI MET HIS HEROES

Everton football club invited Kobi Sadler and his mum Kelly to Goodison park to show off his NEW 3D printed Everton arm. "We had an amazing day," said Kelly. "Kobi met all the players and hopefully we raised awareness of limb deficiency and the awesomeness of 3D printing." Here they are meeting Ashley Williams.



## JAMIE HARRIS WINS GOLD

Jamie Harris took on the elite of UK Archers in the annual Junior Masters at Lilleshall National Sports Center, against able bodied archers. Jamie not only ranked 1st in the qualifying round but also went on to take Gold in the final day's head to head match.

Jamie said "it was a great weekend, the competitors were tough but all my practice at the Home Guard Club paid off".



The Junior Masters is an invitation only event held by Archer GB and is only open to those archers achieving the highest classification. Jamie who only took up Archery in 2013, spent the first 18 months in the sport working out how he could physically load, draw and release the arrow unaided as his disability restricts movement in his right arm and hand. Jamie said "It has been the assistance and patience of everyone at Stratford Archers that has made this result possible."

Born missing several bones in his right arm including an elbow joint Jamie uses a strap across his upper and lower arm to hook his bow to. Once drawn, he then uses the only two fingers on his right hand and a combination of cable ties and string to pull the hook away.

Jamie, 17, is currently studying A-Levels in Maths, Chemistry Physics and Biology at Stratford-upon-Avon School. He can often be found in the school's gym, however the lack of indoor shooting in Stratford has been a challenge.

Jamie said: "Practice over the winter was difficult as KES no longer offers the club indoor shooting and many venues worry about safety despite vigorous rules and the use of safety netting. It's a great time for Archery and I would recommend anyone to try a beginners course. That's how I started at Stratford Archers"



The next local south London branch get together is on Sunday 12th March 3:30 to 5:30pm at The Pod, Hawker Centre, Lower Ham Road, Kingston upon Thames where we will have private use of the large Softplay area for children up to 10 years old. All Reach families are welcome! This will be a really good opportunity for parents to chat while their young children play safely! Contact Nicola Romberg at: SouthLondon@reach.org.uk.



## YORKSHIRE

Families in the Yorkshire Branch enjoyed a fantastic day out at Bolton Abbey in August.

The weather stayed dry and the kids played together by the river making new friends whilst the grown ups chatted. We all enjoyed a picnic in the field and then some of us continued with a long walk to the lovely cafe.

All being well, this is the first of many meet ups so keep an eye on Facebook and emails. To contact Sally to help organise or just to keep up to date with events, call 07916 345110.

**Sally Lambert**



## WELL DONE KITTY!

Trustee Elizabeth Wilmshurst and her daughter Kitty did a sponsored pyjama swim to raise money for Reach. Kitty was a star despite not feeling her best. Waiting for sponsorship to be counted but a really great turn out so fingers crossed!

## WELL DONE BENNY!

Benny Romberg is pictured here receiving his Borough of Kingston upon Thames medal for winning the Para London Youth Games 50m backstroke race! Very proud!





**James Barnes Miller** writes: "I want to thank you for your sponsorship last season, as this helped me so much with flights, accommodation, training and lift passes. Last season we trained in Austria and I had a lot of competitions in Holland, America, Canada and France.



But it wasn't the best start I could of had.

Training was going really well and I was entering the race season really confident, but I broke my leg in January and it took three months to be diagnosed properly. I spent those three months trying to race with a broken fibula until, in France, I broke it again as it hadn't been able to heal properly. So I've spent six weeks in a walk boot and then in rehab building my strength back up.

I'm now back to training with the Scottish institute of sport, getting me fitter and stronger for next season. This summer has been really busy as I had camps in Manchester, Holland and Lithuania followed by Switzerland. Even with this set back I've managed to jump up four scales on the GB team and I am now sitting at podium potential.

**Alex Marshall-Wilson** has just been awarded a £1,150 Reach Bursary towards the cost of an RGK Elite lightweight wheelchair to enable him to develop his basketball skills. Born with a rare condition which means his leg, feet, arms and hand bones grew at different rates, Alex has undergone many operations and intensive physiotherapy throughout his life.

He always wanted to play sport, and when his physio, referred him to Disability Sport Wales he jumped at the idea of wheelchair basketball. Since September 2014, he has gone from playing with his local club Conwy Thunder to representation the regional U15 North Wales Knights squad and has represented Wales for the last two years at U15 in the National Championships.

His new sportschair will help overcome his arm and hand deficiencies and his family are thrilled: "Wow!! We really didn't expect such a generous Bursary – thank you so much. To say we're blown away is the understatement of the year!"

**Madeleine Rowntree** was awarded a bursary towards her car adaptation. "Being born without my left forearm I needed an automatic car with a steering ball with infrared controls and electronic parking brake adaptations, to be able to drive.

