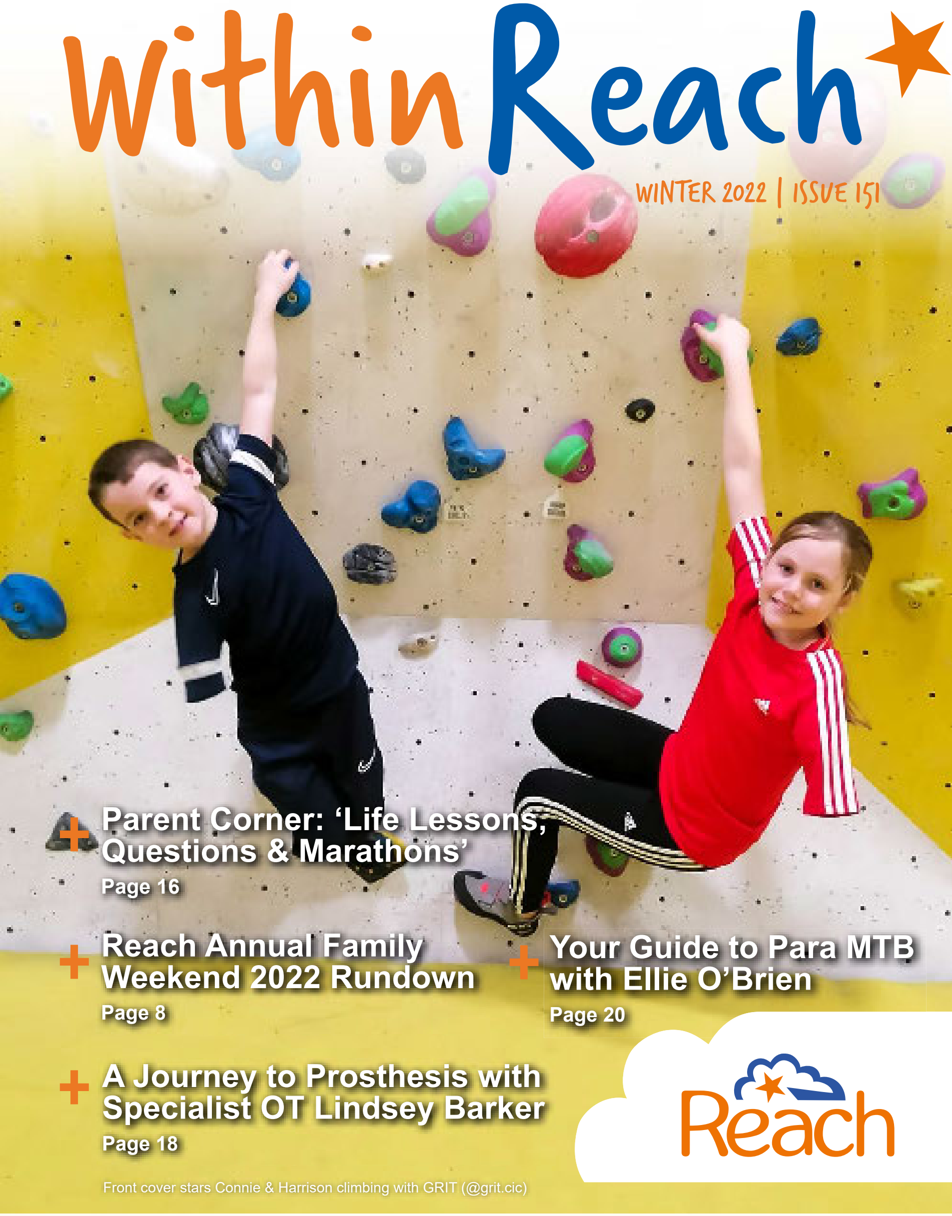
Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits

Within Reach

WINTER 2022 | ISSUE 151



Front cover stars Connie & Harrison climbing with GRIT (@grit.cic)

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Reach

The Official Magazine of the Association for Children with an Upper Limb Difference

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JAN	· 14th - Northern - Jump Giants, Dunston
APR	· Limbloss & Limb Difference Awareness Month · London Marathon
JUL	· 30th - 6th August - RAW
AUG	· R5ach Fundraising Campaign

For details contact reach@reach.org.uk or your local branch coordinator

Hello!

From the Editor & Designer of withinReach

We're Max & Tom Swinhoe. We welcome comments, articles, requests, or suggestions for future editions of withinReach. **Email us at withinreach@reach.org.uk**

Reach Membership

Membership is open to parents of children with upper limb difference, and individuals of 18 years and over who are interested in furthering the work of the association. The UK and Ireland subscription is from £36 (£35 via direct debit) and the International subscription is £40.

Views expressed in withinReach are not necessarily those of Reach and are not intended to reflect or constitute Reach policy, or in any way portray an official view.

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Please add reach@reach.org.uk to your contact list.

Stay up to date

All event news is on our website www.reach.org.uk and facebook page www.facebook.com/reachcharity.

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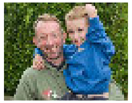

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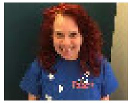

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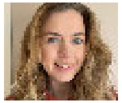

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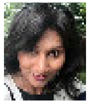

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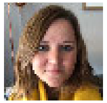

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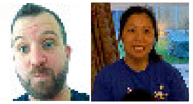

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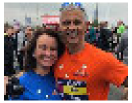

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Want to volunteer?

If you're keen to get involved and organise events for your local Reach branch, we're looking for coordinators! Get in touch today, email Head Office at reach@reach.org.uk

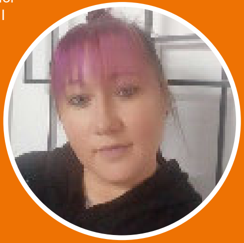
Head Office Report

I am so happy to be a part of the Reach team.

Although my Reach journey only began recently, I can already see the passion for the charity from all involved. One of my first tasks I undertook was to help in the planning and organising of the Annual Family Weekend, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Seeing the event come together behind the scenes, and then seeing all the photos afterwards, was truly heart-warming.

I am recently married, although, we were engaged for 12 years so we thought it was about time to tie the knot. We have an amazing little boy called Elijah who will be 4 years old in December and he is the most active little boy I have ever known and he takes up all my spare time! We are both Christmas mad so it's coming up to our favourite time of the year; full of Santa visits, hot chocolates, watching Christmas films and hopefully lots of playing in the snow, but with typical English weather, who knows if we will get to do that.

My love for organising (involving lots of sticky notes) and paperwork, fits my role within Reach perfectly. I have charity work in my background as I was a volunteer Fundraising Manager for a charity that helped to provide financial aid to dog rescues and to individual dogs in need. I was also a Trustee for a brief time, until I left to have my little boy. During my time with the charity, I did a sponsored bungee jump and raised £480 so to be back helping a charity feels amazing, and I look forward to being involved in the work I do for Reach, and I will do everything needed to support Reach.



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Reach Board of Trustees

Joint Chair's Report Winter 2022

Well, what a summer it has been!

Firstly, the changes in Head office - we said goodbye to Debs and Kate, who are sadly missed. We gained Andrea and Lisa who held it all altogether, we're so grateful to them, but then they had to leave us. We now have Ashley, who is rapidly sorting things out for us from her home in Gateshead. Thank you Ashley for coping with being thrown into this role and maintaining a willingness and a smile all the time!

There were also big changes to the Trustee Board - the trustees are there to ensure the viability of the charity and guide the organisation in the directions agreed in our articles. Sadly, as with all organisations, some relationships will flourish while others will cause distress but all the trustees have put in a huge effort to try and work our way through these challenges with many meetings, emails, texts etc. Everyone who works or has worked for this organisation has put in their best efforts to ensure its future and we can't thank Clare, Lorraine, Flavia, Sam, and Nathan enough for all their expertise and the hours they put in to keep us going.

Julie and I are still here, and with the help of many volunteers, we made sure we had a wonderful Annual Family Weekend - which we did! It was so good to meet in person and celebrate our children and adults, young and old! We particularly were so delighted to see so many new members. Welcome!

We now have a new and vibrant trustee board which is looking forward with excitement and new ideas as to how we can continue to be the major UK and Irish charity supporting parents, children, and young adults with upper limb difference. Onwards and upwards we will go!

Julie & Ruth

Julie Detheridge & Ruth Lester
Reach Board of Trustees
ruthl@reach.org.uk - julied@reach.org.uk

Need some help?

Thinking about prosthetics, an adaptation for your child's bike or is there something your child is struggling with and you just can't find a solution? Reach is always happy to offer help and advice, and to point you in the right direction. Or why not speak to our partners who innovate and create to ensure everyone can live a life without limits.

ReVAMP
by LimbPower

@rebecca@limbpower.com

Digital, 'Joe Wicks style' workout videos specifically designed to support amputees and people with limb differences.

