Helping people with upper limb differences live life beyond limits

Within Reach Magazine

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Reach

Winter 2025 | Issue 160 | Front cover star : Millie

The official magazine of the association for people with an upper limb difference

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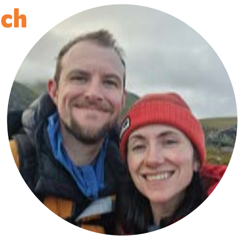
For details contact reach@reach.org.uk or your local branch.

Hello!

From the Editor & Designer of withinReach



Reach's magazine proudly shares the stories and lived experiences of the Reach community and it only grows stronger with every issue because of YOU; your heartfelt contributions, unbelievable fundraising and the dedication of Reach's volunteers. Enjoy this winter issue and if you have suggestions for future articles please get in touch at withinreach@reach.org.uk.

Your Within Reach creators, Max & Tom

Reach Membership

Membership is open to parents of children with upper limb difference, and individuals of 18 years and over. By joining Reach, you gain access to a supportive community, resources that we hope will enrich your life and the opportunity to participate on your terms:

The UK and Ireland subscription is £35 annually, £18 bi-annually, or £9 quarterly and the Full Overseas subscription is £40.

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

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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These branches need your help!

Help organise mini-meets, play-dates or fun weekend events. Big or small, your local branch needs you!

Got ideas? Happy to host? Good at organising trips to the local park or softplay? Reach out today.

Reach@reach.org.uk

Winter 2025

Reach is a wonderfully diverse community brought together by circumstance. Every member committed to sharing knowledge and experience and supporting each other. As Chris says, in 2026 the Annual Family Weekend (AFW) does indeed visit Manchester for the first time, and we are all very excited. This week we held our first 'event committee meeting' and our local Branch Coordinator Lindsay was speaking proudly of the strong sense of community in the North West that we have the opportunity to be part of and celebrate at AFW26 which, we got it right this year, takes place on the 4th weekend in October! As she spoke I thought about the Annual Family Weekend this year, where at 1pm on Friday the 17th of October 2025 every person in that reception area was hanging, fixing, blowing, placing, making everyone who walked through that door feel…WELCOME!

Please may I end with a thank you to everyone who has shared their experience, time and self with and for Reach in 2025 – there are a lot of you; 30 people giving their time to support at a local level, 10 people enabling RAW 25, 8 people mapping a new role for Reach as 18-25 Mentors, everyone who brought AFW25 'home', the Reach team and our wonderful trustees and ambassadors who go above and beyond time after time, after time, and you – thank you for making Reach such a special space.

All the best,

SJ

Sarah-Jane
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Make a meaningful difference

Reach is seeking a volunteer trustee

Reach is looking for someone with governance experience to help guide our strategic direction and strengthen board oversight. This is an opportunity to use your skills to support a meaningful cause and make a lasting impact.

We welcome applicants with experience in charity or organisational governance, risk, compliance, or strategic leadership. Previous trustee experience is helpful but not essential.

If you're interested or would like further details, please contact Sarah-Jane: sarah-janel@reach.org.uk / 07932 747 652

Reach Board of Trustees

Welcome to Within Reach Winter 2025, the content of this edition points to an exciting year in 2026 to be involved in Reach…

It only seems like yesterday, October to be precise, that we were wrapping up the first Reach AFW in South Wales. If you didn't get to attend, I hope you got to follow along online. It was a full and varied AFW with emphasis on the activities and workshops for the children. We also witnessed the greatest number of contributions from our highly visible and intensely active young adults (Briony, Jay, Alex, Glen and Melita, Megan to name a few). Our South Wales Branch achieved another first last year – the first ever Reach on the Beach 2024 which introduced Reach members to surfing. What a list of achievements for the members of the South Wales Branch – Melissa, Sian M, and Sian B. Well done one and all.

We want to say a big "Thank You" to Lee Harvey for all his years of service to Reach, both as a Branch Coordinator and as a Trustee. Lee will still be active in Paralympic Swimming with his high achieving son Rue.

In October 2026, we have another first – an AFW in Manchester. We move the AFW around to give as many members as possible the opportunity to attend. As Manchester is so central, we hope to see more new faces for the first time. The old-timers will be welcome too – they have so much to give.

In November the Trustees met for our Annual Strategy Weekend to plan for the next five years. We are especially focused on the 50th Birthday of Reach in 2028. Wouldn't it be impressive if we had by then a Chair or Vice Chair who grew up as a member of Reach. Thus far for 46 years, the Trustees have predominantly been parents. Slowly but surely, we have become more balanced between parent Trustees and young adult Trustees with an upper limb difference. Imagine how truly representative Reach would be if the next Chair and/or Vice Chair were to be a member with ULD? Can you think of anyone you would like to nominate for the role? If you can suggest a suitable candidate from your experience with Reach, please email Sarah-Jane for the next trustees meeting at the end of January. We would love to achieve that goal by our 50th birthday in 2028.

In December we took part in the Big Give Christmas Appeal. Thanks to Ashley for researching, promoting and delivering the Big Give for Reach, to the Reach Team for driving the campaign to double our money, and behind the scenes, to the young adults who work our social media communications, with such determination and enthusiasm, to make sure that every member knows what our goal is. Thank you especially to all the members who contributed in various ways (Olivia and Erin for making pens to sell in their local community, for Bex who with new found skills in woodcraft has been saving up her car boot and community event earnings to donate to Reach during the Big Give Challenge, Roland Gill Primary School, Genevieve's Carol Concert in Ireland, India's Rave runs – all of these, plus every single person who donated a fiver or more to help us smash it - thank you to them all.) to make this campaign a resounding success. Consequently, in 2026 we will be able (1) to subsidise more participants at the next Reach Activity Week, (2) to assist more branches to host Regional Family Weekends and (3) to contribute to funding our very own Paediatric Liaison Nurse to assist our new members and their babies and, to provide a link to the services that NHS Trusts provide to our members.

We have even more exciting projects in the planning pipeline. Watch this space!!!

Chris

Chris Creamer
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Registered charity in Scotland no.SC049805

A BIG thank you for your support for the BIG Give!!

Christmas Challenge
BigGive

Total raised £23,883.69

The BigGive Christmas campaign is now complete and we're thrilled to have exceeded our target, raising almost £24000, 10% over our goal! From all of us at Reach we want to say the BIGGEST thank you to everyone who contributed to making this campaign successful; if you donated, took part in the auction, guessed the bear's name or simply shared our story to raise awareness as an ambassador or contributor - we thank you all.

Another thank you to our pledgers and our champion funders, The Hospital Saturday Fund, together with their support, we've had our funds matched. The money raised will support events and increase the number of Regional Family Weekends throughout 2026. It'll also go towards our pilot Liaison Nurse Project which aims to increase the number of families finding Reach when their baby is born/diagnosed, with support from a nurse with lived experience. Finally, the extra 10% that we raised will go towards Reach Activity week, enabling more kids to connect and build their self-confidence, giving 5 more young people the chance to attend in 2026.

The campaign was incredible, witnessing our community come together to genuinely support and connect families was something really special. It's a wonderful achievement, and we couldn't have done it without you. **A very BIG THANK YOU to everyone!**

Are you ready to join the Reach Triathlon Challenge?

The first ever Reach Triathlon Challenge in partnership with ATW Events is on 27 & 28 June 2026!

Fun for all the family – whether you're a beginner, a pro, a family, or a young person interested in getting serious about Tri - there is something for everyone at this event! Even the option to camp! Come join Reach ambassadors Alex Brooker, Melissa Johns, Briony Williams, Jay Howard and our figure head and inspiration for our first ever Tri: Para athlete and new mum Claire Cashmore MBE who will be there on the track, awarding medals, and no doubt serving cake at Mallory Park. For the children's races we are proud to have with us the British Triathlon Para Pathway Team and LimbPower to help Reach children participate. There is a Relay Race option at the Tri - a most excellent challenge for Reach adults or a corporate team - might your work put a team up?

All funds raised go toward our 50 Year Celebrations in 2028 + our 18-25 Project.

To book or find out more visit www.reach.org.uk

Introducing the first Podcast created by Reaching OUT

The very first Reach podcast was recorded at the 2025 AFW.

In the first episode, Megan talks to Gemma Adby openly about dating with an upper limb difference. As influencers who both found love in different ways, online and in real life. They share personal experiences and perspectives; discussing whether, how, and when to disclose your ULD before going on a date. It's a fun, honest, and insightful conversation between friends, and they hope it helps others on their own dating journeys. Let them know what topics you'd like to hear next: DM @reachcharityuk or email me at meganbe@reach.org.uk

If you haven't already listened – catch up and follow now!

hand drawn INFOGRAPHICS
tanyahankinson.com

18 - 25s Progress report!

Hello everyone, Jenna here (18–25 Programme Project Coordinator), I wanted to share an update on how the programme is going, as well as details of our next retreat and mentorship programme...

We held our 2025 retreat in September in beautiful South Devon. Eight young adults and five mentors, all with a ULD, joined us for a fantastic weekend of coasteering, wild swimming, and yoga. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and truly heartwarming. For many, the most meaningful part of the retreat was the chance to connect and share experiences with others who genuinely understand.

Our online mentorship programme began in October, with 13 young adults and eight mentors meeting monthly to discuss topics ranging from body image to dating. They are now two sessions in and already cultivating a safe, supportive, and nurturing space.

I'm also excited to announce that we have booked next year's retreat in the beautiful Gloucestershire countryside at Hidcote Manor Farm, running from Friday 26th June to Monday 29th June 2026. The next online mentorship programme will begin in July.

If you are interested in attending, or know a young adult who might be, please get in touch as soon as possible - places are already filling up! For more info email JennaR@reach.org.uk or complete a booking form: https://www.tfaforms.com/5201052

Thank you and goodbye BCs Melissa, Grace & Lee!

Thank you but never goodbye; Reach's wonderful branch coordinators are all volunteers who give up time to arrange meet-ups and playdates for local branches all across the UK and Ireland. So, when a branch coordinator stands down, it's never goodbye, but always a huge thank you for everything they did for Reach and we hope to see them at the next event!