I put off driving for a long time as I thought I wouldn't be able to do it and the adaptations would be difficult to use but I was wrong! When I first started it took me about three lessons to get used to the adaptations and from there on it became a lot easier.

Now I have passed my test and with the generous help of Reach I have a car with the adaptations I require. I couldn't be happier and I just wish I had done it sooner! My advice to anyone in my situation is to just go for it and don't put it off! Being able to drive has so many advantages - freedom being the biggest one!"

## FUNDRAISING EVENTS

### MEIAN MAIDS POP UP CAFE

Meian Maids volunteers raised £340 for Reach with their pop-up café in aid of charity. The café has a link with Japanese culture, which explains why it was part of the Anime Attacks event at Gateshead Leisure Centre on October 22.

"Sometimes we work with a Japanese patisserie and our costumes are based on Japanese film and TV characters. It's a bit niche but surprisingly popular," said Sally Blake.

"Anime Attacks is a Japanese pop culture event that celebrates Japanese Animation, Food & Costume Design! So we were all in fancy dress!

One of our volunteers has her own cake business, so she kindly created some lovely cupcakes for us!



We sold a lot of cakes & tea, and also received some

very generous donations. My brother has Poland's Syndrome, and Reach supported him and our family when we were little, so I wanted to give something in return."

### RYE CHARITY GOLF

A very successful and fun Charity Golf Day was held at Rye, East Sussex which raised a fantastic £2,500.00 for Reach. This wouldn't have been possible without the hard work from Siobhan Highwood and Rye Golf Club. Many thanks to all from Phillip, Julie, Sophie & Summer Paxton



### EASY FUNDRAISING

Shopping via the [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) website is a great way to raise money when you are buying online. You don't pay anything extra. So far it has raised over £9 million for causes throughout the UK. Perfect for Christmas shopping! Just select Reach.



## NORTHERN IRELAND



We recently had a Northern Ireland branch family day. We spent the day at Carfunnock Country Park. Eight Reach families had a picnic together before the kids enjoyed the puffer train, zorbing, trampolining and the adventure playground. I'd like to thank everyone for coming and making it such a great day.

Lynne McKinley

## SWIMMING TROPHY

We were really proud of Chloe aged 7 this summer when her swimming teacher awarded her the 'swimmer of the term' trophy & certificate. Since beginning her lessons as a complete novice during the summer of 2015, Chloe has gone from a frightened and timid individual within the water (with armbands on) to a fairly competent and good little swimmer without armbands. We were always a little anxious as to how difficult or easy Chloe would find learning to swim but it is definitely achievable with a good swim school and regularity of lessons to build up the child's confidence.



## HAPPINESS IS A BIKE



Gemma Petty from Saint Austell writes: We have a very happy boy! Can't thank the team at The Thornberry Centre in Plymouth enough!

 Remember you can apply for a Reach Bursary to help pay for sports adaptations!

## NORTHERN BRANCH

The sun shone up in the north, and we had a great time meeting a new Reach family, enjoying a picnic in the woods and playing a bit of rounders.

Suzanne Parker



## PARACLIMBING EVENT FOR THE DIARY

Monday February 13th, 4pm-7pm  
ParaClimbing Coaching Event at White Spider Climbing Centre, Surbiton, Surrey  
Free climbing coaching by two top climbing coaches, Belinda Fuller [www.beclimbing.co.uk](http://www.beclimbing.co.uk) and GB ParaClimbing Team Coach Robin O'Leary [www.robinolearycoaching.co.uk](http://www.robinolearycoaching.co.uk)  
The training is free and you just pay the centre's entry fee.  
To book a place email [belinda@beclimbing.co.uk](mailto:belinda@beclimbing.co.uk)

## THE DOUGLAS BADER GRANT SCHEME



This initiative provides practical support for the pursuance of achievements by those with disabilities. We look at all applications and, depending on the nature of the request, the scheme may help towards or provide the equipment, training, services, further education or other practical support required by the successful applicant.

Our Grants have assisted countless disabled individuals and groups

throughout the UK to achieve a variety of goals in diverse areas ranging from education, the arts, sport and recreation to small businesses.

Group Captain Sir Douglas Bader was commissioned as an officer in the R A F in 1930 but after only 18 months he crashed his aeroplane and became a double amputee caused by "my own fault" in an aeroplane accident in 1931. Douglas was discharged from the RAF and after the outbreak of the Second World War, re-joined the RAF as a disabled pilot. Douglas was a member of 222 Squadron and was promoted to lead 242 Squadron. His skill as an aviator and contribution as an outstanding leader and fighter ace during WW2, along with his continuous attempts to escape prisoner of war camp after he was shot down, were immortalised in the book and film 'Reach for the Sky'.