Team Unlimbited

https://www.teamunlimbited.org/

Empowering and inspiring people with limb difference through the design and build of innovative 3D printed arm devices.'

Remap

https://www.remap.org.uk/

Remap custom-makes equipment to help disabled people live more independent lives.

Sporting Icons

It can be scary to go try new things but as many of our Reach children prove, you just have to jump in and see what happens.

Alun - Swimming - “First gala done and dusted for Alun this weekend - he loved it (I think he loved the medals more than anything else!”
– Mum, Lois

Rue - Swimming - “Rue participated in a four-season gala event. He showed great courage. He started in the pool whilst the others dived in, giving them an advantage. Them being fully able, and Rue not, he was in fourth place but shot into third where he finished! He was so proud and got heavily involved in the team as they came second overall out of five teams.” – Dad, Lee

Luca - Tennis - “Luca, (year 3) recently competed in the David Lloyd annual club team tennis championships in the 8u category. He came through the local club competition rounds to get through to the regional level and won all his matches to become overall winner in his category for the 8u boys. Lots of tough matches and very hard fought. Well done Luca. Next step is the Nationals!” – Mum, Kavita

Daniel - Football - “Today after three training sessions and one trial second half of a match he has been signed with a local team!” – Mum, Stephanie

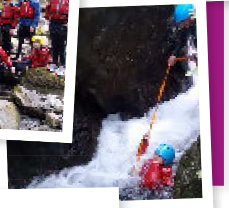
Patterdale Hall Activity Weekend

Reach member Francesca, aged 9, shares her experience of the Patterdale Hall activity weekend in July.

“Patterdale hall was really fun, the food was exquisite and the lake inviting. I met new and old friends.... Who had grown since we last met. I loved jumping off cliffs and into the cool water below especially on a hot day. The canoeing was exciting and the paddleboarding was fun too... Especially on the party board. Moss was lovely and helped me.

In bush craft we made our own dens, dream catchers and cooked bread on a stick. In the gorge walking I held my head high and did it all. When we weren’t doing activities, I was having so much fun in the wonderful and large garden; rolling in grass, climbing trees, and playing ping pong.

Can’t wait to do it again next year!”



open bionics Hero Campaign

This year Reach contributed funding towards Open Bionics’ Hero Campaign; three children were chosen to receive fully-funded bionic arms. Over the last several months they’ve been back and forth for fittings but on the 18th November, they were officially presented with their new Hero arms and Reach Trustee Lee Harvey was there to represent Reach on that special day:

“Each arm costs roughly £13,000, then it’s an additional £165 a month for maintenance and upgrades for the foreseeable, and if they wish to change the covers of the arm it comes at an additional price so campaigns like this are vital for children who otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford them.”

RAW 2022

By Tony Addison

This summer’s Reach Activity Week was my 7th as a mentor, and once again it proved to be one of those life changing experiences that you only recognise after the event.

Whenever I get the opportunity, I always describe RAW as a privilege of a lifetime that I get to mentor the future of Reach and work alongside other influential and inspiring mentors.

For most people, the headline events tend to be rock climbing, abseiling, building rafts and zip lining, and for others it can be the evening football games, film nights and karaoke.

However, I’ve come to recognise how much I thrive in the small conversations and what a difference they can make in the life of a young person.

Taking those extra moments to ask how someone is really doing can change everything, whether it’s about school, your physical appearance, dealing with your own inner critic, or worries about the future.

Showing empathy and compassion is something I’ve learned to lean into over the years and in return it’s provided an enormous amount of self-fulfilment. This year’s RAW was certainly no different and it has inspired me to sign up to a Coaching & Mentoring accreditation with Warwick University over the next 12-months.

I’ve found that although tough times in life might have seemed insurmountable in the moment, they have always been the source of huge personal growth, and can be a blessing when shared with others on the same path as you. Both as a way of knowing that they are not alone and that there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

If any parent is considering whether to send their child to RAW next year, I promise you won’t regret it.

By Emily Tisshaw

From the age of 10 to 17 I spent the run-up to summer in excited anticipation because I knew that I would be leaving for Reach Camp when the school holidays commenced. 10 years after my last camp as a child, I made a comeback!

In 2021 I attended as a mentor and the excitement I had felt so many years before returned and I was beyond thrilled to be invited back again this summer for the second year. I’ve never forgotten how special Reach Camp is and such a magical experience is difficult to describe if you’ve not lived it, but I’m going to try…

When I was 10 years old a girl in my class at school called me a “one armed freak”. She would often taunt me with this phrase, saying it with such venom that I was confused about why she was angry with me. Her bullying really upset me and despite being involved in Reach and knowing other kids who looked like me, I felt alienated. When my difference was pointed out in such a negative light, I felt like I was the only one-handed person in the world. My Mum complained to the school, I was moved into a new class and the bullying stopped but I still felt unsettled surrounded by so many people that didn’t look like me.

At Reach Camp, that changed. I had never felt a sense of community so strong. I was validated and affirmed without anyone even having to say anything. I could just look at the other kids all with our different arms and know that in amongst these friends was a place I truly belonged. At Reach Camp I didn’t worry about hiding my arm up my sleeve, a nervous habit I started after being bullied, and I didn’t care if I looked as though I couldn’t do something because I knew that I could; I was doing it in my own way and I knew that everyone around me had their own ways of doing things too.

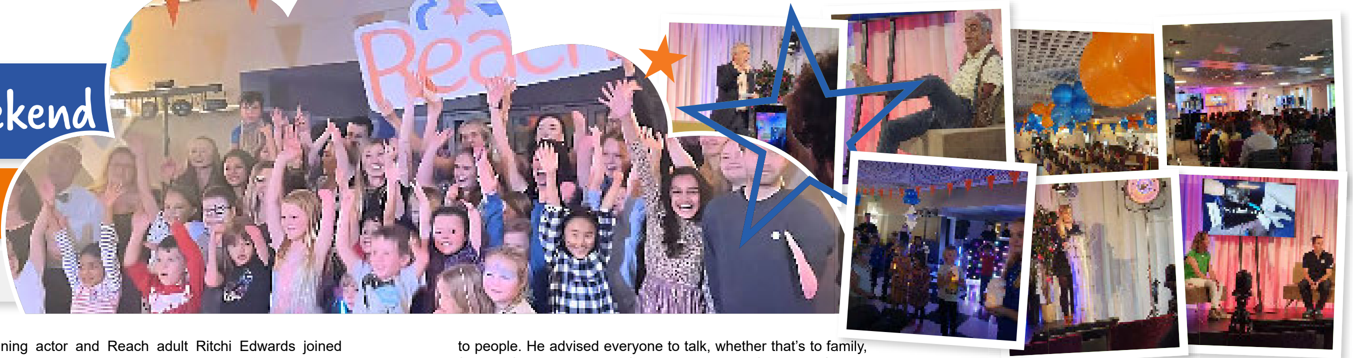
I learnt things at Reach Camp that I struggled to do before; everyday ‘normal’ things like how to tie my hair up and different ways to do up laces. I was also able to do rock climbing, abseiling, caving, archery and kayaking - extreme sports that would make anyone think twice before saying “one armed freak”. I felt privileged to have had the chance of experiencing these activity weeks; they gave me confidence and a strength I wasn’t aware I had, but it is even more rewarding returning as an adult and being able to watch kids discover their abilities, make lifelong friends and just exist in their freedom without any worries.

Next RAW 30th July – 6th August 2023

Reach Annual Family Weekend

#ReachFW22

" Difference is what makes us stronger! "



The Annual Family Weekend 2022 was destined to be something special. Taking place at Woodland Grange in Leamington Spa, members from all over the UK came together for the fantastic mix of workshops, speakers, disco dancing and importantly, reconnection, at the first in-person conference since 2019 - a wonderful hybrid of real-life and online gathering only made possible by James Jones and his team conducting the show. And it wouldn't have been the same without long-time supporter and friend of Reach, presenter Alistair Greener.

Saturday was the official kick-off, with exhibitors like Koalaa, LimbPower and BOLDkids chatting to parents about upcoming projects and how they might be of help, the creche 'Nipperbout' received our smallest guests and the workshops invited members aged 6 years and over to dive in and 'Make Music with OHMI', push their limits in the Triathlon Challenge with British Triathlon; get creative with 'Arts & Crafts with Claire Hermon' and join in Team Games with Over the Wall – many opportunities for Reach children to bond and play.

Whilst the young ones thrived in the workshops, adult members and parents headed for the conference, and those at home settled in, to listen to the wonderful guest speakers…

First to the stage was long-standing Trustee of Reach and retired Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Ruth Lester, Reach mum and Paediatric Nurse, Emma Gilpin, and Psychosocial Nurse Practitioner, Orla Duncan, who joined via live stream.