We're currently looking for branch coordinators to take care of our South London and South Wales branches, and we have a number of other branches with solo BCs looking for more help. If you can offer any kind of assistance, please get in touch with your local branch – together Reach is a greater community.

Reach tomorrow and beyond... Write your will for free!

'GOOD NEWS' Reach is delighted to announce that following a positive response to our partnership with will writing experts Farewill this year, we are continuing to team up with them in 2026, so you have limited time to still write your will for free! It's easy, only takes around 30 minutes and you can do it from the comfort of your own home. If you live in Scotland or Northern Ireland or you would rather write your will over the phone, you can book an appointment with a Farewill specialist.

To start writing your will online with Farewill please go to: https://farewill.com/reach-magazine

THANK YOU' to our members and their families who have this year written or updated their will using the free will writing service provided by Farewill in partnership with Reach, and to those that felt able to leave a legacy gift to Reach to support families in years to come, thank you for your generosity.

We would also like to say a big Thank You to those of you who contacted your own solicitor and wrote or updated your will and left a gift to Reach. If you are interested in general information on will writing and leaving a legacy gift you can read more at https://reach.org.uk/support-us//interested-in-leaving-a-gift-in-your-will

Celebrating Your Reach Branches...

A NEW branch and your NEW coordinators!

Meet Emyr & Manuela

We're delighted to introduce Manuela and Emyr, they have two daughters, Elin, 8, and Anni, 6, who is their Reach baby. They live just outside the Ruthin area in North Wales and have been members of Reach since just before Anni was born.

After finding out about their Anni's upper limb difference during Manuela's second scan, the couple took to Google for more information about upper limb difference and that's where they discovered Reach, and I guess as they say, the rest is history...

We know some parents find out about their child's upper limb difference during prenatal scans, that must have been a lot to take in, quite a daunting experience. May I ask you about that second scan and how you felt at the time?

It really was a whirlwind of emotions! The main concern being of course that she was OK and that there were no other complications. Then just silly stuff like, would she be able to tie her laces or get dressed by herself - both of which she can do faster than her older sister!!

How did it feel to learn of Reach's existence during that time?

After our second scan revealed the news, we began researching online, eager to find other families who were navigating a similar experience. The Reach website was one of the first websites we found. It was an instant relief, making us feel significantly less alone. Viewing articles and reading about Reach kids showed us how truly remarkable children with upper limb differences (and adults) are, and the incredible achievements they go on to make.

> "Everything would be alright, and we were welcoming a truly resilient and beautiful child into our lives."

What and how was your first Reach interaction?

I remember calling the Reach office during a work break, shortly after we received the news. The lady I spoke to was really kind and supportive. Her words immediately provided the reassurance we desperately needed, confirming that everything would be alright and that we were welcoming a truly resilient and beautiful child into our lives.

More than 6 years on, has being members of Reach altered your perceptions and settled worries you had 6 years ago?

Absolutely. While our perception has never been a negative one, through meet-ups, general communication, and of course the Within Reach magazine, we see time and time again how truly incredible Reach children are. Having a community where we can share not only our concerns but also our celebrations is truly amazing.

And now you're not only new branch coordinators but now you've helped to set up a whole new branch – why was it important for you to set up the branch in North Wales?

We are so happy to have the opportunity to become coordinators as we are keen to help other families and individuals that have had and are having the same experiences as us. It is a truly rewarding experience to be able to offer back to this community the same support and resources that we were so generously provided with. To be able to offer this to families in the local area really is the icing on the cake!

What do you feel you can bring on a personal level to your branch?

As parents ourselves, we bring an understanding of the journey families are on. We can offer a listening ear and a sense of solidarity to new parents who might be feeling overwhelmed!

Are there any future events currently in the planning and are there any specific activities you've got in mind?

We are hoping to hold our first ever North Wales meeting in early spring! We are currently looking at venues and reaching out to members to get something together!
As for activities we've got a great mix in mind! Alongside classic meet-ups and indoor play dates, we're excited to use the brilliant North Wales scenery for some easy-going group outings. We want to provide a variety of settings so that every family feels comfortable joining in, regardless of their child's age or interests! So, watch this space!

What would you say to any parents or Reach adults thinking about helping their local branch?

I would say go for it! It's a really rewarding way to give back to the Reach community! Beyond the sense of fulfilment you get from helping out, it's also a chance to build lifelong friendships with other families and by sharing your time, you're helping to create an amazing environment where our children can truly thrive.

The end of an era, but not goodbye.

By Melissa Beesley

Being the South Wales Branch Coordinator for Reach has been one of the most meaningful roles of my life. Taking on this role has helped me create a wonderful network, a strong community, and lifelong friendships for my Reach son, Owain, and for our whole family.

My first event as coordinator was a Christmas party in 2012. I couldn't have known then that Christmas parties would become such a constant thread throughout my time in the role, right through to my final event — another Christmas party — in 2025. Over those years, countless families came together to celebrate, laugh, eat far too many mince pies, and watch our children grow, build friendships, and gain confidence from one another. Alongside the Christmas events, I organised summer day trips to farms and other outdoor venues across South Wales. All of these events gave children the freedom to explore, play, and simply be themselves,

while parents had the chance to talk openly with others who truly understood their journey. Those conversations — often over a cuppa while watching the children run around — were just as important as the activities themselves.

When possible, I also ran a few wellbeing events for mums, I've also felt that supporting parents is just as vital as supporting children. Theatre trips were another highlight, particularly trips to see performers such as Cerrie Burnell and Melissa Johns, whose visibility and representation meant so much to Reach families.

During Covid, when in-person events weren't possible, we adapted by hosting online quizzes and virtual get-togethers. Even through screens, that sense of community endured.

Looking back from 2012 to 2025, I'm incredibly proud of what the South Wales Reach community built together — a place of understanding, joy, resilience, and belonging. I'm so grateful to all of the South Wales families who helped me along the way. I'm also thankful to my family for supporting me in every aspect of my Branch Coordinator role; it truly has been a combined effort. From my boys, Owain and Elis, helping with set-up and clear-away, to my husband Jamyn loaning me his school hall and helping greet members, and my mum and dad, Maureen and Geoff, looking after my children while I was busy with events — even helping with North Pole deliveries — I couldn't have done it without them all.

I can't wait for the new Branch Coordinator to lead the South Wales families in a new and exciting direction. They really are the best bunch. While I'm sad to step down, it's simply time for me to support Reach in other ways.

Thinking about becoming a BC?

By Lindsay Wright

Finding your own way That's what it means to be a Reach volunteer.

Over in the North West we run mini meet ups. Our area is quite large, and it is tricky to find a date and location that is good for all our members to reach. Also, life is hectic, families have a lot going on, especially when you have small children. So last year Chris and I decided to go in a different direction. Rather than focusing on numbers, we focused on connection, we wanted an event that felt easy and relaxed for our members to pop by to.

The mini meets are held at a cafe, here we bring table top activities, and have a nice chat over drinks and cake. Each only lasts an hour, however we make sure each cafe is near or within a beautiful outdoor space. This gives our members the chance to continue getting to know each other by exploring the sights after the meet up should they want to. It's a no pressure sort of thing, they can leave after the cafe if they want because that is technically the meet up done, but there is this unofficial option to extend.

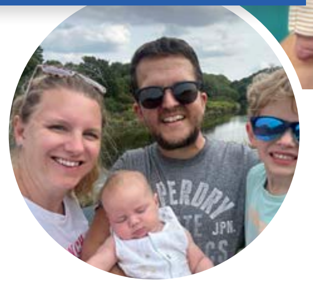
Our members can pick the mini meet closest to them or a date they can make; they don't need to make all three. All of the mini meet ups not only allow for Chris and I to get to know our families better than we would at a big meet up, but they also bring local members together. People often realise how close they are to each other, and arrange meet ups for themselves!

My personal highlight of the mini meet ups was a family who had never been able to attend a meet up before because they were always too far away for them to fit into their weekend. By making the events mini, and targeting individual regions, they could finally make one. Not only that, but it meant it was the first time their Reach child had met other people with an upper limb difference. They have since made it to our larger meet ups!

If you're considering becoming a Branch Coordinator for your region, which I would obviously highly recommend, I want to encourage you to have fun finding ways to meet up that work for you and the members in your region. Our mini meet-ups started by accident as a way to connect when another meet up failed to take off, as Chris and I are constantly confidently winging it in order to find the right ways for our members to connect and feel supported.

Quinn's Reach journey so far...

We're Tom & Kirsten; parents to Arlo (5) and Reach member Quinn (6 months).



We were fortunate to find out about Quinn's limb difference at our 20-week anomaly scan. It was all going fine, until it ended rather abruptly, with the Sonographer telling us he was "unable to get all the pictures he wanted". We were told to take a seat in the Waiting Room while he spoke to a more senior staff member. We quickly found ourselves sat in a side room, waiting for someone to come speak to us. The biggest relief in that moment was that we knew our baby had a heartbeat, and what matters more than that? However, that feeling of "what are we about to be told" was lingering. It was explained to us that they weren't able to fully capture Baby's right hand. The news softened by a "it may be that Baby simply has it's fist clenched", however they wanted to refer us for more detailed scans. Deep down we knew there was something amiss. Unfortunately for us, this was 16:30 on a Friday . . .

After a weekend of 'what-ifs' and 'why's', we were contacted by King's College London (KCL) on Monday, who wanted to see us the following day. The urgency of it, didn't help calm our anxiety. KCL looked after us well, and a detailed anomaly scan confirmed Baby had an incomplete right hand.

> “Don't stress. They will be just fine.”

The staff were compassionate and balanced, explaining next steps clearly whilst we were still taking everything in. They completed a number of scans, and were able to reassure us that there were no other anomalies, and likely to be just 'one of those things.'

With no other concerns we were discharged back to the care of our local hospital for the rest of the pregnancy. (Adding into the mix Low PAPP-A, Gestational Diabetes & concerns about low growth, we probably had in excess of 30 scans, not once finding out the gender!)

In one scan, Baby's hand was in a 'rockstar' pose; with that their middle name was set: Rocco for a boy, Star for a girl.