Douglas married Joan, Lady Bader in 1975. During the next six years he was a wonderful husband, step-father, father-in-law and grandfather, resulting in many memorable times. His untimely death aged 72 of a heart attack IN 1982 whilst being driven back from London by Joan caused a great hole in our lives. The concept of the Douglas Bader Foundation started around the kitchen table within 24 hours prompted by the extraordinary numbers of people who contacted us expressing how much Douglas had been an 'Inspiration' to them whether able bodied or disabled, and whether they had met him or not.

Creating the Douglas Bader Foundation has enabled us to continue this inspiration – providing a wide range of support initiatives and information to the limb loss community.

Our original Board of Trustees consisted of those who had flown with him side-by-side, had become friends in POW camps, had known him and worked with him post-war in his civilian life and were family. Douglas was honoured in 1976 with a Knighthood for his contribution and work on behalf of the disabled. The mission of the foundation is to continue Douglas' work in conjunction with and on behalf of individuals with a disability.

'A disabled person who fights back is not disabled...but inspired'. It is this maxim that our charitable foundation established in Douglas's name in 1982, and seeks to replicate and develop in 2016/17, our 35th Anniversary year. Contact: [david.bickers@douglasbaderfoundation.com](mailto:david.bickers@douglasbaderfoundation.com)

## GRAND IRELAND MEET-UP

We had a great Ireland Branch meet up with 12 families, making 27 kids in total. Thankfully we had booked an indoor event because it rained all day - phew!

It was super to get to hold and see the workings of some of the 3D hands, so thanks for bringing them all along. If anyone else is interested in getting one, the guy in ITT to contact is Robert O' Connor

a Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering. Just email him at [robert.oconnor@ittdublin.ie](mailto:robert.oconnor@ittdublin.ie), as his students are making them very kindly free of charge.

We have some amazing parents fighting hard for their children's right to a medical card, to go on waiting lists, get funding for adapters etc. Researching and discovering all the information they can find. We can only do our best and being a part of a group like ours really does help.

We also have an active Irish Facebook private group page. It is kept fairly up to date with meet ups etc. Reach members can find us here <https://www.facebook.com/groups/reach.ireland/>.

**Lorraine O'Farrell**



## GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH

Unfortunately due to small number the Gloucestershire branch had to cancel the summer party, but a few of us got together and went the climbing wall in Gloucester. We were in the main arena which meant the walls were higher and it was manual belay making it harder to climb up but had a great time and all the children did brilliantly!

**Sam Wood**



**WILL:** I am 17 years old. I am missing my left hand. I am writing to share some of my experiences, struggles and solutions to various problems I have had through my teenage years through the progression of boy to a young man. Personally I have found relatively few problems and those that I have found have been easily overcome. As puberty hits the usual changes occur; a deeper voice, facial hair, spots and of course an affinity to girls. At first I started to doubt myself and the way girls may perceive my hand as being unattractive. However it's just like making friends, once they get to know you it becomes no different and sometimes they can forget about it completely. If the person can't see past it, then you don't want that type of person in your life anyway so it doesn't matter.

One challenge is when it comes to gaming. I am an avid gamer and can easily beat some of my friends. On console games with a remote I have found that using my chin on the left analogue stick and resting the hand grip on my collarbone is an easy technique to give full range of controls. When it comes to computer games some of the default keys are hard to reach, therefore I change the controls around till I find a way that gives me full control.

Another challenge I faced was when I started going to the gym. Lots of the traditional exercises such as free weights can be different. However this does not mean you cannot train your other arm to tone your muscles as you wish to. I have found kettle bells a much easier way of building my bicep as I can hold these on my wrist.

Also benching (and many other exercises such as squats) became a lot easier on a Smith machine as it keeps the barbell in a vertical plane. Remember to ask the staff at the gym as they know all about the machines and how to safely use them and try and find adapted methods that work for you and you'll have your summer body ready in no time.

**Will Bean**

**TOM:** I'm 22 years old and I'm missing my left arm from above the elbow; I live in Newcastle and work in IT Support for the NHS. I'm going to talk about the main struggle I had growing up as a Reach child.

"Mummy why does that boy have no arm?" "Look look that boy he has no arm". Hearing people say these words daily really affected my self-confidence as a child. I first noticed people staring or talking about me in public places at the age of around 4 years old. I would always pretend not to notice and just hide my arm by attaching myself to my parent's side. I would always cover up when going out in public even if this meant being far too hot and risking passing out.

I struggled with going swimming. Even though I loved it, I felt exposed when out of the water, once I was in the water I didn't have a care in the world. But when the time came to get out I would avoid this until the very last moment. I would cross my arms and again attach myself to my parents, they were less inviting of this when they had just been spectating! This issue stayed with me for nearly my full childhood whenever I was out in public.