Ruth spoke of the legacy left by Sue Stokes, who worked for 20 years to set Reach on the path it's still on today to spread awareness and continually grow the charity. This led Ruth onto the Early Parental Experience Study which earlier this year revealed that '75% of parents felt unsupported following the news of their child's limb difference.'

Emma talked about her positive experience which only highlighted the importance of "support in the early stages so parents are as prepared as they can be." Orla followed by touching on the psychosocial side of processing such news as an expectant or new parent, reinforcing the significance of social support for parents and children as an effective barrier against negative attitudes, reiterating that parents' worries are valid, that they're not alone in having them and agreeing with the guidance given to Emma that "not all children are bullyable."The resounding message from all, "we must improve the early experience!"

Award-winning actor and Reach adult Ritchi Edwards joined Alistair on stage, speaking about entering the "tough" acting industry as an actor with a limb difference and his personal aversion to the term 'disabled,' preferring "differently abled." Ritchi's ultimate ambition is to be "a vessel of hope for children today" so they know they can do anything they dream and he advises anyone set on acting to "seek out local amateur dramatics clubs, email casting directors, get headshots and make yourself known." Watch Ritchi in Homeless Ashes on Prime Video, and in the upcoming film, Witch, set to be released later this year.

Former Reach Trustee and Reach Ambassador Frank Letch then took to the stage telling us about his new autobiography, but largely, in his humorous and delightfully 'frank' way, to remind us what Reach children are capable of. He talked prosthetics, explaining how they just got in the way for him and how he learned to feed himself using a fork and an elastic band and to go to the toilet independently using a coat-hanger-wire.

For Reach children and adults Frank passionately declared: "Be yourself, accept you, never be embarrassed. Be proud of being different!" He also told Reach parents,

> " your kids are tougher than you! Let them climb Everest. Let them aim high. Let them have wide horizons. There are exciting things out there. You need to be emotionally capable and physically capable, because your kids are! "

The finale to the morning conference was a superb pre-recorded performance from the National Open Youth Orchestra starring Reach musicians, Sam Carter, and Jake Carswell.

After a lovely lunch break Reach Ambassador Ella Dickinson joined Alistair to co-host, but not before chatting about the importance of representation for Reach young people and the significance of communication and conversations when it comes to managing the positive and negative effects of social media.

Alistair and Ella then welcomed Trombonist and Reach member, Steven Haynes, to the stage to talk all things life, music, and mental health. Starting with the recorder at age 8, he attended music college and then went on to become one of the West End's most sought-after trombonists. Steven spoke about Reach being a great support network for him and his parents, but shared too the struggles he's had with depression and anxiety over the years but that he discovered how fitness helped his mental health, as did talking to people. He advised everyone to talk, whether that's to family, friends, fellow members of Reach or to a professional. Steven also spoke about how his upper limb difference has given him creativity, empathy, and the ability to read people, which he's used in his work outside of the music industry to help people, from the Samaritans to doctors, and now at the Royal College of Nursing.

> " My difference makes me more creative. There's no box…I just figure out how to get around things I can't do. "

Next up, Alisdair Donaldson, Paralympic Pathway Manager for British Triathlon was joined by Reach mum, Hannah Palin, to discuss the issues, challenges and rewards of cycling and cycling prosthetics. Alisdair talked about learning to ride being a case of "trial and error in the beginning" and showed us some of the prosthetics being used by Paralympians today.

Hannah, having been told that her Reach child, Fred, wouldn't ride a bike, shared how she'd duly ignored this, and how she learned a lot about bikes as Fred progressed, from stabilisers, to a 'back-braking' bike and then onto a series of second-hand bikes when he joined a junior triathlon club. With the help of the bike specialists to adjust his bike, Fred is now heavily involved in the design of his prosthetics understanding what works best for him. Hannah's advice to any parent is to go speak to a bike shop about bikes, gears, and brakes, and if triathlon is the goal, go try a junior event first.

To close the wonderful day, we were privileged to welcome award-winning actor and Reach Ambassador, Melissa Johns, to the stage. Melissa's sincere delivery and poignant storytelling captured the audience as she spoke openly and honestly about some of her life experiences, sharing how despite having "a wonderful childhood" and feeling like she was the same as everyone else, she struggled with negativity at school which led to her feeling isolated and shy. This shyness would continue into her late twenties, but acting was the thing she had always wanted to do, so despite rejection and prejudice along the way, she began to carve her own path, and this year, once but a dream, Melissa toured the UK with her very own one woman show 'Snatched' which is now being developed into a TV show, so watch this space!

Melissa's closing message, "difference is what makes us stronger!"

Annual General Meeting

Long-standing Trustee and joint Chair with Ruth, Julie Detheridge, started AGM proceedings by reading through former Chair Clare Salters' report which highlighted the significance of online events during the pandemic and paid tribute to the "army of volunteers whose generosity of time and energy makes it possible for Reach to operate."

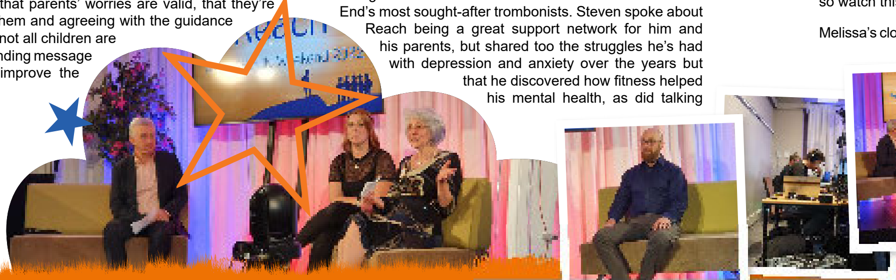
Clare's report also said a fond farewell to the Trustees standing down in 2022; Flavia, Lorraine, Nathan, and Sam, who all "made a massive contribution to the charity during their time" and then advised the board of her own departure as Chair.

Julie thanked interim Head Office team, Andrea and Lisa, for their contribution over the past several months and welcomed interim Administrator, Ashley Blackburn, to the team.

Interim National Coordinator Andrea's last duty was to talk through a summary of the accounts (March 2021 to March 2022), highlighting key wins and updates; from the year's 17 wonderful post-Covid meet-ups and Reach Activity Week to the award-winning Reach ORchestRa and the £8,247 worth of successful bursaries being given to Reach children.

Julie then welcomed the newly appointed Trustees for 2022: Returning Trustees, Chris Creamer and Gary Phillips, and new Trustees, Lee Harvey, Jo Neal, Esther Pounder, Emily Tisshaw and Amber Thacker.

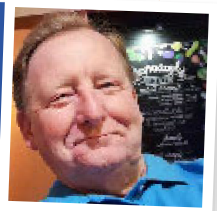
Ruth closed the AGM with a few words about the recent "changes in personnel," reminding all that "every single person who has worked for Reach, either as a volunteer, a Trustee or as a paid employee have done their absolute best to support this organisation" and that Reach is moving on; our family of families will continue as the positive, supportive, and inspiring community it's always been."



Meet Reach's NEW Trustees

Reach members voted and here they are, the new Reach Trustees who have joined Ruth and Julie on the board to help advance the purposes of Reach and to continue building and supporting the charity – the family - that is treasured by so many.

Chris Creamer



When our son Colm was born with a limb difference in 1991, my wife Rita searched for a support group. We found a very small group interested in Reach and we became instrumental in starting Reach Ireland. As a member, Branch Co-ordinator, Trustee for 18 years and Chairman for 3 years, we worked to see Reach grow and develop to become the influential organisation that it is now. We enjoyed the successes of Reach AGMs/Family Weekends, including hosting two in Ireland. We participated in Reach Quiz Nights when the late Jeremy Beadle was our Patron. We assisted Frank Letch with the introduction of the highly successful Reach Activity Week (RAW) from Millennium Year (2000) to now, thereby bringing relevance to Reach in the lives of our teenagers and young adults. Many of those have returned to Reach and are exemplary participants in the activities of Reach.

So, my interest in once more becoming a Trustee, stems from bringing my skills, experience, and knowledge to assist with the furtherance of our Reach Objectives, as a former Primary School Teacher, Marketing Manager in the largest learning disability organisation in Ireland and later as a Lecturer in Third Level Education, I believe I have something to offer.

Emily Tisshaw

I have been an active member of Reach since the early years of life; my parents joined the charity after I was born with a shorter left arm, attending AGM's, Reach Activity Weeks, and the camping weekends in Wales for over 15 years. I'm now a mentor on the Reach Activity Week and a regular contributor to the Reach's WithinReach magazine.

My job roles have consisted of admin, retail management, writing and online content creating. I am currently working as a freelance writer and content creator as well as studying a course in counselling. My skills include leadership, accounting, excellent written and verbal communication, creativity, organisation, and counselling/mentoring.