All these additional scans, gave us time to process and come to terms with it all. Finding out early, (although now speaking to others we realise not everyone is as fortunate) allowed us time to research and discover some amazing charities. One that shone through was Reach. It was reassuring to find others with a shared experience, and knowing that such groups exist - we were not alone.

After a long pregnancy, Quinn made a quick entrance into the world. During his checks, it was also discovered he had webbing and a short index finger on his left hand. To us, he was perfect. His 'paw' - as we had affectionately nick-named it - was as we had imagined, which helped in allowing us to accept the reality.

Fast forward six months, and Quinn is thriving, hitting all his milestones (much earlier than his older brother!), and smiling throughout. Nothing seems to faze him.

Words of advice we've heard often on this journey are along the lines of "he'll adapt", "he won't know any different", "he'll be just fine", and as clichéd as they sound, it is so true. His limb difference does not bother him in the slightest. For anyone finding themselves at the beginning of this journey; the clichés are true. Don't stress. They will be just fine.

We are now navigating the appointments with consultants and plastic surgeons, all of whom have said it's about trying to give Quinn the best possible future - albeit we are confident he will cope just fine with minimal intervention.

Our first consultant appointment, gave us an insight as to what to expect. Our first surgery will be to free Quinn's web, which will be planned for when he's around one year old. Further down the line, there are discussions to be had around toe-to-hand surgery; something for which we have found ourselves reaching out to fellow Reach members (WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages) to sense-check our thoughts, and we've had many valuable responses.

Having these platforms as a resource is invaluable, and a reassuring reminder that we're not alone. We have also recently had the pleasure of attending our local face-to-face meet-up, which is also invaluable in helping us share lived experiences.

It will be so nice to be able to navigate our journey with like-minded people, and those who 'get it'.

Thank you to Reach for allowing us to feel like we are not alone. Quinn's journey is just beginning. Incredible things await!

Welcome to Reach

Alexandru

"Hi all, I'm Alexandru and I'm 4 months old. I am born with a missing left limb. My family love me so much and my sister and my brother make me giggle a lot!"

Raphael Julian

Youngest of 3, he's the cutest little baby boy. Milk and cuddles are his favorite things.

Stanley

Currently 8 months old, he was born with Symbrachydactlyl. He loves shouting and making himself known. He loves stitch and bumping heads. He loves his Weetabix and getting into anything he shouldn't. Loves a bottle of tea too. He is ginger just like his mama and dada but has blue eyes.

Antonia

This is Antonia and she is nearly 15 months old. Born with complex syndactyly she is developing into a confident, strong and amazing little lady!

Dottie

This is our baby girl Dottie, ready to take on the world, go make us proud Dottie!

Koa

"Hi my name is Koa. I am 12 weeks old and I love swimming."

Cai

Cai is a very lively seven year old boy who loves making new friends. He enjoys making people laugh and has lots of hobbies, including building things with Lego, cycling, reading, playing games, swimming and handing out with his cat Jeremy. He is a great baker and artist too!

Billy.

Born 30th Dec 2015! Billy swims, rides a bike, a rockstar on a scooter and an awesome gamer!!! Billy has also completed 3 Hell & Back Junior events in 2025 and looking forward to the same in 2026! Next birthday is the big 10!!

Arabella Jo.

Our daughter was unexpectedly born with an upper limb difference in April. At first it was a real shock to me and my partner Jake but she couldn't make us more proud every day. Her difference makes her who she is and we can't wait to show people what she is capable off!

Hello & welcome to South West BCs Sarah Chaplin & Jenna Roper!

Jenna lives in Devon and is mum and step-mum to 6 children, including her Reach child, Kit, who is 7 years old. Jenna became the South West Branch Coordinator back in 2018 but took a big break whilst work and family life took over. She's now back in the role and excited to plan some wonderful events for Reach families in the South West. She also hopes her skills as a counsellor will help to support local Reach families.

Sarah Chaplin joined Reach back in 2021 as a Reach adult. She lives in Porthleven, Cornwall and is married with four adult children. Sarah is a semi-retired hospital chaplain who loves travel, writing and public speaking. She is delighted to be new joint Branch Coordinator for the South West and looks forward to supporting her local Reach families.

Volunteer with Reach

Got some good ideas for branch meets?

Get in touch with your local branch and get things in the calendar for 2026!

Thank You!

You dont need to raise hundreds of pounds or run a marathon to fundraise for Reach. Every penny goes a very long way towards enabling Reach to continue the essential work and support it offers its members.

Donations

Jessica (Laurel's Daughter)	In memory of the late Mrs Laurel Button	£150
Chesney Collins	In loving memory of his mum Lesley Litliernhurnest	£1300
Sandra	Friend of the West Midlands branch	£270
Helen Ratcliff	"For my lovely great niece Islay and a remarkable young man (James Rudge) who I met at a wedding recently.".	£200
Simon Bohrsmann	"For my grandson Harvey and all his friends in Reach. Have a great family weekend!"	£102
Chris Knox		£82
Emily Coles	From LV Exeter Tuck Shop	£60
Elizabeth Ratcliffe		£20
Becky Pocock		£20
Rebecca Nelson		£20
Jemma Bowers		£50
Ann Byers	Gateshead Freemasons	£250
S Morris	LeRoy Funerals - Frank Letch's 'In loving memory of' collection	£10
C&M Moore	LeRoy Funerals - Frank Letch's 'In loving memory of' collection	£105
Crediton Church Collection	LeRoy Funerals - Frank Letch's 'In loving memory of' collection	£349
Howard Spargo		£50
Andrew Garner	This donation is in lieu of Christmas card giving by the Foursails Partnership and was chosen by our employee Jake Redmond.	£500
Susan Rewaj	Celebrated Ruby Wedding Anniversary, asked for donations to reach in lieu of gifts	£420
Simon Webster	Mother, Pam Webster, passed away at 93 years old. They've asked people to donate to Reach in lieu of flowers. Unknown yet the amount raised. Her grand daughter Anna has been a reach member all her life.	£1309
DDC Fire Sprinkler Design LTD	Andrea Connally's company made the donation asking it to be designated to NI branch	£500

Make it Monthly

Visit Reach.org.uk, click 'Support us', then select 'Make this a monthly donation' and follow PayPal's instructions.

PayPal

Fundraising

£1710 Tracey Smith and the West Midlands branch
They ran 2 raffles to fundraise for the BigGive.

£1430 Tirmohan National School, Ireland
They sang Christmas carols in their local shopping centre for the BigGive.

£1125 Olivia & Erin
They made pens and sold them locally. The BigGive match-funding doubles their funds!

£1015+ Lucie Curtis ran 3 half marathons in 3 months to raise money for her local branch which has been so supportive to her family.

£11,733 Roberston Construction
'When a community comes together, incredible things happen.'
On Friday 5th September 2025, the Robertson Construction team united for the annual Robertson Construction Tayside Golf Day, raising over £23,000 for two charities. A huge thank you to everyone who fundraised and donation to Reach.

£1010 Cameron Aitchison - partner of Reach mum Debbie Mercer
Cameron and his friends did a 'pub crawl'. They simply visited all our local pubs in Levenmouth with their Christmas jumpers on and stood with a charity bucket.
"The locals were extremely generous and we managed to raise a total of £1010.00. This is something they do every year however this is the first year we have been a part of Reach since joining in May after our son Koa was born with an upper limb difference. The group kindly decided Reach was the perfect charity to donate to so we are incredibly grateful!"

Our supporters

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Monthly Donations

Annette Gabbedey Goldsmiths	£5
Heather Nash	£10
Jonathan McGee	£10

The 2025 RAW Report

The 2025 mentors

A mentor's point of view...

Will Bean

"Last summer, after 9 years, I returned to the Reach Activity Week (RAW), but this time as a mentor. We were at Kepplewray in the Lake District - a new location for RAW.

However, there were plenty of familiarities from my last camp from the get-go; figuring out what to pack, the wait for the coach at a motorway services, an excitement and anticipation for what the week would have in store, and then a feeling of being at home amongst the Reach family.

It was just as I fondly remembered it, except with some extra responsibilities, and (hopefully) some extra maturity to deal with them. I have kept up my Reach attendance over the years with AFWs and even going on the inaugural 18-25 retreat, but nothing is quite as immersive and full-on as RAW.

It was a privilege to be a part of the week, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. I have benefited greatly from Reach throughout my life, and it was nice to give back. I just wish it hadn't flown by so quickly.

The best part, of course? The kids themselves. Seeing them help each other out, nail the activities, cheer each other along, have those relatable Reach conversations and build life-long bonds - knowing I still talk to and see some of the friends I made at camp ten years ago cannot be beaten.

Some of the other mentors were my mentors when I was a teenager, and I was still learning from them, albeit different things in a different stage of life. The experience has given me more confidence in one day having my own children and has caused me to reflect positively on my journey and capabilities.

I knew the mentor role would be a welcome push out of my comfort zone but I didn't expect the activities to - turns out, jumping down a waterfall for the first time is scary, no matter how old you are!

It was utterly exhausting and worth every ounce of effort. For any other young adults who are thinking about volunteering, I would 100% recommend it. It is such a unique and invaluable atmosphere for everyone involved, and the benefits cannot be understated. You will not regret it."

> "Watching their confidence build and knowing I played a small part in that made everything worthwhile."

Izi Chappell

"Ever since my first RAW at 12 I have wanted to volunteer one day. Each of my mentors for my own activity weeks inspired me so much and created such a safe space to truly be myself, I wanted the opportunity to give that back to another Reach child.

RAW provides such a safe space to challenge yourself and explore conversations and activities that you may otherwise avoid.

I have found it personally quite challenging growing up with an upper limb difference, self-acceptance is something that I have struggled with throughout my life. This was something I felt taking on a mentor role could help shift, which it did. I felt the week gave me more confidence and acceptance for who I am through seeing how loving so many of the Reach members are towards their own and others' limb differences.

I was quite nervous about the responsibility it takes to be a mentor, but I was so excited to have another opportunity to join in with all the fun activities and be surrounded by people like me. Creating that new relationship with the people who also mentored me growing up, now being a peer was also something that I found very rewarding.