I was always told to just ignore people and to not pay attention, but I couldn't help but notice people staring or making comments about me. That was until I returned from

THESE YOUNG MEN ARE PREPARED TO TELL IT LIKE IT IS - GROWING UP AS REACH BOYS



my first RAW. I have been a member of Reach since I can remember and attend all AGMs and regional events. Attending these events finally made me understand that I wasn't alone in the world (although I was still self-conscious).

**“** If the person can't see past it, then you don't want that type of person in your life anyway so it doesn't matter. **”**

At RAW it all sunk in, I could run around with my arm exposed without a second thought. There were many children my age with the same interests I had, and many younger and older. We could share experiences and offer advice to each other. This was so important to me and changed my view on a lot of things. I am confident in myself and couldn't be happier. I hope this will provide a little self-confidence for anyone struggling.

**Tom Crow**

**ROBBIE:** I'm a 17-year-old high school student originally from Essex but I have travelled many places around the world and I currently live in Canada. I have been a member of Reach for as long as I can remember. When I was born I was missing three of the fingers on my right hand and my thumb and pinkie had no joints in them.

When I was younger people would always tell me how I shouldn't play sports or I'm never going to be able to join teams and for a while I believed them. That was until I started to go to Reach Activity Week, (RAW). They showed me I could do anything I wanted or be anything I wanted.

I was 10 when I first left England and moved to China... I know I was surprised too, things like that never happen to small town boys like myself. I didn't know anyone when I first arrived so I joined a group called GYSL (Guangzhou Youth Soccer League). And yes they called it soccer out there. As annoying as that was, it was great fun, as they randomly assign you to a team of a random country and you play against all the other teams.

I had never really played before so I wanted to just stay in goal but I was worried about my hand affecting my ability to save a goal or catch the ball. After a week or so of training and learning the game I was able to put it all behind me and just have fun playing the game. As the weeks progressed and we won more and more games and conceded fewer goals I was feeling amazing, People would ask me to play for their team when their goalie wasn't there and I ended up being the best goalkeeper at that tournament.

From then on out I haven't let anything stop me. I play a variety of sports. I did many track and field events for my school in an athletics tournament involving many schools in South East Asia, where I was placed in events such as javelin and high jump. I now play rugby for a team in Canada called the Nomads which is one of the best teams in Toronto. I am first to be picked for most of their games. I play for my school teams, and hopefully, soon I will be able to try out for team Ontario. I have never let my hand hold me back. I know many people have it worse than me but I have seen people do amazing things when they put their mind to it. I have a friend who doesn't have an arm from his elbow who is now a sponsored BMXer which still blows my mind.

“At RAW it all sunk in, I could run around with my arm exposed without a second thought.

” If people tell you that you can't do something you should try as hard as you can to work hard and prove them wrong. When you put your mind to it you can accomplish anything.

**Robbie Balaam**

Having had first hand experience of of this amazing chance for Reach kids to spend a week in the company of their friends and look to mentors for guidance, it has convinced me that this is a great opportunity that every Reach child should experience. It will change and shape their lives forever and would have certainly helped me to accept who I am that little bit earlier in my life.

This is a happy story though and it all works out in the end regardless of whether you take the long or short journey!  
**Tony Addison**

## FANTASTIC FUNDRAISING!

Benjamin Ruby took part in the HSBC Triathlon and Duathlon and raised a total of £425.26.

Clea Ingram ran the Vitality Run Hackney Half Marathon and raised £681.37.

Jessica Thessinger ran a marathon and raised £1,655.36.

Adam Norman did a skydive and raised £525.00

## TONY:

I love being a member of Reach and I'd like to help others who are going through some issues by telling a few stories from a "Been there, seen it and got the T-Shirt" perspective.



Don't worry - it all turns out fine in the end.

I'd like to think I'm a pretty happy person these days. It could have a little to do with my little boy, Noah, celebrating his first birthday, being promoted to a Senior Manager role at work or Newcastle back to winning ways again!

Despite this being a particularly good week, my happiness mainly stems from accepting who I am as a person.

Growing up and even as an adult, I've always had a fear of not being accepted by people. I don't know why, and I'm sure I'm not the only one, but it's nice to be liked, isn't it? It starts when you become self-conscience as a child and it peaks when you hit teenage years and become a bit more aware of girls (or was that just me?).

I became pretty insecure around this time and my lowest point was when I stopped playing for the school basketball team because girls had started to watch me play and they would see my hand. Looking back I completely regret this but it's all part of learning.

I think having a mentor or peer support from other Reach kids would have helped at the time, but I never really got involved until just last year when I became a mentor at RAW myself.

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# Reach

Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits



**Chris Penny on the summit of Mount Fortress in the Blue Mountains in Australia**