Reach inspires so many and breeds confident young children and adults and a family-like environment which makes people feel comfortable and safe, and I want to continue to inspire people and help them flourish.

My involvement with Reach continues to evolve in alignment with my desire to give back to a charity that helped me so much during my younger years and I would like it to continue to evolve by being a member of the trustee board.

Gary Phillips

I am a Reach parent who's Reach child is now 21 years old. We have been members since he was born and I have been a trustee previously for 18 years including several periods as Chairman and Vice-Chairman. I live in Surrey and work in Public Sector IT.

I have a wide range of IT and project management skills and extensive experience in charity governance, gained over 25 years in roles including School Governor, Reach and other non-profit organisations.

As a trustee I will work to rebuild the family feel of Reach and recruit new head office staff who can empathise and support our members as the previous staff did. I will ensure that the staff are valued and enabled to run the charity on a day-to-day basis without interference but supported by the trustees.

I would also like to see the Branch Coordinators and branches strengthened and look to continue to expand opportunities for members to meet. I would like to see increased opportunities for the older Reach children (14-18) who are the charities future, and the 18–25-year-old Reach children who have a lot to offer the charity, whether it is as a mentor for RAW, helping with workshops at the Family Weekend or simply as a role model, but they also deserve to be supported with activities to help them grow and enhance their experiences.

Amber Thacker

Reach supported me and my parents and I would love to have the opportunity to give back.

I was born with three digits missing on my right hand (symbrachydactyly). My parents were quickly introduced to Reach, where they received support and advice. We made lifelong friends at the annual family weekend and I loved attending the Reach activity week!

I currently work as the Philanthropy & Individual Giving Lead for a wildlife conservation charity. In my current role, I lead the development and delivery of our individual giving programmes, raising unrestricted income from a variety of channels including appeals, monthly giving, events, adoptions, and major gifts. However, I will be transitioning back to a previous employer in the private sector at the end of September. Nevertheless, I believe my experience in the charity sector will support me as a trustee of Reach. I ran the London Marathon for Reach in 2015 (raising c. £2,000) and I often engage with Reach members on our Facebook page, answering questions and sharing my experiences.

My 'little hand' as I call it, has driven me to achieve more and I would not change it. Reach helped me and my family tremendously and, as a trustee, I would be dedicated to the cause and ensuring that support remains available for the next generation.

Jo Neal

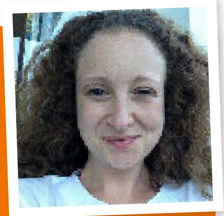
I have excellent knowledge of many aspects of Reach and many skills and ideas that I feel would be of benefit.

Lee Harvey

Dad to a Reach member Rue, I have been a jBranch Coordinator for 6 years, arranging events and meeting with other members regularly. I have also regularly attended the Annual Family Weekend and AGMs and self-funded a trek to Everest Basecamp in Nepal, raising over £2000 for Reach.

I am interested in following up any para sporting opportunities available to Reach members and have established good contact with several of the Paralympic Team; I am committed to upholding Reach's reputation as a supportive and family friendly, membership-based charity, very keen to keep and preserve the family feel of Reach – it's hugely important to me that it is not lost by the business aspect of the charity.

Esther Pounder



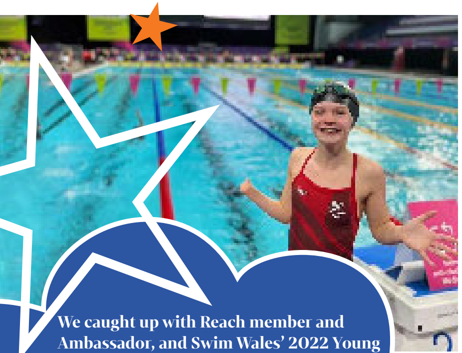
I became aware of Reach when our second child William was unexpectedly born with ulnar dysplasia in 2019. The help and support that we received from the charity in those early days was incredible. We spoke to someone from Reach when William was just a few days old, a conversation that will always stick with me as they provided us with the guidance and reassurance that we so desperately needed at that time.

We then went along to the Annual Family Weekend when William was a few months old and realised that we are part of a family. Meeting other parents and seeing the incredible things that Reach children can achieve was brilliant. Now William is a confident, happy child who gets on with life in his own inimitable style and the worries of those early days feel very far away.

We will never be able to repay the debt that we owe to Reach for their support in those early months but I hope that by becoming a Trustee I can be of some help to this great charity.

My day job is as a barrister specialising in personal injury and clinical negligence work. I act mainly for Claimants who have suffered serious, often life changing, injuries; advising and representing them in Court. I live in Leicestershire and am mum to William and his big sister Eliana. If I get any time to myself, I enjoy spending it printmaking- mainly linocut and collagraphy.

Meghan Willis on swimming, Reach & her Paralympic aspirations!



We caught up with Reach member and Ambassador, and Swim Wales' 2022 Young Performance Athlete of the Year, Meghan Willis, who told us about her journey into competitive swimming; what it was like to be the youngest to represent Wales at the Commonwealth Games, how her sport has helped build her confidence, and she even revealed some exciting swimming news!

So, Meghan, how did your swimming journey begin and when?

"I first started in the water as a baby – my mum used to take me to weekly sessions called bubble tots. I then started swimming on my own in lessons at the age of 3 when I was able to join swimming lessons with other children on my own. My mum and dad wanted me to learn to swim as early as I could as it's a key life skill and they wanted me to feel safe around the water, especially when we went on holidays."

You're only 14 years old, it must be hard juggling life, school, friends, and swimming training at times?

"It is tough to juggle everything, especially with my GCSEs coming over the next 18 months, but I think that the great friends and coaches I have at my club, Torfaen Dolphins, keep me getting in the pool. I have high aspirations of going to the Paralympics and winning a medal, so I feel the more opportunities I get the closer I get to my goal."

You are one driven young lady! So, what is it about swimming that you enjoy most?

"When I'm in the water, it gives me time to think and relax."

You went to the Commonwealth Games in July, that must have been amazing! Were you nervous? Or as you progress in the sport, do the bigger events just feel like natural progression?

"I was so chuffed to qualify, and really excited to be going and representing Wales at the Commonwealth Games in my favourite event. I think when I got there the adrenaline kicked in and I was more excited than nervous to be honest. I have been competing in national and international events now for 5 years, so yes, they do feel like a natural progression."

Wow good for you! How did it feel to be the youngest member of Team Wales?

"It was a real privilege to not only be part of Team Wales but to be the youngest member of the team was amazing - everyone was really lovely and looked after me."

Has swimming changed or impacted your mindset regarding your upper limb difference?

"Yes, I think swimming has helped me overcome my fear of having my limb difference on show, obviously being in a swimming costume so much of the time, it has given me the confidence to not be afraid to show my arm and to be proud of who I am."

And with that in mind, and as a member of Reach, does your swimming empower you and give you confidence?

"Absolutely! It has made me so much more confident. I have been so lucky to have also had so many great role models that I have had the pleasure to meet and compete against, like Paralympians Claire Cashmore, Amy Marren, Lauren Steadman, and to compete next to Toni Shaw in my first Commonwealth Games was just amazing!"

Do you mind people asking you about your difference? I know for me it depends on if I'm having a good or bad confidence day.

"No, I don't mind. Often it will be from younger children who are just curious as to what has happened to my hand."

What advice would you give to other Reach members to get through days when they might be feeling less confident or shy?

"I think just to remember that it's ability not disability that matters and to get out there and try new things. Don't be afraid to give things a go. Sometimes just chatting to a friend or someone in your family can help – or a Reach Buddy if you have one."

> "Remember it's ability not disability that matters"

In terms of sharing your sport and life on social media, do you find it to be a positive thing for you? How do you manage it?

"I find it a positive thing. It enables people to learn more about para sport and the opportunities that are out there for people with a limb difference. Up until more recently my mum used to share things for me, but I now have Instagram and will be starting a twitter account soon. I have just been selected for the World Class Podium Potential programme with British Swimming so hopefully I will be able to share any exciting opportunities that come my way."

The 25th Reach Tyncae Camping Weekend

The last camp (2nd - 5th June 2022)

By Cheryl Catesby-Potts

We as a family have been attending Camp Tyncae for the last 12 years. The Davies family welcomed us right from the start and this year was no exception.

We arrived a day earlier to help out and as always, Thursday started off quiet but gradually got busier as Reach families arrived; friends seeing friends for the first time in a few years; new friendships being formed as the children ran around playing in their safe space.

Friday arrived in true Tyncae fashion with the sun shining, everyone helping each other, talking and laughing, full of excitement for the day ahead. After breakfast everyone headed to the marquee for workshops - there was mosaic making, milk carton bird feeders, art and crafts, African drumming, stone painting and seed planting. We also had Kate and Debs from Head Office helping out (it was great to put faces to names). That afternoon we headed to Tregaron Bowls Club for lunch before splitting into two groups - whilst one group learnt the new skill of Crown Green bowls (full of competitive spirit), the other half went to the Leisure Centre for fun and frolics including a bouncy castle and several ball games.