There were so many moments but one conversation I had with one of the younger girls while she was asking for advice during one lunchtime really hit me. It was a rich experience of listening and relating to one another, being able to offer some guidance and relief in knowing that the experience wasn't something isolated, but rather one that so many people have experienced. Witnessing her relief in knowing there was someone she could talk to who had a shared lived experience, reminded me of so many conversations I have had over the years with my reach network. I still value this conversation and shared moment.

Being 19 I had previously attended RAW with some of the people I was now a mentor for; this was a step up for me and also a shift for them. I worked closely with the other mentors, and reminded myself of the role change and responsibility, having open conversations about this shift.

During the week, I also learned that I can be assertive and reached levels of confidence that can sometimes allude me. All teaching me that I can trust myself more.

While sitting in the corridor one morning waiting for the girls to get ready for breakfast, I was plaiting another mentor's hair. Before I knew it, it became a queue of girls most days waiting patiently for their turn. That is RAW, someone will always be willing and happy to do your hair and once that secret is out that's your role for the week.

It may have been tiring, but I wouldn't change that for anything. The experience is something that I will always remember and hold close to my heart.

I recommend others becoming a mentor - it's an experience hard to describe without living it. It's a beautiful way to give back to the charity and also gain valuable life skills. Not many mentoring opportunities require you to be 'on' for 7 days 24/7, but that's why it's so special and helps form lifelong relationships."

Lily Brown

"I attended RAW as a child. It was a huge part of my early life and played a big role in shaping my confidence and sense of belonging. Being around other upper-limb amputees made me feel understood in a way that was hard to find anywhere else.

I chose to volunteer because RAW gave me so much when I was younger. Going back felt like a full-circle moment. I wanted to be that person for the kids that older mentors were for me — someone they could relate to, look up to, and feel comfortable talking to. I also felt ready to give back and support the next generation in the same way I was supported.

> "RAW means belonging, confidence, and possibility."

I was nervous about whether I'd be good enough as a mentor and whether I'd truly make a difference. At the same time, I was incredibly excited to meet the kids and see RAW from a new perspective. I was also excited to challenge myself and step into a role that carried real responsibility.

There were so many moments that in all honesty made me quite emotional. Seeing the growth in the kids over such a short space of time was incredible. Watching their confidence build, seeing them try things they were initially hesitant about, and knowing I played a small part in that made everything worthwhile. Those moments really confirmed that going back was the right decision.

One of the biggest challenges over the week was learning how to support the kids without taking over — letting them figure things out for themselves while still being there when they needed encouragement. I handled this by reminding myself of the importance of independence and self-belief, and leaning on the support of the other mentors and staff when I needed guidance.

I learned just how much RAW still means to me and I saw a massive change in my own outlook. Mentoring reminded me of how far I've come and helped me reconnect with a sense of purpose and confidence. It showed me that I'm capable of more than I sometimes give myself credit for.

RAW means belonging, confidence, and possibility. It's a place where children don't feel different — they feel understood. For many, it's the first time they meet others who look like them and truly get what life is like for them, and that connection is incredibly powerful.

As both a child and now a mentor, I've seen how transformational RAW can be. In just one week, children arrive unsure and leave more confident, more independent, and believing in themselves in ways they didn't before. That change is emotional to witness because it stays with them long after they go home.

I would wholeheartedly encourage parents to let their children attend RAW. It's more than a camp — it's a chance for your child to feel accepted, empowered, and proud of who they are. RAW doesn't just create memories; it helps shape confidence that can last a lifetime."

AFW 2025

Croeso i Abertawe.

Welcome to Swansea!

And what a warm heartfelt Welsh welcome it was. From the Pheonix Choir of Wales and our very own member Sarah Chaplin greeting us at the door with beautiful music on Friday evening.

But that was only the beginning, we had a wonderful array of exhibitors, adrenalin-inducing kids activities, a fund-raising beach run with Claire Cashmore and heartfelt messages and stories of lived experiences from our guest speakers.

Sian, Ashley, the whole Reach team, they truly outdid themselves in the planning for this one!

From the moment people arrived it was clear the family was reunited, friends catching up, kids playing and adults reconnecting. It's an atmosphere that can't be explained but it is always felt with heart and soul…So, without further ado, let's hear about the weekend from some of those who were there, right in the action!

Reach adult & workshop host

Nikki Spalding

In January 2025, I was sat on a cold train back from Scarborough and my imagination wandered. What would happen if the stone gargoyles of York Minster came to life and explored the city?

I began painting scenes of gargoyles enjoying afternoon tea and reading in bookshops. A friend suggested that I should write a children's book about the gargoyles of York…

I knew right away that my gargoyle protagonist would be different, just like me. Quinn, a young gargoyle with a little wing, was carved in my mind. He was quickly followed by Lilly, a girl with a limb difference who sneaks away from her school trip to go on adventures with her new gargoyle friend. Lilly wears a cape to cover her arm and help her feel brave, but through her friendship with Quinn she experiences the joy and freedom that comes with not hiding.

At the age of 41, I hadn't been involved with Reach. News of this wonderful charity clearly did not 'reach' Rotherham in the 1980s! I only discovered its existence in recent years. In a moment of unusual self-assuredness, I emailed the Reach team to say, "Hey, I'm writing a children's book!" I had no expectations. But before I knew it, I'd agreed to run a book workshop at the Reach Annual Family Weekend. Yikes. The door was suddenly open, and it felt like a missing puzzle piece had fallen into place.

Being surrounded by young children and not one of them staring at my arm – what a treat. The only time a child was looking was because, as his mum explained, he was wondering if we were in fact "hand twins". No judgement, no awkwardness – just connection. It was a beautiful moment.

At the gala dinner, I had a realisation that Reach is slowly rewiring my brain. Being in a room where having a limb difference is the norm brought a primal sense of relief to my nervous system – a lightness. When I've tried to explain it to family and friends, I've said that having a limb difference is a specific, nuanced experience that's difficult to put into words, which can make it lonely. I don't think I fully realised how alone I'd been with it until this year. Now, I have a community that already feels like home.

Running my workshop – sharing snippets from my children's story for the very first time with a room of children and their families – was extremely daunting. I was so nervous. Am I partly writing to heal my inner child? Yes. But I'm also writing a story that only I can tell, building a world where Reach children can see themselves fully, with the conflicting and often complex emotions that come with being different.

Creating an imaginary space to express my own childhood memories and feelings led me to Reach, and to a sense of belonging I didn't know I was missing. My life is richer for it, and a little less hidden.

Parent – Clive, Austin's dad

When did you first become a member of Reach?

We joined Reach when Austin was around 1 year old.

What has Reach done for you?

Although we have not interacted with Reach a huge amount, two weekends and one or two local meet-ups, just knowing that the support is there if we need it is massive.

It was your second AFW wasn't it – what were your highlights?

A highlight has to be Austin making friends and dancing with the other children at the Gala Dinner, that was special.

Did any messages from our speakers stand out particularly for you? They were all interesting. Seeing how the children who are now adults are coping and more importantly, thriving, is inspirational.

What were your expectations for the AFW?

[My expectations] were exceeded as the Reach workshops were not something that Austin could enjoy the first time round as he was too young - they were great.

Did Austin enjoy himself?

He liked the food and the book workshops; he and his friend Ander created a new Harry Potter spell called 'Poopify'.

I must ask… What does 'Poopify' do?!

I dread to think to be honest!

Are you and Austin keen to come to future AFWs?

We are definitely planning to come to more.

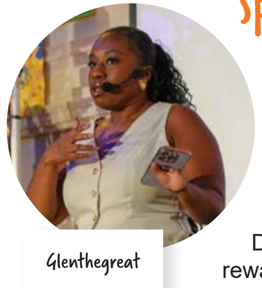
Who would you like to hear/what would you like to hear about during the conference?

In terms of speakers - just more of the same types of journey.

What would you say to parents who aren't sure whether to come to an AFW?

Do it, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Speaker - Glenthegreat



Glenthegreat

When did you first discover Reach?

I first joined Reach in August 2024. Prior to that, I had been following Reach's [social] posts for several months and had been occasionally tagged when they referenced initiatives such as International Women's Day. Joining Reach has been one of the most rewarding decisions I have made to date.

Have you been to the AFW before?

My first experience of the AFW was in October 2025, where I had the honour of being invited as a speaker. I was privileged to share my journey living with a disability and to offer words of insight to the audience. It was the largest audience I have addressed to date, and I would welcome the opportunity to do so again in the future.

What were your expectations and did the reality match them?

To be honest, I was unsure of what to expect. I knew only that I would be attending an event where I would meet others who looked like me and shared similar limb differences. However, no words can fully describe how I felt upon arriving. Seeing both adults and children with upper limb differences like mine, and experiencing that immediate sense of belonging, was incredibly powerful.

Watching the children play freely and confidently moved me deeply. I became emotional knowing they were able to be themselves in ways that were not available to me at their age. While I wish I had known about Reach as a child, I am truly grateful that it exists to support and empower children today.

How was it standing on stage talking to your Reach community?

It is interesting to reflect on how nervous I felt before stepping onto the stage, concerned that I might forget what I wanted to say. However, the moment I began speaking, those nerves disappeared and the words flowed effortlessly. Had there not been a time limit, I could have spoken for the entire day. Knowing that everyone in the audience shared similar experiences and could relate to my story made the experience feel natural and deeply comfortable. I felt completely at ease on stage and did not want the moment to end.

Are you keen to go to another AFW in future?

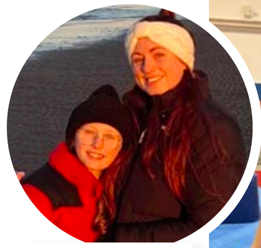
You just try and stop me! I believe I even mentioned in my speech that Reach has me for life. I also met several incredible women whom I now proudly call my "limb difference sisters," and it genuinely feels as though I have known them my entire life. I am already counting down to next October and the opportunity to experience the incredible AFW all over again.

Para-gymnastics needs YOUR help!