> "This was a time of friendships being renewed and new ones being forged."

That evening it was back to the marquee for a BBQ and raffle, where of course a wonderful 'Reach Tyncae' 25th anniversary cake was also presented. Raffle prizes ranged from a bottle of Taittinger Champagne to toy cars. Everyone made sure that each child went away with a prize - in good old fashioned Tyncae style it was the kids that came first.

On Saturday we headed to King Arthur's Labyrinth, where the main attraction was the underground story telling adventure where we sailed through a magical waterfall but we didn't get wet! We were taken into a mythical world filled with dragons, colossal giants, fierce battles and the legendary King Arthur. Ancient legends unfolded with dramatic scenes, all guided by a hooded Dark Age boatman. After a picnic lunch we headed to the Lost Legends of the Stone Circle story telling maze where we counted dragons and worked out cryptic clues to earn a medal, and yes, they were shown off once back at camp. After jacket potatoes and soup, we had the legendary Tyncae Family Quiz where we had our grey matter stretched, with lots of squeals from those who knew the answers. Again, this was a time of friendships being renewed and new ones being forged for adults and children alike.

On Sunday morning bacon rolls were on the menu but they were met with a glumness, perhaps it was the rain or because it was the last camp that the Davies family would be organising. Wonderfully they have offered Reach the use of their land for free for future camps for anyone wishing to take on the event, and the children were all excited to be awarded their Weekend Survivor Medals. When it was eventually time to say goodbye, everyone said it was like leaving family that we might not see again - I'm sure there were a few tears shed as families wound their way down the road homeward.

Everyone who attended would like to thank the Davies's and crew for their continual hard work and dedication for the children of Reach and their families by not just welcoming everyone to their home but also into their hearts.

We would like to thank the following for their help and kind donations towards the 25th and final Reach Tyncae Camping Weekend event without whose help this event would not be able to take place:

Mr & Mrs C & M Rose for their generous donation, Miss E Morgan, Mrs A Lloyd, and Mr & Mrs K & J Havercroft for their kind donations. Spar, Tregaron for supplying rolls and baps for the BBQ. Co-op, Lampeter for supplying water and juices for the picnic lunch. Iceland, Aberystwyth for flavoured water. Morrisons, Aberystwyth for 10% discount and £25 voucher towards the BBQ. Tesco, Aberystwyth for £20 voucher for fruit for the picnic lunch. Chris Cawthorn of Colchester Trophies for donating all the medals and quiz trophy. Lloyd Brothers, Tregaron for sponsoring the Spartacus sandwiches. Mike & Jo Davies for sponsoring the 25th Reach Anniversary cake. Dai Davies, Butcher, Tregaron for donating the sausages for the BBQ and Tregaron Bowls Club for providing the venue, bowls coaching and trophies.

Love Reach meet ups? Got event ideas?

Enjoy meeting new Reach families & spreading awareness about the charity?

You'd be a great Branch Coordinator!

The Branch Coordinator Role
The Branch Coordinator can be the first point of contact with new and existing members, and your ability to interact and communicate with your local members has a massive bearing on the way Reach is perceived and is so helpful for families going through the same journey that you did.

The expectation is that you can do the following with support from Head Office:

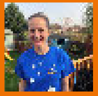
- Welcome new members to your area
- Arrange 2 or 3 family get togethers each year, one of which is the Christmas party
- Communicate with your local members via Head Office
- Create your own Branch closed Facebook group
- Share Branch news with us for our quarterly magazine 'WithinReach'
- Encourage members to join the Reach Closed Facebook group and share news
- Join the Branch Coordinators 'WhatsApp' group - you're not alone!
- Think about Fundraising in all your activities to support the running costs of Reach Charity. We will offer help from Head Office for any of your fundraising activities

Thank you & goodbye!

The biggest thank you and farewell to Branch Coordinators Stephanie & Mags from the Scotland branch, Laura from the South West, and Jess from the South London branch who have been the life-blood of this organisation!


Mags Millar


Stephanie Tennant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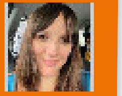
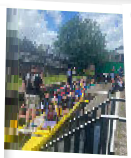

Laura Kayley

We have openings for Branch Coordinators in:

- South London
- Kent
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- South West

To express your interest in becoming a Branch Coordinator for your local area or for more information please get in touch today by emailing Head Office at reach@reach.org.uk.



Fundraising & donations for Reach

Did you know: you dont need to raise hundreds of pounds or run a marathon to fundraise for Reach.

We appreciate all donations and funds raised no matter how big or small. So even if you raise only £10. If every member raised only £10 that would go a very long way towards enabling Reach to continue the work and support it offers its members.

Help support Reach so Reach can support you. Thank You!

Ideas for fundraising

Running Events
Whether you're a first time runner or want to take on a marathon, we've got the challenge for you, join Team Reach!

Virtual Fundraising
If you are looking for ways to raise money online, here are some fun ways to fundraise - from the comfort of home!

Community Fundraising
Ideas of how to fundraise at school, with your clubs and in your work place, every penny counts!

Fundraise for your Birthday
Make your birthday extra special and ask for donations to Reach in lieu of gifts or cards.

Find out more about fundraising here: https://reach.org.uk/fundraising/

How to donate

Leaving a Gift in Your Will
Including a gift of any size in your will is a wonderful way to support Reach. Email reach@reach.org.uk to find out more

Via Paypal
PayPal Giving Fund passes on 100% of donations
https://tinyurl.com/4fbf9bnp

Via Bank Transfer
Name: Reach Charity Ltd
Sort code 40-52-40
Account No. 00028547

Via 'Work For Good'
Flexible fundraising for businesses and charities. Find out more here:
https://tinyurl.com/34hjxmh8

What is Reach?

Positive
Even in the darkest moments, we want Reach to be a ray of hope in our members' lives. We see the potential in all Reach children and celebrate their ability, never focusing on disability.

Supportive
We recognise that different families want different levels of support, and we tailor our approach to suit them. We're here to provide resources, support and practical advice; whatever our families tell us they need.

Inspiring
Our members are amazing and we shout about their achievements whenever we can. We share success stories and hero those 'wow' moments, big and small, to show families just how much our incredible children are capable of.

Community
Connecting families is a vital part of Reach's work and the bonds this creates is priceless. Whether it's at our family weekend, branch meetings or on our Facebook forum, we help members to build relationships that last a lifetime.

Even in the darkest moments, we want Reach to be a ray of hope in our members' lives. We see the potential in all Reach children and celebrate their ability, never focusing on disability.

Parent Corner

‘Life Lessons, Questions & Marathons’

Reach mum, Rosie Higgs, speaks honestly and openly about her journey of becoming the super marathon-running mum of Henry, born with multiple limb differences. 2 and a half years later, she talks about her pregnancy, the agonising waits to find out if her baby was OK, how her perspective of difference has changed since Henry’s birth and why she’s so passionate about raising money for Reach.

Your gorgeous Henry was born with bilateral upper and lower limb differences. When did you first find out about Henry’s limb differences?

“Henry is now 2 and a half years old. I found out about his differences at my 12-week scan but didn’t know the severity or have a diagnosis at that time. I was only told at that point that there was a problem with the growth of his legs and that I had to wait until he grew bigger to find out more as he was still too tiny to know for sure. The waiting was awful and not knowing what was going on with my baby was agonising. I was referred for a 20-week scan at the foetal medicine unit where there was more specialist doctors and equipment.”

Have you ever been given a diagnosis for his differences?

“I was told Henry’s legs hadn’t grown properly and that he was missing most of both legs with only a little femur on both sides; I was in shock and I was hysterical finding out that my poor baby had no legs. The doctor at the time told us it was caused by something called Amniotic Band Syndrome. We were still not aware that Henry was missing his right arm at this point. We came to terms with Henry not having legs and knew he would be different but still never doubted him and knew he would be loved and fine with the support of his family.

I had scans every 4 weeks after that to keep an eye on Henry, and I even had an Amniocentesis to rule out all genetic conditions and syndromes, which all came back clear with no sign of amniotic bands so this diagnosis was ruled out, and still had no answers. It wasn’t until 28 weeks that the doctors noticed Henry was missing his right arm. This was another huge shock, especially after coming to terms with him having no legs; my life was full of anxiety and anger especially during Covid - I didn’t want to leave the house. The doctors had no idea of Henry’s diagnosis and I was told he just didn’t develop properly at the start.”

What was it like for you when you found out? Had you encountered limb differences before having Henry?

“I work in a special needs school so nothing really phases me. I work with children with all different types of disabilities and absolutely love my job, which is very rewarding but I had never actually met anyone with missing limbs.

I only ever saw people on the TV, when watching the Paralympics for example, and had only ever heard of amputees missing one arm or hand, never had I heard of children born with three missing limbs. I managed to find a few amazing families online in similar situations which was so reassuring when I found out about Henry.”

How has your perspective changed from your first weeks with Henry to now?

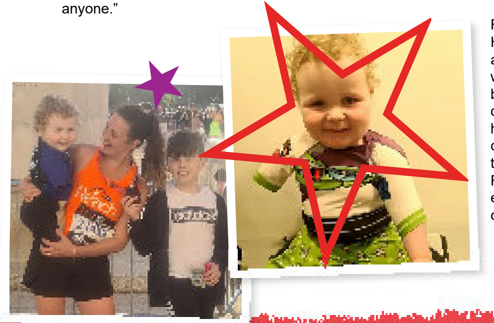
“When I was pregnant with Henry, I remember thinking I would never be able to work again and I would care for him for the rest of his life. I never thought he would be able to sit, shuffle, climb, eat, or do any of the normal things a child would do. Henry is absolutely incredible and has managed to do everything and more. Henry eats independently and moves around absolutely fine; he even climbs stairs regardless of his disability. He doesn’t let anything stop him and finds his own way of doing things. I still have my worries as he gets older, with school and how he will deal with children and adults staring as I have learned to ignore this. I worry about him of course as he is different but he is not less and Henry is growing into a very independent little boy and likes doing things himself so I know Henry will be fine. He has support from everyone around him and he can do anything he wants to, he has amazed all of us doing everything I thought he couldn’t, and much more!”

What is the biggest lesson you’ve learned over the past 2 years?

“Don’t ever underestimate children and adults with disabilities. I am amazed by how far and how much Henry is doing in just 2 Years. He can live a happy and amazing life regardless of what people told me that he would never be able to do. He is smashing life and I will never doubt anything he wants to do because he can do anything.”

What have you discovered about yourself over the last two years?

“Since having Henry I’ve learned that I am very strong and that nothing surprises me anymore. Henry has taught me that nothing is impossible and to always follow your dreams regardless of any disability. You can do anything if you put your mind to it - don’t underestimate anyone.”



How do others perceive Henry’s differences and how do you deal with peoples’ questions?

“So many times, I’ve had people staring and pointing at Henry; funnily enough it’s the adults that surprise me most because children will ask what happened and I will tell them that he was born this way and usually they smile and carry on as normal. I had teenagers laughing at a bus stop on one occasion, and I felt really anxious the first few months after Henry was born and my mental health suffered. I thought everyone was looking at Henry and I felt everyone was blaming me for the way he was so I would come to tears when people asked me as there was no diagnosis and I just didn’t know what to say. I learned that other people’s opinions were irrelevant and I grew stronger with time and I joined baby swimming groups and music groups to help with my confidence. People always ask and always will as Henry is special and I am now confident and happy to tell anyone about him.”

When and how did you find out about Reach?

“After I found out about Henry’s differences, I was on Google literally most of my pregnancy looking for anyone or any support or charity that helps with limb differences. Thankfully Reach was on the top and I contacted them straight away and had such a lovely warm response.

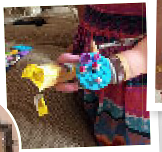
Over the past two years you’ve raised lots of money for Reach through various wonderful events and most recently, running a marathon!”

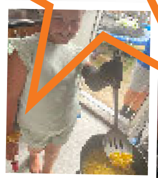
“What drives you to raise money for Reach?

Reach have been fantastic and so supportive with Henry; when I felt alone, they saved me and showed me all the other wonderful families that I am now in contact with. The charity is amazing for not only the parents but, most importantly, the children having other children dealing with the same challenges every day and just having each other to talk to and meet up with. Knowing children who are the same as them is life changing as they know they are not alone. I will always support Reach and the marathon was an incredible experience that I will never forget and the least I can do for all the love the charity has given me.

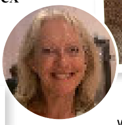
Thinking about prostheses?

Embark on a supportive journey





NELFT (North East London Foundation Trust) Regional Prosthetic Service, based at Mayflower Community Hospital in Billericay, Essex (previously Harold Wood) provides support to children with congenital or acquired upper limb difference.



By Lindsey Barker, (Clinical Specialist Occupational Therapist

Children and their families have access to a multi-disciplinary team including consultant in rehabilitation medicine, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, prosthetist, nurse, psychological therapist and rehabilitation assistant. Children are encouraged to attend regularly for review, whether they are prosthetic limb users or not.

The service offered is lifelong and many of the children continue their journey with us as adults, as their needs and wishes change in relation to both prosthetic use and for advice and support.

Prior to the covid pandemic the team held regular events for its younger service users and their families, as an opportunity for the children to have fun and meet others to share experiences and provide support.

Amber was first seen at our service when she was 2 months old, receiving a cosmetic prosthesis when she was 4 months old, and functional body powered prosthesis when she was 19 months old. She tried a child's split hook, a mechanical hand and ultimately a split hook with play attachment before moving onto a myoelectric prosthesis at the age of 4 ½ years.

Amber's prosthetic provision has been directed by her parents, with the guidance of the prosthetic multi-disciplinary team and Amber herself as she developed and began to express her wishes. She continues to wear a myoelectric prosthesis as she moves into year 6 at primary school but enjoys many activities without using her prosthesis or with a different device to help her. More recently we have made her a cycling device to help her ride her bike and she has been provided with a Koalaa prosthetic with a Janet attachment which she is very excited to use for food preparation and cooking at home.

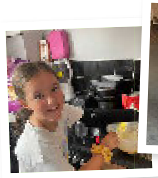
Now, at the age of 10 years, Amber says “I still have my first cosmetic prosthesis which my little sister likes to play with. I remember not being so keen on the split hook as there was a strap which used to dig under my arm but I like my myoelectric prosthesis. I still remember doing the training where I had to move my muscles in my arm to practice how to use it, to squeeze the foam ball or pick up the toy farm animals. It is great as I can choose the colour of the socket and glove, I can pick up things with the hand and hold my fork at mealtimes. It can get a bit hot to wear sometimes and I still need some help with putting it on. I like the Koalaa prosthetic because it is quick and easy to put on and I want to use it to help at mealtimes or to make cakes.”

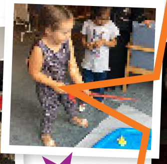
> “Amber's prostheses were initially provided for cosmesis, then helped her with play activities and are now becoming more functional to her.”

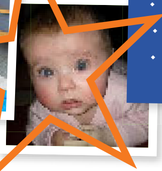
Amber's mum, Natasha, reflects on how Amber's prostheses were initially provided for cosmesis, then helped her with play activities and are now becoming more functional to her.

At NELFT prosthetic service the occupational therapist aims to promote a child's participation and performance in their daily occupations including self-care, school, and play/leisure. This could involve learning to manage tasks with one hand, or with the provision of a prosthesis, device or piece of equipment. Occupational therapy sessions can be provided at the prosthetic centre, home or nursery/school to work with a child on their goals. Support can also be provided in other areas such as with rehousing and benefit applications.

The prosthetist's role is to assess, measure, design and fit the prosthesis with the child. This includes working closely with both prosthetic technicians in designing and building the socket and limb, as well as occupational therapists and the rest of the team in delivery of the device and integrating it into the child's play and daily activities. It is important for the prosthetist to be proactive in the care of children with regular reviews to address growth and development, whilst allowing the child to lead their care to suit their personal needs.







3 steps to begin your journey:

- Contact your GP who can make a referral to your local centre.
- Talk to other parents and children who have used prosthesis
- Write down any questions, worries or expectations to take to your first appointment

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The Social Media Mirror

Inspiration, representation, empowerment… Just a few of the wonderful effects of social media. Harnessed with the right intention, social media can provide a platform for small communities to educate and spread awareness, and it can give a voice to those who have felt unheard. It can also give us a reason to share, it can offer insight into people's lives and it can invite empathy and kindness into the hearts of strangers.

By Max Swinhoe

When it comes difference, to see others wearing theirs with pride can build confidence, encourage us to take a step forward to self-acceptance and help us to feel less alone. Like a mirror, we see ourselves in those who are sharing their lives and feel connected to their journey.

But, me must acknowledge too, that mirrors don't always show us what we want to see or what we're equipped to see. Social media can portray a skewed and unrealistic view of life; it can be a platform for bullying, give opportunity for ignorant strangers and trolls to judge, and most of all, it can encourage unhealthy comparison in all of us.

In one online article by Miami University, they refer to social media as a ‘distorted mirror’ and discuss how ‘the world judges based on appearance.’ Suggesting that we all ‘take selfies because we want to produce an image of ourselves that comes close to how we perceive ourselves and sometimes that image doesn't align with our expectations…’

> **“Let's keep talking, and if social media is making you feel bad, stop scrolling!”**

On a bad day the social media mirror can turn even the most positive of posts into a negative influence that pokes at us like a schoolground bully. And for young people and parents of Reach children, knowing this is important.