Para-gymnastics isn't yet an official Paralympic sport, but there are people fighting to get it there. We spoke to some of those campaigning for para-gymnastics' place at the Paralympics: mums Kathryn and Anne; Iain Sinnott, a para-gymnastics volunteer and grandad to gymnast Millie; and Dr Angela Turner, National Coach for British Gymnastics.

Anne & Monica

Firstly, Kathryn and Anne, when did Millie and Monica's passion for gymnastics begin?



Millie & Kathryn

[Kathryn] Millie started gymnastics when she was around 4 but she started getting really passionate about it a few years later when she was around 6.

[Anne] Monica started gymnastics when she was eight years old. I was looking for some activities for her to take part in and while attending a hospital appointment at WestMARC Glasgow there was a leaflet for the City of Glasgow Gymnastics Club's (COGGC) disability squad. I took her to the class and she loved it - that's how it all began; she's been attending the disability squad since then.

How have the girls responded to being part of the COGGC's para-gymnastics squad?

[Kathryn] Millie has come on massively since being part of the disability squad not just in her gymnastics skills but in her confidence at trying new things, pushing herself out of her comfort zone and her drive to succeed.

[Anne] Para gymnastics has become part of our lives, it really helps Monica's confidence to grow, to be out there with other people with similar disabilities. Monica is a very shy girl, and the team has become like family! The coaches are great with her and everyone is so welcoming.

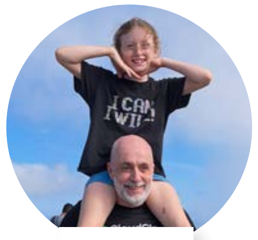
Kathryn, what do you hope Millie takes from this journey?

I hope that Millie keeps her drive to achieve anything she sets her mind to, she has been this way since she was tiny never letting her limb difference hold her back. I hope she will always look back and see that she was part of something huge and takes so much pride from that.

Anne, what would it mean to your family for para-gymnastics to become a Paralympic sport?

It would be absolutely amazing and a dream come true to be able to participate in such a big important event. It would definitely show that all the hard work has paid off to have the sport recognised internationally. It will be a long but worthwhile process.

Iain, you're Millie's grandad and a volunteer director of the COGGC's para-gymnastics squad – tell us about yourself and your connection to para-gymnastics?



Millie & Iain

At age 20 I sold wheelchairs to end users and spent time visiting spinal injury patients at Stanmore and Stoke Mandeville hospital. It was then I developed a love for para-sport. I like to be involved in social payback having benefited as a child from volunteers' efforts in football, scouts etc.

From the day Millie was born I've seen her upper limb difference as more of a paralympic qualification than a disability. I'm a big believer in helping young people find a passion in something and then supporting them achieving their best within whatever area that is.

Are there misconceptions about what these young gymnasts can achieve?

[Iain] I think we all make assumptions about people when we meet them and if they have one arm, can't see very well or rock up in a wheelchair it's easy to rule out gymnastics as a sport for them.

These young athletes not only change perceptions about para-gymnastics but about what people with a difference can and can't do.

Dr Angela Turner, Disability Gymnastics Lead Coach is the driving force behind the campaign...

Angela, how can you encourage more people to try para-gymnastics?

Dr Angela Turner

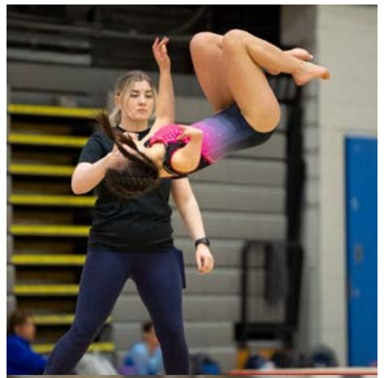
Gymnastics truly can be a sport for everyone and we need to get that message out there to encourage more participation at all levels. The governing bodies (i.e., Scottish and British Gymnastics) have inclusion at the heart of their current strategic frameworks and are working on developing more opportunities for disability gymnastics by developing and building on existing competitive pathways. However, we need more gymnastics clubs to offer both inclusive sessions as well as considering competitive pathways for their potential para gymnasts.

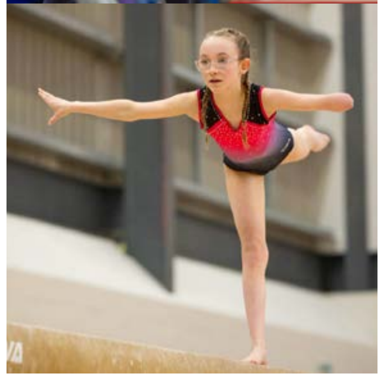
We hope as the visibility of the discipline increases and that more clubs look to offer competitive opportunities for our potential para stars of the future. Often para-gymnasts can work within existing competitive groups and structures with a few adaptations and we are always willing and keen to offer support to coaches, parents and athletes who want to become more involved.

Why do you think disciplines like gymnastics so important for young people?

[Iain] What I like about gymnastics is the core need for athletes to recover quickly from massive lows (landing on the bottom or face) and massive highs (executing a critical move) and returning to a composed state. I see sport and especially gymnastics as both a safe space to share with peers and training to manage the highs and lows.

They need a paralympic pathway because all kids should be able to dream big.





Why hasn't para gymnastics reached the Paralympics yet?

[Angela] Getting any new sport into the Paralympic Games is a huge undertaking - with sound evidence needed to support the developments of classification and sport classes.

Artistic Gymnastics is perhaps a little more challenging when it comes to classification than sports with more limited ranges of movement/apparatus requirements. There is also the challenge of getting enough countries – and continents involved. British Gymnastics has been leading the way for many years and the development of our domestic programme will hopefully serve as a model to other countries to develop their own pathways.

Artistic Gymnastics is one of the most popular summer Olympic sports and its para counterpart would more than likely attract similar attention. There are many talented para-gymnasts throughout the world taking part in competitions and demonstrating high levels of skill but until now the international governing body has not actively brought them together under one competitive umbrella. The FIG (now World Gymnastics) declared Para-Gymnastics (Artistic) a discipline in late 2024. This was a real step and landmark on our journey to see the sport be recognised and the seeds have been planted for more international development and competition.

Now a lot of work has to be done to develop the rules, classification protocols and sport classes so we can be considered a Paralympic Sport by the IPC. Thus far the FIG Working Group have identified Limb Difference and Visual Impairments as two potential Sport Classes for early research and development – meaning there may well be lots of opportunities for members of Reach to get involved with the sport and how it grows over the next few years.

What needs to be achieved for para-gymnastics to reach the Paralympic stage?

[Iain] We need to start creating and mapping the 32 countries who might create a competitive squad for 2032 which is the first opportunity but we have some momentum now so need to capitalise on that and push hard for the next three years (including the LA games). It will take time to get new squads up to a competitive standard so we need to start recruiting clubs, coaches and national bodies as fast as possible.

What about the financial and logistical barriers?

A coach and gym time costs money and once kids like Millie go beyond general participation and need specific skills development it becomes a problem for a small club.

Until a club can create a full cohort, like the COGGC has, the investment of coaching time and gym space is difficult. Local sponsorship for either small group coaching or 1-2-1 coaching would help widen the pool of young people reaching a higher level.

But it is an investment worth taking as each young person who is inspired to reject boundaries other people set and start to push hard to reach their own full potential (in gymnastics or anything) will deliver more to society as a result.

How have you found the campaign so far?

This is a really difficult challenge. Most people I know assumed gymnastics was a paralympic sport, so in reality success in 7 years or even 11 would be remarkable, but then I now know at least 6 young women with limb differences who can compete on vault, bean, floor and bars and don't make many excuses for themselves, so we just need to buckle down and take it on!

How can the wider community, and charities like Reach help?

[Angela] Gymnastics clubs and coaches who want to be involved can get in touch and we can support them! We can also look to help anyone keen to find local clubs and take up the sport. Beyond that help us spread the word – follow out club social media and the media channels for Scottish and British Gymnastics who are leading the way in this work!

[Iain] Visibility and understanding of the mission are key and for the Reach community we have four inspirational pathfinders who can tell the story better than me.

Like most projects, we need to have thousands of people doing a very small amount each. So, if Reach parents, friends and members can help gymnastics clubs understand more about limb difference, support the development of opportunities with patience, and volunteer where their own kids get involved - it all helps. And we need to use social media to the max in celebrating achievements and the breaking down of misconceptions.

A lifetime of getting it wrong? Through the eyes of an OAP...


By Chris Knox

WR was delighted when Reach member and mentor, Chris Knox agreed to share a few stories and wise words from lessons learned over the years. A fell-running, chainsaw-wielding and all round lovely human and huge fan of Reach, Chris, take it away...

Although I've lived most of my life in Cumbria, I'm the youngest of six Geordie boys from North Shields on Tyneside and was born in 1953…and what a journey I've had!

As a child I played in the streets and back lanes and revelled in being chased out of our local park for daring to play on the grass, also a WW2 bomb site, the fish quay and coastal cliffs, that Mum had told me never to do - I bet she'd an idea of where I'd been afterwards!

Infant and junior school days were pretty good; I'm still friends with a girl who made sure she sat next to me in craft lessons so she could finish the work I was always frustrated with. She's still crafting now and recently knitted two 'first coats' for my first grandchild.

The Limb Clinic then was still geared up for WW2 amputees and their objective was to make me look more 'normal', thankfully things have changed for the better. First prosthetics were useless lumps of plastic held on with straps across my back; I enjoyed the process of mornings off school, warm plaster of Paris to create a mould for the socket, and having a new 'thing' of my own.

Wearing it was heavy, sweaty and painful, when that tiny bit of flesh got nipped and bruised on the edges. (I tried to give one away, wrapped in brown paper, at Harvest Festival. The Minister returned it with kind words for me and Mum.)

By senior school I was big enough to have a leather and steel prosthetic, this time with a hook so I could ride bikes better and carry things. It was heavy, but the leather breathed so I didn't get sweaty. I gained my first nickname, 'captain hook', from friends and another from football mates 'one armed bandit' - I could run faster than most and pinch the ball from their feet - both were terms of endearment. I did have one name-calling bully, but that didn't last long.

Alongside academic studies we had woodwork and metalwork, including using a forge; I was allowed to work out the best way to hold and hammer red-hot metal. Both teachers would observe and occasionally help me to speed up a bit - I'm forever grateful.

I left school early, I was too busy helping to run a mobile disco with mates to revise, I was also doing graphic design and making money from both. This carried on into working life; manual driving test passed, I became good at getting rid of money on cars and driving (allegedly) too fast.

A proper job in accounts, lecturer, woodland and garden management, to name a few, had to fit around sports of rally driving, cycling, darts, running, triathlon, adventure racing and fell running. Still not sure what I want to do when I grow up!

I'd known about Reach for over thirty years and always thought I'd join up – 'next year when I'm not so busy'. Then after meeting the wonderful Melissa Johns by chance on the Roman Wall before her one woman show 'Snatched' in Newcastle - it struck something deep inside. Totally humbled by her strength, resilience and humour in presenting a reflection of more than just testing times. That was it… I signed up to train as a mentor for RAW!

It was the first time I'd been in a room where everyone had an upper limb difference. RAW 2023 was WOW! An emotional adventure, including tears of sadness but mostly of joy. Just being there, listening, talking, learning how helpful and accepting everyone was became a revelation, yes I helped and guided, but I learned so much from our youngsters - thank you. I then bought my first guitar at the age of seventy, and my archery has improved. I'm very dependent on my prosthetics, but I'm finding more reasons to leave my arm by the back door. RAW has to be the most important event in everything we do - I have a purpose in life.

My wise words for Reach young people?

Looking back, I've learned most from getting things wrong! However, be yourself at all times. I think life is mentally harder now for younger people; there is so much media pressure and disruptive trolls around that didn't exist decades back. Reach is here for all of us, and if I can make it, everyone can.

- **Dating** - On a school ski trip to Austria at sixteen, and very shy of girls, I was shocked when a girl asked me out, I've never blushed so much in my life, we exchanged letters for some time after - she'd changed my outlook on life and love. I did marry the wrong girl first time, that was expensive, the second one has lasted 39 years, I'm learning still.
- **Work** - Try everything people tell you that you can't do, ask us oldies what they do and how they got there, read the Frank Letch autobiography.
- **Sport** - The pitch, court, pool, target, bike, race track, springboard, trampoline, wall, slope, rock, fell and even dartboard is there. If you fancy it, have a go.
- **Life** - You only get one go, give it your very best shot!

Editor's Column

Yesterday I felt strong.

As editor of Within Reach magazine I'm not the voice of Reach; I understand my lived experience is very different to the next Reach adult' but I do believe it's important to share honest, authentic accounts of my lived experience when I can in the hope that others may connect and relate, and feel less alone in their struggles .


By Max Swinhoe

I also hope that my honestly might help to start conversations; with friends, family members, employers, because the more we talk, the more we can understand each others' journey and break down barriers, change society's standards and challenge what has been called, the 'norm'.

Yesterday I felt strong.

Most days are like this. I don't even notice my arm. In my head, I'm just like everyone else, living my life and adapting as I go; invincible, a queen of the problem-solving, keeping up with all the two-handed things as quickly as anyone else.

But today I felt disabled.

Things just felt, hard.

I noticed my arm in the mirror and just couldn't shake it; this sometimes happens, depending on where I am or what I'm wearing. I catch it in the corner of my eye when I'm typing or sometimes in the changing room of a shop. It'll jump out at me from nowhere; I'm feeling good and then bam! I see it and can't unsee it.

I'm happy to say that I have a disability but I don't see myself as disabled; I don't see myself as looking different or the way I do things but once I notice it something in my head says, 'oh yeh, I am different, and it makes me feel sad'.

Today was one of those days. It lingered in the back of my mind for a few hours. Creeping in at inopportune moments, distracting me every now and then and then eventually it faded away again.

My back and neck also ached, probably from carrying our puppy Mali around, which I've been doing a lot lately and the only way is with my right arm.

Come to think of it, it's not just from carrying Mali; my back aches quite often, from picking up the shopping bags, the laundry, the dog crate, the delivery box, the dishes from the dishwasher, from my work - typing, writing…

I keep fit; I do yoga, I try to stay strong and keep my body strong to tackle the everyday but sometimes my body just hurts and my mind ruminates on negative things - that's just what it is to be human I guess.

Yes, I climb, swim, hike, run and push my body too; I am a mountain leader and full team member of mountain rescue so staying fit and being able to carry a big pack up a mountain is important, but sometimes it's the simple things that take the biggest toll. The two-handed everyday chores or actions many take for granted that use the energy that I had in reserve for the fun stuff.

When my mind and body are tired, over-used and aching in all the ways and I just can't bring myself to go for the run in the end or I leave the dishwasher unemptied it's not always laziness but I think sometimes, just sometimes, it's an overwhelming sense of being 'done'. Done of using my right arm, done having to do the extra trips it takes to and from the dishwasher just to put everything away.

I think this is part of living with a physical disability. You see, I've spent a lifetime training to simply keep up with everyday life.

Battling to get my seatbelt done up quick enough at the petrol station for the waiting car behind, packing my shopping as quickly as possible at the supermarket to avoid keeping people waiting in the queue; learning to type quickly using my little finger on my left arm even though it makes my neck burn, or even moving my yoga blocks on and off my mat as efficiently as possible during yoga in order to retain some sort of Vinyasa flow… It's exhausting and I don't even notice I'm doing it; measuring myself against others, racing according to the two-handed standards that surround me and engulf my consciousness.

This is not a complaint but rather a reminder; of the extra work and effort that constant adapting and problem-solving takes to simply cruise at society's established baseline. And a reminder that despite appearing confident, capable, strong, adaptable… sometimes I'm not.

I believe it's important to share the wins with our ULD community but also the realities of living with a difference. Sure, not everyone will have the same aches and pains as me, or struggle in the same ways but I hope that if you do, or you are facing struggles of your own, that you know you're not alone on your journey.

I hope that you can stop and take a moment to acknowledge the 'extra' you put in. That you feel proud of yourself for tackling this two-handed world as well as you possibly can, and I hope you know that it's OK to not feel OK all of the time.

Trailblazing, problem-solving & finding *my* way into Optometry...

By Lucy Pirie-Guy

My name is Lucy; I am 30 and I live in Devon with my husband James and our doggies Apollo and Nyx. I am an optometrist (you may call me an optician) so I spend my days examining eyes, prescribing glasses and fitting contact lenses. I was also born with right symbrachydactyly which, for me, means I have a wrist joint but no hand or fingers on my right side.

I recently wrote a short article for an optometry blog about my experience of the profession with an upper limb difference. The kind editors of Within Reach have asked me to tell you a little bit more about my life so far and my journey into eye-care.

[Link to blog - https://theeyecareadvocate.co.uk/2025/09/24/finding-a-way-a-personal-reflection-on-disability-in-optometry/]

Would you mind sharing a bit about your early life; what was it like growing up with an upper limb difference for you?

I was born in 1995 to my parents Lynn and Paul. There had been no indication of my limb difference before I was born so it was a surprise for them when I turned up without one hand. Thankfully, they took it in their stride and were happy I was a healthy wriggly baby – my mum was more concerned about getting some tea and toast after giving birth than how many fingers I did or didn't have!

I think that thanks to my parents' positive attitude about my upper limb difference (ULD), I had an incredibly normal early life: I was always keen for school, started ballet and tap and musical theatre, and played the cornet and violin in primary school.

As a teenager, I became much more self-conscious of my difference – though, that said, as a teenage girl I was self-conscious about everything! However, I kept up dancing and was a high academic achiever, so I had plenty of other things to focus on.

What inspired you to pursue optometry specifically?

I never have a great answer to this question I'm afraid! I did my A-Levels in Maths, Biology, Psychology and Law. I knew I wanted to go to university, and I was reasonably certain I wanted to go into healthcare. But I also knew I had no interest in being a doctor and definitely no interest in being a dentist (shudder). I had also at this point in my life been wearing glasses for several years and was therefore pretty familiar with going to the opticians. After a lot of thinking and worrying I managed to arrange a week's work experience in a local practice and, long story short, here I am over 10 years later testing eyes myself!

Did you ever feel discouraged from entering a medical profession due to your limb difference? How did you navigate that?

I can't say I felt discouraged, but I was definitely nervous when applying. The universities were also a little nervous of me: half of the universities I applied to contacted me to ask about my disability and how I would manage. One university even asked me to come up and had me play with the equipment and put a contact lens in a poor unsuspecting staff members' eye.

What was process like for you? Did you have to adapt certain techniques or tools?

At university there was a certain amount of adaption; the university have to, of course, teach the "perfect" techniques and particular ways of doing things. For example, there is one technique where you hold a piece of equipment in one hand and a small lens in the other in front of a patient. There is simply no way to do this technique one handed so I made use of an old adaptive device that was originally designed to hold cutlery – I cannot describe it so I will try to include a picture!

I also had to advocate for myself a certain amount; it is a tradition in optometry that if you are examining the patient's right eye, your hold your equipment in your right hand. On more than one occasion, someone tried to correct me for holding things in the "wrong" hand. By my third year I would simply respond with my best eye roll.

Now that I am ten years into my career, the way I do things doesn't even cross my mind. The only real adaptive device I use is the occasional rubber band to hold a cotton bud.

What aspects of your work do you enjoy the most?

Really for me it is the problem-solving aspect. Problem solving is really the core of optometry; a patient comes in with an issue with their eyes or vision; we do a series of tests and investigations and then come up with an action plan. Being able to improve someone's day to day life by solving a problem is very satisfying.

You wrote a blog for theeyecareadvocate.co.uk and you mentioned patients asking you quite often about your upper limb difference, how do you go about explaining it to them?

I usually just keep it simple with "born this way". I joked in that blog that I was previously temped to get those words tattooed on my arm to save me saying it so often. I find most people are satisfied with that answer, but I do then occasionally get someone follow up asking if I was affected my thalidomide (the anti-sickness drug popular in the 50s and 60s which led to limb differences in some babies) to which I respond "how old do you think I am??". More seriously though, I do find that most people are very respectful. I can't lie, it can get a little tiresome when I'm asked about my hand several times in one day, but I try to keep my answers short and sweet so that I can move on and do what I need to do.

What advice would you give to educators or employers about supporting healthcare professionals with limb differences?

The biggest expert on someone's capabilities is themselves. Offer help genuinely and kindly as you would to anyone else but don't be surprised if help is not needed.

At WR we love to meet people in all sorts of careers so Reach children know the endless possibilities before them. For you, how important is visibility of limb-different professionals in healthcare?

One of the reasons I wrote my original blog post was because I was searching to see if there were any existing accounts from other disabled optometrists (which there weren't).

I think it is very important for young people, especially those who are more self-conscious or struggling with their experience of disability, to see others with similar differences living very normal lives. I know we are all very thankful that there are now influencers and media personalities with ULDs who have had a huge positive impact, but I also know that not everyone wants their ULD to be the main focus of their life.

I would hope that all the great profiles and interviews you have at WR show young people that there are infinite paths in life open to you.

What would you tell a young person with a limb difference considering a career in optometry?

In my experience, living with a physical difference makes you a master problem solver, and as I said earlier, that is really the core of optometry. So, you're already half-way there!

How do you hope your story impacts patients, peers, and future students?

I hope it gives a little insight into a career path that many people don't think of – regardless of ULD or not.

Need careers advice?

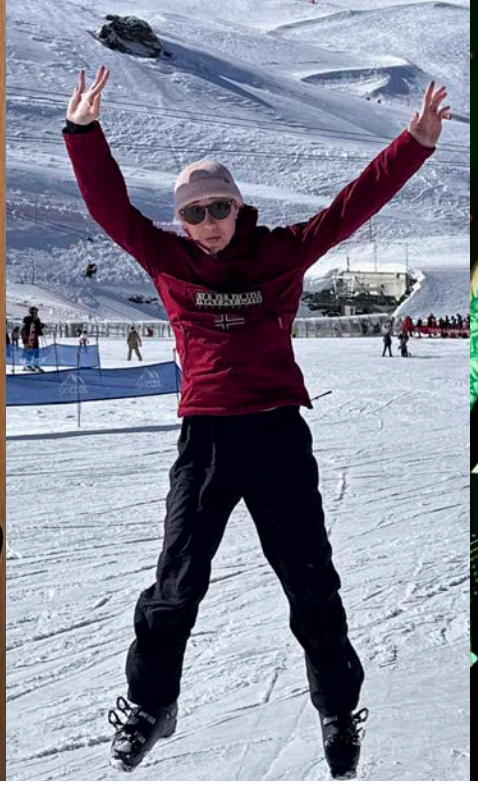
Reach teens, young people, and parents if you have questions about the jobs or careers you see in WR send a message to **withinreach@reach.org.uk** and we'll try to put you in touch with the right people or answer your questions as best we can. You're never alone in your journey. All you have to do is ask!

Did you know there's a Reach Bursary?

Available to members up to the age of 18 years old, it could help cover the cost for specialist equipment, adaptations or additional training? Find out more: https://www.reach.org.uk/resources/apply-for-a-bursary

Resilience, determination & her SUPERPOWER!

Life in the Army with an upper limb difference



At Reach we love hearing about Reach members laying their own paths; following careers they're passionate about and sharing their lived experiences and journeys so others may follow in their footsteps. Some people find their path along the way, whilst others just know what it is that drives them from early on. This was certainly the case for Chelsea Palfrey...

Chelsea, thank you for joining us. What first inspired you to join the Army?

From the age of about seven I knew I wanted to be a soldier. My mum, stepdad and grandparents talk about how I used to run around the house with sticks, shouting "bang bang" while other little girls were playing with Barbies. I just always wanted to do something exciting and adventurous!

Was there a particular moment or person that made you realise?

School was quite tough especially as I wasn't sure if I could join the Army because of my upper limb difference (ULD). But I was determined to make it happen. My mum's cousin is in the military, and both of my great-grandfathers also served, so their stories gave me that extra push to stay focused and work towards my goal.

Did you always want to serve in the Royal Artillery?

Actually, no! My original plan was to go to Sandhurst and become an officer in a bomb disposal role. But life took me in a different direction. I spent some time in Australia and then joined as a soldier in 2014 at the age of 20. That's when I found myself drawn to the Royal Artillery looking at joining an Air Defence Regiment and that has been the job for the last 11 years.

How did your family react?

My family were incredibly proud, especially my grandmother. My late grandfather had written a letter before he passed, saying he was sorry he wouldn't be at my passing-out parade but that he was proud of me and would be there in spirit. My grandmother shared the same pride, though she's no longer with us but I still find myself messaging her phone updating her on promotions and things (a weird coping mechanism I think).

Of course, my family had their worries about deployments and the time I'd spend away, and locations etc., but they've always supported me. I know they still worry sometimes—just as I would if I were in their shoes.

What values have you gained through military life?

Self-discipline, motivation, the drive to achieve the best, not only out of me, but my soldiers; compassion around all sorts of circumstances and if my soldiers are performing at their very best that is to their credit not mine. I adapt to change so much better than I did before I joined.

Teamwork too, which for me is such an important aspect of my job. Focused on the same objectives, using everyone's strengths to the extreme and focussing on work on points for myself and individuals to ensure the task or job is completed to the highest level.

What was your recruitment & training experience like in terms of having a ULD?

Recruitment and training went fairly smoothly which was unexpected. During my first exercises, I had to adapt to the cold, as my hand is very sensitive to low temperatures. I often wear one glove to help with that. For fitness assessments, e.g., carrying jerry cans, I quickly figured out how to manage by using certain fingers on my right hand, as I can't grip fully with all of them.

How did the Army support you during the training process?

My medical assessment during selection took a bit longer than usual. I had to go to the armoury to demonstrate that I could handle a weapon properly and be assessed by an officer to ensure I could salute correctly despite my limb difference. Occasionally, people notice my hand when I salute without parade gloves, but it's never been an issue.

Were there moments early on when you questioned whether it was possible?

I questioned it a few times on my first deployment due to the cold temperatures; I get a lot of cramping and over time my fingers have started to curl more than they did, however that will not stop me, I will continue to adapt.

Can you recall a time when you surprised others—or yourself—with what you could do?

Throughout my career there have been moments when colleagues or bosses only just noticed my hand. They're often surprised by how I just get on with things. Most people find it fascinating, and I like to think of it as my superpower or 'lucky fin'. It's never been a barrier for me.

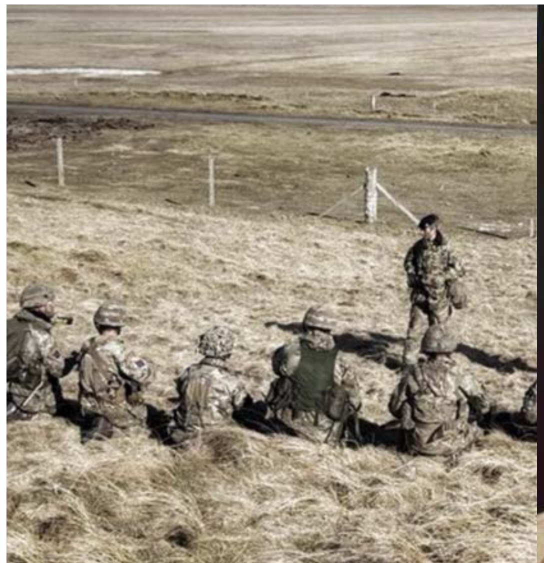
Do you have adaptations or techniques for day-to-day tasks?

During the colder months massaging my hand helps to improve circulation, relax the muscles and alleviate some of the discomfort. Keeping my hand warm, whether by wearing gloves or using a heat pack, makes a big difference in managing the sensitivity and preventing the stiffness from getting worse. It's become an important part of my routine to ensure I can stay as comfortable and functional as possible.

> **"I wasn't sure if my ULD would hold me back, but I was determined to prove that it wouldn't define what I could achieve."**

Has your experience influenced how you lead others?

Absolutely! It's given me a deeper understanding of the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion. I know what it feels like to be seen as "different," and that's shaped my approach to leadership—I make it a priority to ensure everyone feels valued and supported, regardless of their background, abilities, or challenges.



Do you see yourself as a role model for people with disabilities?

I do, and it's a responsibility I take seriously. When I first joined, I wasn't sure if my ULD would hold me back, but I was determined to prove that it wouldn't define what I could achieve. I hope that by sharing my journey, I can show others that having a disability doesn't mean you can't pursue your dreams or succeed in a challenging career like the military.

I want people to see that the Army values what you can do, not what you can't. If my story inspires even one person to believe in themselves and take that first step towards their goals, then I feel like I've made a difference. I'm passionate about breaking down barriers and showing that the Army is a place where everyone, regardless of their background or abilities, can thrive and contribute to something bigger than themselves.

What would you say to someone who's hesitant to apply because of a physical difference?

I would say, don't let self-doubt hold you back. Your difference doesn't define your abilities or your potential—it's how you approach challenges and adapt that truly matters. The Army values determination, resilience, and a willingness to learn, and those qualities are far more important than any physical difference.

I know it can feel daunting, and you might worry about whether you'll be accepted or able to keep up, but I can tell you from experience that it's worth taking that first step.

What's next for you in your military journey?

I'm working towards a promotion to Staff Sergeant. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to take on more responsibility and continue developing as a leader. I also want to gain more experience in different areas, both technologically and academically, to broaden my skill set and stay ahead in the ever-evolving military environment.

Ultimately, I want to keep growing, both personally and professionally.

How do you hope your story impacts young Reach members reading this?

I hope my story shows young Reach members that having an ULD doesn't have to hold you back from achieving your dreams. Growing up, I faced challenges and doubts, but I've learned that what truly matters is your determination, resilience, and belief in yourself.

I want them to see that their difference is not a limitation but a unique part of who they are. It can even be a strength, something that sets them apart and makes them capable of amazing things. Whether they want to join the Army, pursue a different career, or follow their passions, I hope they know that they are capable of achieving anything they set their minds to.

What stands out as a defining moment in your career so far?

So far that has to be my pass out parade. It was such a proud day, not just for me but for my family as well. Knowing how hard I worked to get there, especially with the challenges I faced, made it even more meaningful. My late grandfather's words about how proud he was of me and how he would be there in spirit made it a moment I'll never forget.

Through hard work and determination, I've built a wealth of knowledge and skills that I now use to support and lead others. Looking back, I'm proud of what I've achieved so far, and I'm excited to see what the future holds as I continue to grow and take on new challenges.

Meet the musician:

Keith Xander, lead singer and guitarist of Xander and the Peace Pirates

Brothers Keith and Stu Alexander formed the band in 2006 after moving into a flat together and immersing themselves in writing and recording. That creative spark became Xander and the Peace Pirates – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Quickfire:

Describe yourself in 3 words:

Open, kind, authentic

First riff you ever learned?

Smoke On The Water

Most underrated guitarist of all time?

Robben Ford.

Your 'must-have' for a gig?

My guitar pedals including my volume pedal and always wear a hat.

You're most proud of...?

Being a dad to my daughter Esmee. She's learning to play bass and I'm always proud of all her achievements. She's my inspiration and joy.

Thanks for joining us Keith! How did you come to know of Reach?

We were members when I was a child and attended events. I even played guitar at a couple. Back then Jeremy Beadle was a Patron of Reach, he was mocking my mum and said, "Oh no, not a proud mum!" :) I then played to a backing track on a crappy keyboard and played lead guitar over the top, I was playing an Epiphone SG going through a little amp called a Crate Chorus.

An essential part of living in a world designed for two hands is problem-solving… When it came to learning to play, did you find it easy to adapt?

"It's all about determination and perseverance, and that's driven by a passion to create or express in some way.

When learning to play I was so driven by that passion that I was simply determined to create the sounds I dreamt to make by emulating my heroes like Robben Ford, Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, BB King and many others.

I couldn't have chosen otherwise, and although highly challenging, the music took over - I was lost in music.

It's been my best friend and guide. Music can carry precious messages and I truly believe music makes the world a very beautiful place. It's infinite unconditional power to bring people together in unity is astounding and should never be underestimated.

It was challenging at first when practicing the precision to accurately strike the strings to create a pleasing tone and rhythm. It came with frustration. But the key was to not give up and keep playing and enjoy progressing and learning. The fruit is in achieving what was once not possible, and seeing the beauty in the potential and possibility, and allowing it to drive you deeper into the passion of whatever it is that wish to create or express."

Did you ever doubt your ability to play professionally?

I never doubted myself, but there were times I lost motivation, but I always knew, through perseverance I could achieve the level of playing I was inspired by.

I enjoyed the challenge of overcoming limitations through the sheer determination to sound better, to be the best I could be and not compare myself to others and only see others as an inspiration to improve, encourage and develop my skills. Inspiration is everywhere, and just like Roald Dahl said, "Those who don't believe in magic will never find it".

Do people ask you about your limb difference and what's your 'go-to' response?

People often ask what happened or how did I lose my arm, and did I play before or after I lost my arm, and my response is always the same, 'I was born with a missing right arm below the elbow, and so I have never known any different'.

One doesn't miss that which they have never had. I don't know any different so don't feel I had any greater obstacle to overcome. The main obstacle is usually our thinking habits and attitude. Without trust and a willing to go through the discomfort of the struggle of learning we simply cannot grow, and that's coming from someone who is naturally quite lazy and laid back. But passion always prevails!

The choice is made by the magnetic draw of passion to learn and practice but the fruits of discovering ease and dexterity in the expression of art and creativity is the reward. We get out what we put in. It sounds cliché in a way, because it's true.

Growing up, did you ever struggle with your confidence?

I felt self-conscious when people stared; starting a new school was a challenge, being the new kid and being different as had an electric arm, but I changed to the hook as a teenager, as I found the electric arm too heavy and uncomfortable.

So yes, I did struggle but as I matured I came to understand that people are just curious. I don't get the sense people are ever unkind, even if they shout, "heeeeyyyy, Captain Hook", mostly people seem to give the impression it's cool and like it. Kids at school weren't unkind, but some were scared, and that did upset me. I got good at helping people see I was nothing to be scared of, but it did serve me in senior school if a bully was scared of me [Haha].

Did you know of anyone else with an upper limb difference?

I didn't meet many growing up. But now I know of a couple of musicians who have similar upper limb differences to myself who play guitar; Max Runham from the U.K, and I met Leftie Williams from the U.S; both talented singer-songwriters who play with their stumps.

If teen Keith had seen someone with an upper limb difference playing the guitar, how might that have changed his early experiences?

Seeing anyone overcoming limitations is an inspiration to me. If I had seen anyone playing with one arm it would have definitely inspired me. But it is more about the ability to play, not the apparent disability.

Someone can have a so-called disability and not be very good on the instrument. I never wanted to fall back on just being a one-armed guitarist and getting a pat on the back for having a go.

I wanted to master the instrument, because I love it. So, if I saw someone who was truly gifted through putting in the hard work, that would have truly inspired me. But their physical appearance or disability makes no difference. Some people don't even notice I play with a hook.

Has your limb difference influenced your style or the music you play?

Playing with a hook definitely shaped the way I play. It influences the overall sound when I strike the strings and has forced me to play more legato with my left hand when fingering the strings on the fretboard.

I don't alternate my picking much with the split hook I use, mainly due to the angle of the pick, this causes me to play mainly down strokes and I compensate with the left hand to create more complex phrases and rhythms using hammer-ons and pull-offs.

How has music shaped your identity on and off stage?

Music has built my confidence and encouraged me to be authentic and relaxed within myself.

Playing in front of audiences has allowed me to learn to relax and let go in environments where I otherwise might feel tense and self-conscious. So, facing the fear of not being good enough has allowed me to push through the discomfort of making mistakes and growing musically.

Off-stage I have a sense of satisfaction and joy about what life has gifted me with. I have been gifted the opportunity to uplift and inspire others and play what I love, which is extremely enriching.

What keeps you grounded or motivated when the going gets tough– creatively or personally?

Walks in nature, meditation and mindfulness have been a key when things have got stressful and I've been filled with doubt. As soon as I come home to the present, the mind comes to an indescribable, reasonless peace. But like everything, even peace can become a practice to improve the natural flow of life.

What's next for Xander and the Peace Pirates?

We're writing new songs ready to record a new album in the Motor Museum in Liverpool. And we won an Award! My brother entered our band into the Danny Music Awards and we had the opportunity to play our song, 'Searching for the Light" in The Town Hall in Times Square, New York. It was a beautiful experience and has opened doors to new opportunities and some very talented disabled musicians. The Daniel's Music foundation is a charity that supports disabled musicians and we're blessed to have connected with them.

What legacy would you like to leave behind?

My legacy is to leave good, inspiring music for future generations. Even if only a few hear it. The message within that legacy is to not give up and to simply be yourself, don't try to be anything else. Be at peace and believe in yourself and your dreams can come true. If you can imagine it, you have the potential to create it.

But truly there is no need to be remembered, but if anyone who does celebrate the memory of Keith Xander and the peace pirates, then may they be inspired and uplifted and be filled with faith and wonder.

We're delighted to announce that Keith will be performing at the Annual Family Weekend in October!

Welcome to our community!

What does it mean to be a member of Reach?

As a valued member, you can look forward to a host of events, opportunities, and support throughout the year:

NEW! The Reach Retreat for 18–25s

A special long weekend designed just for young adult members to connect, share, chill and equip them for life's next big steps.

Branch Meet Ups

Local Branch get-togethers and events (around 2per year). Fun, relaxed meetups with local members and families near you, helping Reach families and young people make meaningful connections.

Regional Family Weekends

Family-focused weekends balancing activities and relaxation inviting you to connect with other Reach families all around the UK. Currently in South Wales, Scotland, North West and East Anglia.

Reach Activity Week (RAW)

In July/August every year, Reach children aged 10–17 go away for a week of fun, friend-making, and fresh air on a Reach Activity Week. Adventure and plenty of action is guaranteed; from climbing, abseiling and canoeing to problem solving, archery and coasteering.

The Annual Family Weekend

Reach's National Annual Family Event in October; an annual conference all about sharing lived experiences, inspiring stories, invaluable resources, and reconnecting the Reach family.

Membership Benefits:

Welcome pack - A 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.

Within Reach Magazine (3x per year) - Reach's own publication, sharing the voices of our upper limb difference community; real stories, celebrations, events, inspiration and representation, all delivered straight to your door and available to read online.

Insurance - For any member in the UK with congenital upper limb difference / who acquired an upper limb difference in childhood / who have had one or both of their upper limbs seriously damaged or amputated in an accident

Reach Blog: NEW! - Articles from Within Reach and fresh pieces about lived experiences, editorials, interviews and features all centred around upper limb difference and your community.

Social Media Community - Public platforms focusing on representation and awareness, and private groups providing a safe space for sharing and celebration within our community. Stay connected with the wider community, ask questions, and share experiences.

Your local WhatsApp Group - (optional sign-up) for easy, real-time updates and friendly chats with families in your area.

Access to the Reach Bursary - fund for essential equipment and adaptations.

Equipment hire scheme - one-handed recorders and various other instruments, plus a 'try before you buy' loan scheme for useful equipment like swim paddles and a variety of scissors and gadgets.

Did you know? You can write your will for free!

Reach have teamed up with will-writing specialists Farewill so you can write your will for free.

It takes around 30 minutes and you can do it from the comfort of your own home. (For those in Scotland or Northern Ireland or for those who would rather write your will over the phone, book an appointment with a Farewill specialist).

Reach tomorrow and beyond...

We want to support Reach families in years to come and ensure the passion you have for Reach continues. There is no obligation, however once you have looked after your loved ones, we hope you might create your lasting legacy by leaving a gift to Reach in your will.

Thank you for helping build an even brighter future for Reach families! **Find out more:** https://farewill.com/reach-magazine

THE BRITISH WILLS & PROBATE AWARDS

Trustpilot

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Reach