Parents, I think it's essential to know that, for your child, social media can be a double-edged sword. And for young people and Reach adults, accepting that there's nothing wrong with feeling confused and wounded by something you've seen, despite its best intentions.

What we think is ‘inspirational’ might be different for our friends, children, or family members. Simply understanding this is a step forward in managing and maintaining good mental health on social media. If we can be aware of the negative effects, we can retain some control when it comes to knowing when we need to take a step back.

I can think of one post that I struggled with; a photo of a young woman on Instagram proudly showing her upper limb difference. Her post shared how happy and free she felt in her body. But, on that day I was feeling insecure and frustrated. When I saw her beautiful post all I saw was her difference, and in seeing hers, I saw mine. I didn't see her happy expression or her glowing confidence, I just saw her arm and felt sad thinking that no matter how confident and capable I am, the first thing people will notice in a photo is my arm - I completely missed the point of her post and it left me feeling empty.

We are all different and have good days and bad days, so on any other given day perhaps that post would have boosted my confidence.

I think it's also important too that when young people are old enough to use social media that friends, parents and family members are sensitive in the way they talk about that person's limb difference, and in how and what they share online.

Moreover, social media is the master of comparison and can skew our view of ‘success.’ This is where representation really matters, but it must be fair and diverse. If we only ever saw photos of Paralympians on a podium then every non-athlete would feel like a failure, assuming that society's measure of success for anyone who is ‘different’ relies solely on achieving medals. Reach Ambassador Ella Dickinson spoke about this at the Annual Family Weekend, talking about needing lots of different role models on social media, representing all lifestyles, jobs and industries so Reach children know the world really is their oyster!

So, let's continue posting, sharing, and feeling inspired but let's also stay social media aware for the good of our mental health, especially for younger people who may find self-management more difficult, and the emotions and feelings social media can conjure, confusing and hard to deal with.

So, as Ella says, let's keep talking, and if social media is making you feel bad, stop scrolling!

My Guide to:
Para Mountain Biking

By Elmarie O'Brien 'Ellie'

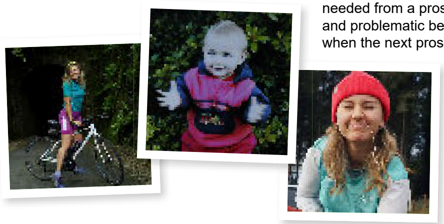
ABOUT ME

I was born able bodied, when I was 2 years old, I lost my arm in a lawnmower accident – more like removed my arm, because if it were simply lost, I'd go find it! As a result of the accident, I was left with an above elbow amputation of my left arm and a missing finger on my right hand. I'm the youngest of 4 siblings; 2 brothers and 1 sister. I can't emphasize enough the value my family had in shaping me to be a very able-bodied amputee and they did this by treating me like normal. As the youngest, naturally I looked up to my siblings and wanted to do what they were doing, especially in the outdoors. I rode bikes, skated, bodyboarded, played camogie and tennis – all without using a prosthetic, not that I even thought about it at the time.

THE DAWN OF THE PROSTHETIC

I owned 2 or 3 prosthetics between the ages of 6-12, but when I say own, I mean I wore each arm to school once a year to play pranks and show off but that was it. We pursued prosthetics when I was young to mitigate postural issues, but honestly, they felt like more of a hindrance than help. Looking back on this now I have no regrets. I think it's an important part of development, to learn how to use the body you live in. There's also a wonderful creativity that flourishes in limb difference and I think the addition of prosthetics in early childhood can disrupt this to some degree. In my memory there was nothing I couldn't do as a kid with one hand.

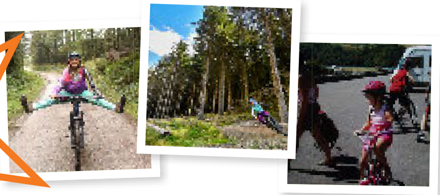
Here's where prosthetics do come into play – mountain biking. Before I delve in, I'd like to say I also know a guy who mountain bikes without a prosthetic too and he's an above the elbow amputee like me. I intentionally share this because I think there is an over reliance on prosthetics to fill the gap and they're not always needed. I want using your own body or assistive technology to be the default and prosthetics to be the next best thing. During my onboarding at a new company, we were introduced to the definition of 'ergonomics': "The art of fitting the work environment to the person rather than the person to the work environment." This is the thought framework I'd like everyone to have towards disability. It feels so much nicer having the environment adapted to suit you rather than having to change your body.



Finally, my MTB prosthetic! When I started mountain biking, I didn't know what I needed from a prosthetic so I got a "standard" biking one which was rigid by design, and problematic because it meant I couldn't compress into the bike properly. Therefore, when the next prosthetic was designed some suspension was a priority. I now use a little 40 Newton pump stay that allows the arm compress. I'm still figuring out different angles of the prosthetic setup, for example the first arm was in a T-rex position where the shoulder, elbow, and wrist were in line with each other, which felt horrible and so unnatural. My arm now is a little better because the wrist and elbow can rotate but it's still not quite right. This is something I'd like to improve for prosthetic version 3.0! It would also be great to have a small lateral range of motion in the wrist to facilitate tight cornering and I would like to replace the pump stay with a shock for greater movement control.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR "PARA" MTB

- Using a full suspension bike will help give you more stability on the trails. I started with a hardtail (no suspension in the rear of the bike) and this led to less control of the back end. Where there is suspension there is forgiveness!
- Use the "Hope" dual lever braking system to control both the back brake and front brake independently. It's an expensive bit of kit, but arguably one of the most important because your brakes are the magical things that will save you from going splat into a tree. I recommend investing!
- Ride a 1 by gear system on your bike, this will eliminate two levers for changing gears (a quick google will explain this very simply). Since all the controls are on one side of my handlebars the cockpit can become pretty chock-a-block, so a 1 by helps free up some space.
- What you need from a prosthetic will be different for everyone because no two limb differences are the same. However, generally for folks with an above elbow difference you'll need to have suspension built into the arm otherwise it will be very uncomfortable and seriously asymmetric.



HOPES AND DREAMS

I'd love sports prosthetics to become more accessible and better fit for purpose. As an adventurous outdoors person, I feel let down by the prosthetics in this field. Not only are the large prosthetic companies restricted in their design by safety regulations, but also getting funding for outdoor prosthetics is very difficult. In my experience I have found the public health system (in Ireland) only supports cosmetic prosthetics and if you mention prosthetics for recreational sport they dismiss it entirely. I honestly find this so shocking and disheartening, as if the joy we get from hobbies is not important and isn't worth the money.

With all the emphasis around diversity and inclusion nowadays, I think access to prosthetics/adaptive equipment is where it begins, because if we can't get this then subsequent involvement can't happen. In the meantime, I'll certainly be pushing on the current boundaries of sports prosthetics and I'll share everything I learn along the way.

PARTING MESSAGES

Disability is lacking the opportunity to try, don't disable yourself by not trying, and don't let others disable you by accepting what they think you can or can't do.

Adults!! Know that you are a mentor and kids of limb difference look up to you. If you even insinuate a child can't do something without giving them the opportunity to try, then you are disabling them. It's very simple - always let the person try and figure it out for themselves, you don't understand our bodies like we do.

I recently had an incident when I was starting my first job after graduating university with a Bioscience degree. I was offered the research assistant position after doing my online interview. In another meeting after this I casually mentioned I had one hand. In response, the lab manager - although a lovely woman, doubted my ability to conduct the physical experiments and it really knocked my confidence. She insisted I could help by doing more online research (red flag: side-lined without the opportunity to try). When I got into the lab I was adamant I would figure out how to manage the experiments, long story short I only needed two minor adjustments. Thankfully my lab colleagues were very encouraging and I found the confidence I needed to persevere through my manager's doubt.

As an adult I was aware that I could take back control but I worry kids get side-lined without realising. It's so damaging because the child will most likely internalise the situation and believe there's something wrong with them because they are not allowed to take part. I love and care for kids of limb difference so much because I was and still am one. I understand the vulnerability, and I know you can shine through it in the right environment. The challenge is in educating those around us to enable an environment for us to flourish.

YOUR FIRST RIDE

- Go to a 'trail centre' where trails are built and maintained by trail builders. Here, trails are usually graded by colour - start on the easiest. If a trail has some intimidating features get off the bike and check them out before riding them or find another trail.
- Mountain biking could be broadly sub-categorised into flowy trails and tech trails. To start off try the flowy trails, they generally feel easier and are more fun to begin with.
- Any person of limb difference will know the public have an abundant curiosity about us wonderful creatures so you can expect at least one person to ask you questions or chat to you about your prosthetic etc…
- You'll also definitely fall, there's no shame in it, in fact, it might even make you look really gnarly (thumbs up).
- It's a good idea to get coaching, although there's a sea of YouTube videos for all tricks and skills, it's also hugely beneficial to have someone watch you and give you feedback on your riding.
- Finally, be patient. Mountain biking is almost as much a mental challenge as it is physical, so learn to love your pace of progression and just ride what you find fun.

FIND OUT MORE

▶ Watch my mountain biking journey here: https://tinyurl.com/49pxzuxn

🔍 Search: 'Elmarie mountain biking'

Instagram: @elmarieeeee

Sofia's new LEGO Friend

Representation in action

Our very own Reach member Sofia took to the sofa on BBC Breakfast in October to help introduce the new LEGO Friends character 'Autumn' who has been created with an upper limb difference. This was in response to many children and parents highlighting a great importance for today's toys to reflect real people and so LEGO jumped at the chance to take that step forward. They gifted an Autumn 'friend' to Sofia and gave her a whole set to take home and build.

Jessica and Sofia:

Sofia wrote to LEGO asking them to create a character with an upper limb difference. In her letter she stated: "I'm a little girl, not a pirate."

Mum says: "Sofia took a little pirate figure with her onto the BBC Breakfast show as that was the only Lego she had with a limb difference, so to have this little girl Autumn, who isn't wearing a prosthetic, and is one of the new Friends characters is just incredible!"

Does it feel special to have a toy with an upper limb difference?

"I think it's a really special thing to have a toy like me just there in a set because the only toys I've ever had that are like me have been adapted or specially made. Now, everyone can see that Autumn can do anything and live an amazing life just like me!"

I was delighted to be in touch with LEGO who were more than willing to share their view on representation and why Autumn came to be…

Why was Autumn made?

All characters in the re-imagined LEGO Friends universe are new – except for Mia, Autumn's mother, who already existed in the LEGO Friends universe. When developing Autumn's character, it was important to bring to life her passions and interests, as well as the environment she would grow up in with Mia as her mother, and naturally show how these have been passed down.

Autumn was born with a limb difference and has been introduced to show this isn't a barrier to what someone can achieve. Her character brings an innate sense of wonder, love of the planet, nature, animals, and her friends, to the universe just like her mum has done for the last 10 years.

Why does the LEGO Group feel representation is important?

We have recently celebrated the 10-year anniversary of LEGO Friends and this milestone marked a moment for us to re-imagine the Friends Universe.

To help us with this, we carried out in depth research with both kids and parents who pointed to the need to modernise our LEGO Friends universe to better reflect what friendships and the world around us looked like today.

Overwhelmingly, we heard that children want the characters they encounter to be more like the diverse personalities they have and meet in real-life encounters. Our research showed a strong desire for more representation in play, with 3 in 4 children feeling there aren't enough toys that represent them, and 8 in 10 expressed a wish to see more toys with characters that look like them. We also saw that parents believe it's important to discuss DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) topics, and that play forms a key role in helping children learn about diversity.

We know how important representation in toys is both to children and parents, and therefore we continue to evolve our products so that they're reflective of society today. For instance, by expanding features, wigs, elements, and facial expressions that support more diverse representation.

We wanted to make sure that when we did re-imagine the LEGO Friends universe, our LEGO Friends fans were ready for this and involved in what needed to be changed.

And very importantly, when will 'Autumn' will be available to purchase?

The new LEGO Friends products will be available from January 1, 2023.

Wildwood Jewellery


Charlie Anderson

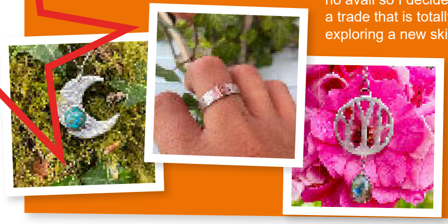
"When I grew up, I don't think I ever saw anyone else with a similar disability to me, certainly not on the tv!

Even with the most amazing parents and family, who did everything in their power to make sure I fitted in and encouraged me to do absolutely anything I wanted, I still felt different, and self-conscious. Especially as a teenager because if I wasn't seeing people with differences, then neither were my friends or my class mates at school.

Representation is so important because seeing people that are similar to you makes you feel like you belong. It can make others more understanding, and can open doors that you may have thought were closed to you. It is also so so important for new parents of children with limb differences to see how much of a normal life their child can have!

Having a limb difference has never stopped me doing anything, I'd give anything a go, I've ridden horses to a decent level most of my life but when I decided I'd like to do a silversmithing course I was still apprehensive and it took a lot of research before I eventually plucked up the courage to book a couple of day courses and soon became obsessed! My tutor was so encouraging and any obstacles were quickly overcome with a bit of out-of-the-box thinking!

I scoured social media for any disabled or limb different jewellers and even contacted Reach in case they knew of anyone but to no avail so I decided to document my journey on Instagram to hopefully show others it's a trade that is totally accessible and hopefully give anyone who is apprehensive about exploring a new skill like metalsmithing the confidence to go for it!



Anything is possible, and representation is the key!"

E Etsy shop: https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/WildwoodJewelleryco

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/wildwood.jewellery1

Instagram: @wildwood.jewellery

LimbPower Event 2023

Year-round 2023

FREE live online fitness classes for amputees and people with limb difference - https://www.limbpower.com/exercise/live-classes

January 2023

Register for the New Year reVAMP 12-week supported and adapted fitness and nutritional programme designed by qualified PT amputees for amputees.

March 2023

Date TBC - Athletics Have a Go Day • Location TBC (all-day event)

11th March - Fundamental Skills Workshop • Redhill/Surrey (all-day). An in-person workshop to provide expert coaching for children who wear a prosthesis in school PE and community activities. 4-18 years old.

31st March – 2nd April - #I Can Family Camp • Longtown Outdoor Activity Centre

Join us for our outdoor family camp, where families spend all weekend doing adventurous outdoor activities and socialising with like-minded children and families.

April 2023

All through April - Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month (online social media campaign)

Join in with LimbPower sharing the love through micrographics and infographics and partake in the online movement with exercise and physical activity.

Date TBC - #I Can Adult Camp • TBA

An outdoor activity camp to introduce people to exercise in a gentle way using outdoor sports that they can find and take part in on their doorstep.

Date TBC - Family Fun Day & Manic MaraFun • Stoke Mandeville Stadium. This a free day event for the whole family to partake in lots of activities and adaptive sports.

May 2023

Date TBC - Fundamental Skills Workshop • Bristol (all day). An in-person workshop to provide expert coaching for children who wear a prosthesis in school PE and community activities. 4-18 years old.

13th May - Family Fun Day & Manic MaraFun • Stoke Mandeville Stadium. This a free day event for the whole family to partake in lots of activities and adaptive sports.

July 2023

8th - 9th July - LimbPower Adult Games • Stoke Mandeville Stadium. An action-packed weekend of adapted sports and physical exercise presented by the National Governing Bodies of Sport.

15th July - LimbPower Junior Games • Stoke Mandeville Stadium. An action-packed weekend of adapted sports and physical exercise presented by the National Governing Bodies of Sport.

For full list of events or more information contact Rebecca at LimbPower at rebecca@limbpower.com

What Reach Does

Find out more by visiting: www.reach.org.uk

RAW (Reach Activity Week)

For Reach Children aged 10 – 17 years, it's all about fun together and plenty of action; from climbing, abseiling, and canoeing to problem solving, archery and coasteering.

'Incredible Delivery' Pack

An extra special care pack for new parents with information about what to expect, the support available to them, and how Reach can help along the way.

Annual Family Weekend

Our annual conference is all about sharing experiences, inspiring stories, invaluable resources, and reconnecting the Reach family.

EVENT

We see the potential in all our children and celebrate their ability, never focusing on disability.

How to Fundraise for Reach...

Run for Reach!

Find a run. Register. Select Reach Charity. Start fundraising!
www.runforcharity.com

Work for Good

Making it quick and easy for small businesses to donate to charity.
www.workforgood.co.uk

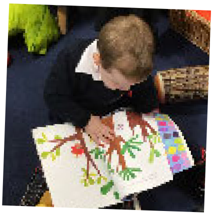
easyfundraising

Fundraise while you shop on the UK's biggest charity shopping site.
www.easyfundraising.org.uk

Birthday Fundraisers

Birthday coming up? Start your fundraiser – 100% goes to Reach.
www.reach.org.uk/celebrate-your-birthday-with-reach-charity/

Reach charity are funded 100% by donations and membership subscription. Help us to continue supporting Reach families with more ideas and how to fundraise for Reach at:
www.reach.org.uk/fundraising/



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Same Amazon, only a percentage goes to charity

1. **Go to smile.amazon.co.uk**
2. **Select Reach**
3. **Shop as normal**

Reach

Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits