

Helping people with upper limb differences live life beyond limits

Within Reach Magazine



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Summer 2026 | Issue 162 | Front cover stars: Megan, Leah & Lottie

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

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Your Reach Meet-ups



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The NEW Metacarpal GEM



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The calendar...

National

- OCT** • 23rd - 25th | Annual Family Weekend 2026 | Worsley Park Hotel & Country Club, Manchester
- JUL** • 25th - 1st Aug 2027 | Reach Activity Week 2027 | Grenville House, Brixham

Regional

- SEP** • 19th - 20th | Northern Ireland - Malone Lodge Hotel
- 18th - 20th | South West - WilderMe Glamping

Branch

- SEP** • 17th | North West Online Collective
- NOV** • TBC | North West in-person meet up (Location TBC)
- 10th | North West Online Collective
- DEC** • 6th | West Midlands Christmas Party (Location TBC)

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



Hello!

From the creator of Within Reach

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. If you have an idea for an article get in touch: withinreach@reach.org.uk.

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.

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 current UK and Ireland subscription is £35 annually, £18 bi-annually, or £9 quarterly and the Full Overseas subscription is £40. Fees due to change autumn 2026, see notice below:

Membership Fee Update

From October 2026, Reach membership fees will be increasing by £5 per year. It has been several years since our membership fees were last increased, and this change is necessary to help sustain Reach and continue providing support, activities and services for our members and families. We thank you for your continued support.

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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

Summer 2026...



Every year in November the Reach Trustees come together to reflect on the year, to celebrate the now and plan for the future – at the beginning of the summer we launched a members' survey to help us do that - to learn what's important to you and to use your feedback to guide us. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas.

Thanks to the initiative of our very own Claire Cashmore MBE in partnership with ATW Events at Mallory Park, Leicestershire, we can now celebrate delivery of our first Reach Triathlon from June 27th-28th. With fantastic support from British Triathlon and the Para Pathway Team, our families rose to the challenges of running, swimming and cycling in relays. Thanks to all the donors who helped us to raise £10,000+. A huge "Thank You" to the volunteers who provided support to our families and individual members for the event. We could potentially make the Reach Triathlon an annual event. Should we do it again next year? Please let us know!



Our amazing RAW Mentors – over 18's who come back, complete the training to lead and support our 10–17-year-olds at RAW – Reach Activity Week, this year at Carlton Lodge in Thirsk, Yorkshire.

Could we ask for loads of photos for our social media, our

website and the magazine please? Would any parents like to write us a note about how attendance at RAW benefitted their child? The feedback is very useful for us when planning future events.

From the 26th - 29th June, Adult Mentors also supported our 18-25s Retreat at Hidcote Manor in Worcester. The Reach Retreat 2026 provides a forum for young adults to share both physical and mental health challenges that arise in their lives as they embark on life's adventures like leaving home, careers, working life, university, living independently, and relationships. Many of them have grown up with Reach, some have attended RAW and all of them report feeling supported and part of "their tribe." Reports from the participants describe a collective of individuals addressing life's challenges in a positive way.

The Limb Loss & Limb Difference (LLLDA) Alliance – the work being done by a team of our Reach adults in forging alliances with BLESMA, The Amputation Foundation, Finding Your Feet, Limb Power, Steel Bones and of course, REACH worked together on a Briefing Paper to present at the Houses of Parliament. Thanks to the support of Marie Tidball MP and Lord Craig Kinsey, we had unprecedented access to the Health Secretary and the members in the House of Commons. A quote from their Briefing Paper ... "An Alliance of limb loss and limb difference charities, we want to ensure that work to support those with limb loss and limb difference, by any public service and government puts our lived experience at the centre of development and delivery of these services." Several of our very young contributors – especially Melita, (age 11) and Harvey (age 9) outdid themselves with personal presentations on the day and made us very proud. Reach members speaking to power.

Following a brief campaign on our social media seeking persons with an interest in becoming Trustees of Reach, we want to thank all the wonderful people who have applied to become Trustees. From parents to adults with ULD (Upper Limb difference), these applicants gave us some interesting discussions about Reach, what it has meant to them and what they would like to see for Reach and its members in the future. I believe that Reach will grow and thrive even more under the next generation of members and their Trustees.

Chris

Chris Creamer
Reach Board of Trustees Chairman
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Reach Board of Trustees

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Hello from a very sunny Devon!



Thank you, Mr Chair and apologies, all for being a little bit late with our Members Survey - it is with you now and is LIVE through until the end of October so please, if you can spare 5-10 minutes between now and then to help guide us, we would be very grateful: click here or contact reach@reach.org.uk for a link.

So many wonderful things have happened this spring and summer, including a few lovely coincidences - Reach Trustee, Steve Haynes bumped into his namesake at our Family Day in Parliament during Disability Awareness Month and a new mum and keen triathlete visiting our website for the first time saw that we were running our first triathlon event near to where she and her family lived so they combined their first Reach family meet-up with a Triathlon!

In this edition I would like to focus on and say THANK YOU to our Ambassadors. They don't just wear the T-Shirt - they go the extra mile literally – this spring/summer Melissa Johns, founder of the very new @accessibleparentingnetwork, has travelled down from Manchester (home to AFW 26 - book now!) not once but twice to speak at the Houses of Parliament on our behalf; Briony Williams baked and brought delicious cakes to 'not sell' but raise loads of dosh at the Reach Triathlon, Claire Cashmore cheered, cajoled, and cried with our triathletes, got her husband and partner in crime to cycle for us, and then there's Jay Howard who took on the hardest leg – the bit that no one else wanted to do – the swim! You helped us bring it home - as did Branch Coordinators Tracey and Jason, Reach Trustee, Julie Detheridge, the amazing teams and supporters who took part, cheering each other on, manning the

Reach stall, donning swimsuits, Reach vests and trainers - for most of us it was a first - here's to: The Unreachables ('preserving' the lead beautifully), Jay & Her Two Left Arms, Team Ella, The Adams, The Pearce's, Team Shepherd, The Socket Rockets, Swim, Bike, Brace, Penelope, Arla & Hannah & the ATW Event Team. You were all magnificent! Next year, 'if' we do it again, we would love to see more of you join us (especially children and OAPS!) - watch out for a sign up at the end of the year!

Also, later this year, the wonderful Alex Brooker is crossing the Pennines to be with us for AFW 26, Manchester and... We are very proud this summer to welcome two new Ambassadors to Reach – Glen Evans and India Sasha, both models, influencers, and advocates, they bring with them passion, humour and a desire to inspire the next generation!

Lastly, we will never forget our wonderful Ambassador Frank Letch (1944-2025) and are quietly working away to create the Reach Jobs Board in his honour - Watch this space!!

All the best (that's all of you),

SJ

Sarah-Jane
Charity Operations Lead
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Have you heard of the Reach Support Fund?

We know that sometimes the cost of equipment, adaptations, activities, training or other opportunities can create barriers for Reach members and their families. The Reach Support Fund, previously known as the Bursary, is here to help.

The fund can provide financial support towards things that help children, young people and families get involved, build confidence and make the most of opportunities – including membership fees, specialist equipment, adaptations, activities and training.

If cost is preventing you or your child from taking part, the Support Fund may be able to help.

Contact Reach

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Phone: Sarah-Jane Lawson (Charity Operations & Safeguarding Lead) on 07932 747652

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Instagram: @reachcharityuk

Facebook: facebook.com/reachcharity

LinkedIn: Reach Charity Limited

Registered charity in England and Wales no.1134544

Registered charity in Scotland no.SC049805

Congratulations & thank you!



Reach Triathlon raised: £ 10,356.79



Ready to tee off?

Join us for Reach's first Charity Golf Day!

But this is about more than golf. The weekend will also give Reach children and their siblings the chance to try golf for themselves, with coaching from Darren Grey, PGA Professional and two-time One-Arm World Champion, and Aimi Bullock from Sport for All. It is a wonderful opportunity for younger members to build confidence, try something new and see golfers with lived experience of Upper Limb Difference in action.

Darren, who will also be playing in the Charity Golf Day, was born without the lower part of his left arm and has built an incredible golfing career around balance, timing, body control and determination. He is passionate about helping golfers of all abilities improve, adapt and enjoy the game.

We are also delighted to have prizes and support from The R&A, England Golf and Rick Shiels, including some fantastic four-ball opportunities, with more exciting updates still to come.

Not a golfer? Come along, walk a few holes, enjoy the atmosphere and support the players as they take on the course for Reach.

This is not just a golf competition. It is a chance to come together, celebrate possibility and support the next generation of Reach children and families.

Interested in playing, sponsoring a hole or donating a prize? Visit www.reach.org.uk/golf to find out more and register your interest.



There are lots of exciting 'firsts' for Reach in 2026, and this one is definitely worth shouting about.

As part of Annual Family Weekend at Marriott Worsley Park, Reach will be hosting its first Charity Golf Day on Sunday 25th October 2026, bringing together golfers from across the Reach community and beyond for a brilliant day of competition, fundraising and community spirit.

Organised with the support of The Society of One Armed Golfers, the day will be fun, friendly and competitive, with a Florida Scramble, Stableford scoring and a shotgun start. There will be prizes for the top three teams, closest to the pin and longest drive, plus plenty of opportunities to get involved even if you are not playing.

And no, you do not need to have an Upper Limb Difference to enter!

Places are limited to 72 players, with registration from 8.30am to 9.30am, including tea, coffee and a sandwich before everyone heads out onto the course. Entry is £75 per player, including a donation to Reach in support of our 50th anniversary in 2028.

Christmas Challenge

Big Give

The Big Give is BACK!

A huge Thank You to everyone who donated, shared and contributed to our successful 2025 Big Give Christmas Challenge. Our final total, after matched giving and Gift Aid, was an amazing £24,152! Your commitment, energy, and belief in what we do has helped us make a meaningful difference, Reaching Further to support the Liaison Nurse Project, RAW, and Regional Family weekends.

Great news!

We're taking part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge again in December 2026, when every pound you raise for Reach could be doubled. We want to raise £12,500 during Christmas Challenge week – which could be doubled to £25,000.

When is it?

The Big Give Christmas Challenge week runs from 12 noon Tuesday 1st December to 12 noon Tuesday 8th December 2026.

DOUBLE YOUR DONATIONS: 1-8 DECEMBER

Reach Together!

Support children with upper limb differences, and their families.



Reach Together!

What will we be fundraising for this year?

This year we want to celebrate our volunteer Reach Branch Coordinators, who bring members together year-round at local meet-ups across the UK.

This summer they've organised parties, BBQs, picnics, farm days, sports days, wild retreats and city breaks. Please help them connect more families, children, young people and adults in 2027.

The money we raise with this year's Big Give Christmas Challenge will:

- 1) Increase funding for branch events, keeping them free for Reach children and siblings.
- 2) Enable Branch Coordinators to organise an additional Regional Family Weekend - taking the total to 6 weekends in 2027.
- 3) Support BCs to develop events for new and returning adult members.
- 4) Provide more dedicated support from the Reach Team.

How can you help?

Please start thinking now!

Could you take on a challenge during the first week of December to support Branch Coordinators organising events in your area?

It could be a cake sale, a carol concert, a sponsored swim, home clothes day... Anything goes!

Why not coordinate with your local branch, or start talking to friends and family now and ask for their support?

How does The Big Give work?

Firstly, Reach submits its campaign proposal to The Big Give. That part is done!

Secondly, we secure pledges from Reach donors to match the first £6,250 we raise during Challenge week. Great news – we've already secured these pledges!

Next, we hope to be selected by Big Give Champion funders, who could match the next £6,250 we raise. We'll find out in October. (If we aren't selected, all money raised will still support Reach events – so it's a win-win!)

Finally, it's down to us! We need to raise £12,500 between 1 and 8 December to unlock the available matched funding.

Find out more: <https://biggive.org/christmas-challenge/>

YOU RAISE £6,250

>>>

PLEDGERS MATCH £6,250

>>>

YOU RAISE A FURTHER £6,250

>>>

CHAMPION FUNDERS COULD MATCH £6,250

>>>

£25,000 FOR REACH

Meet your Branch Coordinator:

Suzanne Parker

Three words your friends would use to describe you: Crazy, adventurous, messy

Favourite place in Northern England: Paddleboarding at Warkworth

What's something people might be surprised to learn about you: "Ooh what people don't know, strong Danish heritage (my mum is Danish) and I was head girl in the Scandinavian procession of St Lucia when I was 15."

Please tell us a little about yourself and how you became involved with Reach?

I became involved with Reach as a child, but stopped going to meetings around 10. Reach has expanded so much in a positive way since. I later helped at the first RAW; even at 18 I didn't realise how important support from Reach was throughout different periods of my life.

What inspired you to take on the role of Branch Coordinator (BC)?

I had kids and the opportunity for BC came up, I thought, if I can help, I'm happy to. Things have become much more inclusive but the friends and knowledge I've gained though Reach has been continuous.

In the 70s I think my parents felt isolated. Thankfully through social media there's more support than ever. As an adult it's the adaptations I've really gained, learning from other Reach members, from finding the best pram to adaptations for paddleboarding, marching with a brass band, cycling and more recently, weight lifting.

What does a typical week look like for you as a BC?

Things can be quiet until the meet ups. I look for venues then promote events to the branch. It can be hard finding places that support all ages and give the parents a place to chat. At meet-ups it's important to check everyone has everything they need and that the children are included. Our WhatsApp group keeps people up to date with events.

What are some of the most rewarding aspects of being a BC?

Meeting new families – and for parents - I hope it's a positive experience meeting other children and adults. Feeling part of a community!

As a Reach adult and a parent, I feel like Reach's approach of ability not disability is important. I've never seen myself as disabled but I do recognise that I do things in a different way. Through AGMs and local meet-ups, as well as the online community, inclusion offers knowledge.

Any particular moments that have stayed with you?

I cycled Coast to Coast to raise money for Reach and was amazed that Chris (member & mentor) joined me for some of it but also met us in his Campervan with a cuppa. A complete stranger at the time but again, it shows the sense of community within Reach.



How have your own experiences shaped the way you support Reach families?

I'm a qualified teacher and work with young people over 16 years old who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so I often find I can be resourceful with adaptations for others too. I'm in the middle of forest school level 3 training and have been amazed at some of the adaptations which will allow me to qualify.

I use an ERGObrass adaptation when marching and a little strap for my arm. (We made it to the National Brass Band Championships in the second section so we'll be competing in York in September - I'm really looking forward to that, then I'll get my head around a Christmas event!

I also had an amazing handle bar adaptation made for my bike by the charity REMAP, and I'm still in the early days at the gym with weights but I mix it up with a prosthetic and an elastic band.

Have there been any surprising or challenging moments because of your ULD?

Funny enough there haven't been many negatives; years ago, I was asked at a job interview if I could catch a child (in case if they fell off playground equipment?!) Luckily, I never had to prove them right and I have three kids which I've never dropped!

How has your lived experience as a mum and someone with an ULD shaped the way you approach your role as a coordinator?

My youngest has an autism diagnosis, so I have some understanding of the worries families can have and the support that may be needed when navigating the real world. I also receive PIP and have previous experience of DLA, so I appreciate some of the challenges involved in accessing support and navigating the system.

What personal experiences do you draw on when supporting Reach families?

As a child I attended the princess Margaret Rose hospital in Edinburgh and had various prosthetics including a trial 'moving hand'. I found them hot and heavy; one plugged in like a mobile phone and at the time it was amazing but I never took to it. About ten years ago I tried one again at the limb centre – I was disappointed to be offered a strap which went behind my back so it moved with the shoulder, again this works for some people but not for me. My advice, go with what works for your child and your gut feeling.

What's been going on?

West Midlands branch

During the spring the West Midland branch got together at Combat Sports Centre and PlayTown in Solihull. 18 families joined, including three new families. The over 6 group had a kickboxing session and the under 6 group went to PlayTown followed by lunch and a chat. Then in early August they held a meet up at St Giles Church, with 10 families joining the fun! They had soft play and a bouncy castle, Sports Day races, football and rounders with fabulous medals and goodie bags from Irwin Mitchell, plus beautiful gifts from their fundraising champion Sandra!

North Wales branch

With support and help from the Reach team, members from the North Wales branch recently enjoyed their first meet-up at the Welsh Mountain Zoo in Colwyn Bay.

The day was a great success, everyone enjoyed getting together to catch up and strengthen connections. Alongside the social aspect, members had the chance to explore the zoo too. A highlight for all was watching the lions being fed, while the snow leopards made an impression showing off to visitors. There were also a few humorous moments - including a determined seagull managing to steal a KitKat!

"Events like these remind us of the value of bringing people together. The role of branch coordinators is rewarding because it allows members to connect and share good conversations. It was particularly lovely to welcome some North Wales Reach friends who were attending an in-person get together for the first time. Everyone's presence helped make the day very special and highlighted the great atmosphere Reach events are known for. As our branch continues to grow, we are looking forward to creating many more opportunities to spend time together. A huge thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the day such an enjoyable and memorable occasion." - Manuela & Emyr Griffiths



Reach on the Beach 2026

The Cucumber of Responsibility...

Reach on the Beach 2026 began with the usual flurry of planning: "Double the Cornettos," "We'll need more cucumbers," and, of course, the all-important risk assessments. None of us realised quite how important those cucumbers would become.

By Friday evening, Ty Borfa was buzzing with families reconnecting, children taking over the lounge with games and parents catching up long into the night. One family arrived with twelve cucumbers, adding to the growing kitchen collection.

Saturday brought sunshine, coffee and an inspiring talk from Paralympic gold medalist Ben Pritchard, before attention inevitably returned to the cucumber surplus.

"This," declared Sian, holding one aloft, "is the Cucumber of Responsibility."

From that moment on, whoever held the cucumber was officially in charge. It was passed to our brilliant activity leaders from

Gower Activities Centre before a day of fire lighting, marshmallow toasting and a spectacular walk to Culver Hole. Along the way, "Independent Cucumbers" were created to share responsibility, and one bewildered couple were even asked if they were cucumbers. They were not.

Back at Ty Borfa, we enjoyed another incredible feast, a lively quiz and plenty of laughter before another action-packed day followed. Families crafted keepsakes, explored the beach and then headed surfing with the fantastic Surfability team. There were huge smiles, cheering from the shoreline and more than a few memorable wipeouts.

The weekend finished with chips, an epic raffle and auction, bacon butties, and reluctant goodbyes after another unforgettable Reach adventure.

As for the cucumbers? Every last one found a home. One was reportedly eaten whole on the journey home, which somehow feels like the perfect ending.

Read the full story, including marshmallows, surfing triumphs, Phoebe Pea Soup and the mystery of the Independent Cucumbers? Head to the Reach blog for the complete tale.

<https://www.reach.org.uk/within-reach-magazine/reach-on-the-beach-2026-the-cucumber-of-responsibility>



Crossing the Finish Line Together



WR caught up with mum and daughter, Hannah & Penelope, to find out how their first ever triathlon went at Reach's first ever triathlon event!

What inspired you to sign up for the Reach Triathlon?

Reach has been such an important part of our family's journey since Penelope was 7 years old. They've given us support, confidence and a sense of belonging. When we heard about the very first Reach Triathlon, it felt like the perfect opportunity to give something back while showing Penelope that she can achieve anything she sets her mind to.

Had either of you done a triathlon before?

It was our first triathlon, so everything was completely new to us. It was definitely a challenge, but that's what made it so rewarding.

How did you prepare for the event?

We trained together whenever we could. Penelope already swims regularly, so we built on that by practising cycling and running. I also trained alongside her, and it became something we looked forward to doing together.

Did it feel special to be a mother and daughter team?

It was incredibly special. Watching Penelope tackle each part of the course with determination made me so proud. Sharing the experience together is something I'll treasure forever.

Was there a particular moment that you'll always remember?

Watching Penelope cross the finish line and seeing how proud she was of herself is a moment I'll never forget. Seeing the smile on her face made every bit of training worthwhile.

Any funny moments along the way?

There were definitely plenty of laughs! I hadn't ridden a bike in over 20 years and didn't get back on a proper bike until the day before the triathlon, so I was just hoping to stay upright! One of the funniest moments was having Dave and Luke, our amazing para champions, whizz past me not once but twice while I was still on the same lap. I could only laugh—it definitely kept me humble and gave everyone a good chuckle!

What does being part of the Reach community mean to you?

It means everything. Reach has shown Penelope that she isn't alone and has introduced us to so many amazing families who truly understand our journey. It's a community filled with encouragement, support and inspiration.

How did it feel to be surrounded by other Reach families?

It was really emotional. There was such a positive atmosphere, and everyone was cheering each other on. It felt like one big family, and there was so much encouragement throughout the day.



How did Penelope find the event? Did it change the way she sees herself?

She absolutely loved it. Completing the triathlon gave her such a confidence boost. I think it showed her that having a limb difference doesn't define what she can achieve. She's already talking about what she wants to do next!

What was the biggest challenge you faced during the event?

For me, it was managing the nerves before the start. Once we got going, we just focused on enjoying every moment and supporting each other.

Which part of the triathlon did you enjoy the most?

The swim was definitely our favourite. Swimming is Penelope's passion, so it was lovely watching her in her element.

How did it feel crossing the finish line?

Crossing the finish line was an amazing feeling, but the most emotional moment was watching Penelope cross hers. Seeing how proud she was of herself and everything she had achieved made me incredibly proud as her mum. Although we completed our triathlons separately, celebrating together afterwards made the achievement even more special.

Has taking part inspired you to try another challenge?

Definitely! We're already looking at what we can do next. This experience has shown us that stepping outside your comfort zone can lead to amazing memories. If Reach organises another triathlon, we'll all be signing up as a family. It would be so special to experience it together and create even more unforgettable memories.

If you could sum up the weekend in three words, what would they be?

Inspiring. Empowering. Unforgettable.

Who was more competitive—you or Penelope?

Without a doubt, Penelope! Once she gets going, she loves a challenge and always wants to do her best.

Lastly, what would you like Penelope to remember most about taking part in the very first Reach Triathlon?

I'd love her to remember how brave she was and how proud she should always be of herself. More than anything, I want her to remember that she can achieve incredible things, that her limb difference will never define her, and that she was part of making history by taking part in the very first Reach Triathlon. Most importantly, I hope she always remembers the amazing community cheering her on every step of the way.

Welcome new members!

Paityn-Rose

"Hi, my name is Paityn. I am 3 and a half and was born with syndactyly. I have lots of energy and love swimming and gymnastics. I am looking forward to meeting other children with an upper limb difference like me."



Anissa

Meet Anissa, our 9-year-old ray of sunshine who lights up any room with her infectious smile and boundless positivity. She loves dancing, dressing up, and immersing herself in girly fun. Once you get to know her, her cheeky side shines through—she adores playing jokes on her older brother and finds his hilarious frustration the funniest thing ever! What she lacks in arm length, she more than makes up for in character, resilience, and heart!



Jett

This is Jett, he is 7 weeks old and was born with an upper limb difference. He is such a happy little boy and can't wait to start making friends!



Lucas

Jude

Hi everyone, this is Jude aged 7 months. This happy little guy loves swimming, eating strawberries, and reading his books. We're really looking forward to joining the Reach community!



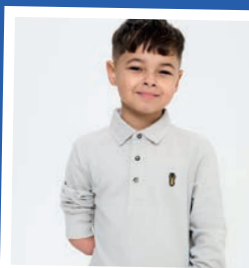
Poppy

This is Poppy, a lively and energetic 15-year-old who brings enthusiasm and positivity wherever she goes. With a strong love for sports and a natural connection to animals, she is always on the move—whether staying active or spending time with her favourite furry companions. Poppy was born with a limb difference, which is simply one part of who she is. It has never defined her limits; instead, it's one of the many things that makes her unique. She approaches life with confidence, determination, and a resilience that inspires those around her. Known for her vibrant personality, Poppy is also wonderfully funny, with a great sense of humour that keeps friends and family smiling. She has a natural ability to make people feel comfortable and included, bringing warmth and laughter into everyday moments.



Remmy

Hello, Introducing Remy, born with the absence of his right hand. Friendly, enthusiastic and a passion for arts/games. Limitless, not limited. Thank you for creating and welcoming us in this community.



Penelope

This is Penelope, she was born with an upper limb difference to her right arm, but nothing is stopping her!



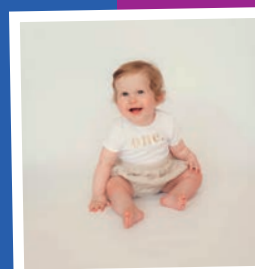
George

George has symbrachydactyly of his right hand.



Bonnie

This is Bonnie. She's 4 years old and is full of curiosity, love and fun. She was born missing her right hand. Bonnie loves making friends and shows us every day that there's no limit to what she can do.



Mabel

Mabel was born with radial dysplasia. Luckily in her case it's not related to any syndromes and we've had such great care at Great Ormond Street & The Evelina London Children's hospital. She has a long road ahead but we're so amazed every day at how she uses her special hand and has started to use her forefinger as her thumb.



Roman-James

"My name is Roman-James and I was born 31st March 2026. I was born with Symbrachydactyly or as my doctor said Bidactyly as I only have 2 fingers on my left hand. I'm a chilled little boy who loves my food :)"

Thank you!

£50

Stephen & Ali Wrigley
In lieu of presents for Ali's 70th birthday! (Their grandson is a member of Reach.)

Heather Coates
A donation in lieu of attending an event.

£30

£20

Ella (West Midlands)
Ella made a goose! Her teacher liked it so much she has kept it as the class mascot and donated another £20 to Reach!

Gill Tipping

£385

£100

Sandra
Friend of the West Midlands branch.

Colette Van Sertima

£20

£20

Barbara Hanson

Barbara Watson

£50

£50

David Fear
Mrs A Wrigley requested a donation in lieu of gifts for her 70th Birthday. Her Grandson Ivan has been helped by your charity.

Lynn Fletcher

£10

£145

Patrick Savage

Paul Burns

£100

£100

Hugh Browne
Mrs A Scobbie

£550

£10

Powerscreen
A donation towards the North Ireland Regional Family Weekend.

Catherine Davis

£1000

£205

Catherine Fisher
Heidi Share

£10

£205

Lisa & Kevin Teasdale
Elinx Physiotherapy Ltd - Kevin (dad to a Reach child) did a physio talk for a local WI group who agreed that all donations would go to Reach. The talk raised £100 with an additional £75.18 being raised by donations made by clients who added change to a tin in their office. attending an event.

£175

£80

Erin Elizabeth Wilson

£10

Joanne Leigh
Katarina Tarhoviska

£55

£480

PayPal Giving Fund

Make it Monthly

Visit [Reach.org.uk](https://reach.org.uk), click 'Support us', then select 'Make this a monthly donation' and follow PayPal's instructions.



£50

Howard Spargo

Heather Nash

£10

£20

Rebecca Nelson
Jonathan McGee

£10

Fundraising

£2286

Lewis Gliddon
3 peaks in 24 hours with friends: Jacob Brooks Lewis Gliddon, George Stone, Vinny Clark, Kieron Cleal, Morgan Watkinson.

Helen Duffy

I feel absolutely on top of the world... What an incredible day! I cannot believe I ran the Birmingham Half Marathon in 1hr 54mins!...I could not believe how kind everyone was who came out to support—there were moments when that really got me through. Thank you to all my gorgeous family and friends who came to support us. To everyone who donated, I cannot thank you enough. I cannot tell you what this means. Reach are truly fantastic and mean so much to our family. Orlagh has been asking daily what the total is and just cannot believe we have raised so much. Our family saying is always "you always can!". I am constantly telling my children they can and will achieve anything you put their minds to. But too often, I haven't told myself that. I've always said, "I can't run"—but I absolutely CAN! Whatever we want to achieve, we always can. Let's always reach for the stars...

£2110

Reach's London Marathon Runners...

£1341



India Atkinson -
Reach Adult &
Ambassador

James Monk -
Reach Parent

£1297



Matt Donaldson - Reach
Parent

£1829



Sydney Hewitt - Reach adult

£1865

£395

Linda & Ken Stokes
celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary in February. They had a party and asked for donations for Reach.

Chris Whitby
Ran the 3 Islands Outer Hebrides Marathon.

£505

£1000

John Nelson
Held a fundraising event at his Honda dealership.

School
Fundraiser

£670

Year 11 students recently organised a charity day in support of Reach, bringing together a range of activities that reflected both their creativity and their strong sense of community. Highlights of the day included a popular bake sale, where students contributed a wide variety of homemade goods, and a "sponge the teacher" event, which proved especially entertaining and drew enthusiastic participation from both students and staff. Through these efforts, the year group worked collaboratively to raise funds while also promoting awareness and inclusion.

St Michaels CofE Primary School, Walsall
A year 5 student put forward the idea for the School Council to deliver an assembly about Reach. Activities included non-uniform day, and a one-handed experience, to 'try and understand'.

£383



Thinking of running for Reach?

Choose the platform 'Run For Charity' - Pick a race, fundraise & run for charity! Visit: <https://runforcharity.com/charity/reach-uk-ltd>

RAW 2026!

What makes Reach Activity Week (RAW) special isn't just the activities – it's the sense of connection, belonging and freedom that comes from spending time with other people who simply get it. Don't just take it from us, take it from the some of this year's RAW mentors, the ones who gave up a week to play, guide, and learn.

First time mentor: Ellie



"It was the first evening of RAW 2026, we were gathered in a circle on the grass outside Carlton lodge. After a welcoming brief from Claire, she asked us one by one, around the circle, what we were most looking forward to. Most kids sprung with enthusiasm for the gorge walk and zip line, excellent choices having now done them. But for me, as my first year mentoring, it was less about the activities and more about the atmosphere. Rather candidly a pun slipped out as I said "I want to see RAW energy". There are no mistakes in art, what flows goes. This idea of "RAW energy" gave me something to think about, what does that mean? I didn't know what it was that I was looking for, but when I felt it, I knew for sure I had found it.

The dining room was arranged into two long tables. Unfortunately, the dining room was also the climbing gym and sports hall, so with 32 kids it turned into an amphitheatre of chaos. I grabbed a seat and hoped for the best. I found myself amongst the girls of room 11, these ones love to talk - I know, because I had to get them to sleep the night before! The conversation hopped around the table like a box of wild frogs, it took many weird and wonderful turns until arriving at one that resonated with us all, our little arms. One of the girls told her experience with a troublesome health nurse who refers to her arm as "stump", she shared her dislike of the word to the table, who, unanimously agreed. Then I posed the question, "what do you call yours?" she showed me her "fairy fingers", I felt my heart swell. Before I knew it, we had little arms that turned into dinosaurs, and jelly fish, and ones that had smiley faces. A love extended from me and enveloped us all in one invisible embrace. I laughed in awe and at ease while another girl showed me how she fidgets with her little fingers, giggling, she twisted and pulled them 360°. I was struck most by the joyful acceptance of their unique limbs. It made me so happy, and that's the moment I realised, this is it. This is the RAW energy I came for.

For me, being part of Reach is like eating fruit and vegetables, it's like exercise and getting 8 hours sleep - it's part of my wellness. And at times I might even overlook how important it is for me, like it's a nice to have but I don't need it. Then I show up at RAW to have my heart cracked open and remember, this is my tonic. In the space between RAW 26' and 27' our lives unfold, and sometimes they might even unravel, that's okay. Because, despite the many changes that happen within us and around us, one thing that never changes is our connection at Reach, we get it. Reach is family and in coming home we find ourselves.



Esther



Each year, you think RAW can't possibly top the last and somehow it always does! The friendships, the kindness, the family feel and all those little moments are what make each year so special.

We said hello to new faces and said goodbye to some of the children we've watched grow through RAW over the years! Each year they build confidence and independence and are now ready to take their next steps into adulthood. It's a bittersweet part of RAW, but also a wonderful reminder of the journey they have been on!

From the first nervous introductions to the laughter, challenges, adventures and countless moments of connection, RAW is so much more than just a week away. It's a place where children can simply be themselves, surrounded by others who understand. Life-long friendships are formed and memories are made that last long after the week is over. That is why being a mentor is so important to me. I am so grateful to Reach for giving me some of my closest friendships, the most incredible memories and a sense of belonging that has stayed with me!

"I was struck most by the joyful acceptance of their unique limbs. It made me so happy, and that's the moment I realised, this is it. This is the RAW energy I came for."

Tony



What a blast! This year's RAW with 35 of our incredible young humans definitely didn't disappoint.

It was full of laughs, pranks, quirks, silliness... All the things that make us who we are.

That doesn't mean that there wasn't vulnerability and some tears at times. But that's what makes us who we are, right?

It's so important to feel safe to embrace all our emotions and, to me, that's a large part of what RAW is all about. Not being afraid to be exactly who you are, warts and all.

We did everything from kayaking, rock climbing and axe throwing, to caving, bouldering, and gorge walking. It was such a fantastic experience - it always is.

These kids have so much to give to the world, and as mentors it's our job to show them the way at times.

One of my particular highlights were all the excellent pranks that were played throughout the week on one mentor in particular.

(I would also like to take this opportunity to apologise to Tom for putting itchy bombs under his pillow, on his towel, in his shoes... I should know better! :)

My overall highlight was remaining as the ultimate fighting champion of Stand-Up Paddle Boarding, even it cost me a few days in hospital afterwards with cellulitis from horsefly bites! (It was well worth it, but I wouldn't recommend it!)"

Chris Knox



"Four activities per day, plus our self-generated evening activities and more importantly the general face to face socialising, over meals (absolutely no phones allowed!) and down time, quite a lot to choose from. Young people from Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England with a true sense of belonging. There were, of course, a few with understandable homesick blues - first time away from home for anyone can be a challenge - but they soon turned into the very best of times. New mentors too, we all learn things from our young members, it can be draining on the energy levels, but still rewarding to be involved.

Lots of 'first time' fears over some activities took great courage and encouragement to just try...try another way...and success! My concern over a young person being very reserved and not joining in on the giant paddleboard, were unfounded, as I half turned my head away, a great shove from behind and I was overboard, the young person now laughing out loud, was also the first one to help me back on board.

Belief, learning, confidence, trust, friendship and teamwork were all on show, especially when Claire said, "This is a team game, it is JUST a game, not competitive..."! Ha! The planning in whispers, "So long as we beat team 3! No! It's team five we've got to beat, the little (or big!) cheats and short cut giggles from every team!" Yes, it was very competitive, we were all winners, though team 1 were the best winners, with less cheating (possibly). Poetry and performing should get a mention too!

To see a block on trying something, even with the best instruction and safety measures, that has gone from year to year, finally be overcome is certainly memorable, along with other older ones naturally acting as mentors within the group, a general 'feel good' factor is there. The Carlton Lodge in Yorkshire did us proud again this year, the instructors and centre staff look forward to the Reach booking. Everyone is happy to be there! Down in the southwest next year, who is planning to go?"





Sewing for Reach

Why it matters & an invitation to the Reach community...

Meet the Reach mum starting a movement for inclusion that begins with adaptive clothing...

Faith is a Reach mum to 16-month-old James; she began adapting his sleeves because she believes that is an important aspect of inclusion. For her, ensuring that his clothes fit him and his upper limb difference means he's not left battling with sleeves that constantly need to be rolled up.

"I wanted his clothing to match him," says Faith. "For him to always feel as though his clothing – and this world – is made for him and people with a similar difference."

So, Faith got creative.

"I was gifted a sewing machine and held a 'Sewing for James' party where 13 friends came over with their machines and we spent a few hours amending all of James's next size up clothes, ready for him!"

It was a practical solution to a very real problem. But Faith quickly began thinking beyond her own family and about the Reach community.

Knowing how expensive children's clothes are, and how quickly they grow out of them, understandably Faith, and other families, buy a lot of clothes from Vinted, which sparked an idea. What if there was an adapted clothing category on Vinted whereby clothes they grow out of can be listed for others with limb differences.

Faith wanted to move beyond simply passing clothes from one child to another. She wants families to have the same freedom of choice that everyone else has when shopping for clothes.



"If James likes Spiderman tops, and the child we pass clothes to actually really likes Batman, they should be able to pick and choose the exact clothes they want their child to have – just like any other child and family should be able to."

For Faith, choice is important. Adapted clothing shouldn't mean accepting whatever happens to be available.

So, Faith started a petition:

"Inclusive clothing is not just a necessity; it's a right. By adding such a category, Vinted can help ensure all children feel comfortable and empowered, regardless of their differences.

By creating a specific category for second-hand clothing adapted for children with limb differences and other disabilities, Vinted will not only be addressing a significant need but will also be setting a precedent in inclusivity in the online retail sector. This change can reduce the environmental impact of the clothing industry, support parents' budgets, and more importantly, allow children with disabilities to have clothes that suit their needs and dignity."

Sign Faith's change.org petition:
<https://www.change.org/p/ask-vinted-to-add-adapted-clothing-category>



Introducing Jane...

In a wonderfully serendipitous turn of events, retired teacher and VSO volunteer, Jane, approached Reach to volunteer her sewing skills to support Reach members who might need alterations to their clothing, little did she know, her kind offer of help would lead her to Faith's campaign.

"There are so many ways that sewing can be useful, creative and fun. From mending and personalised alterations, to repurposing fabrics and making new things. I'm here, how can I help?"



Consider this your invitation

Join the movement...

This is just the beginning of an exciting journey, but the place to start is by bringing people together to see where it goes. So, please sign Faith's petition for a start; or get in touch if you're a parent who feels passionately about adapting your child's clothes but perhaps you don't have the time or sewing skills to do it. Or maybe, like Jane, you have the skills or the time to give to helping to adapt clothes for Reach members or teach others.

A few ideas of how you can get involved today:

- **Sign Faith's Petition – join the movement**
- **Donate clothes for others to adapt**
- **Start listing your adapted clothes on Vinted, clearly including 'ULD' / 'Adapted' in the description**
- **Help your local Branch Coordinator to arrange a 'Sewing for Reach meet-up with your local branch**
- **Teams meetings online to share ideas and sewing skills**
- **Willing to be part of a working group? Get in touch!**

Get in touch!

Faith Purcell Faithapurcell@gmail.com

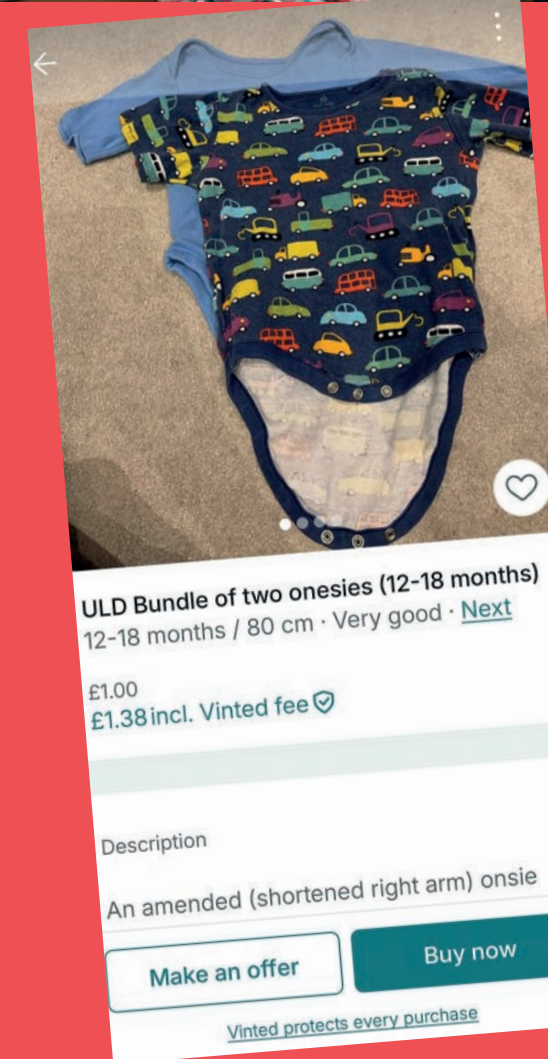
+44 7523217532

Skype: live:faithapurcell

Why adaptive clothing matters

Finding clothes that fit and work for your body shouldn't be a barrier to enjoying fashion. Reach member and writer, Emily Tisshaw explored the disability gap in second-hand fashion through Visible Voices, talking about some of the challenges disabled people face when shopping second-hand — highlighting why projects like Sewing for Reach are so important.

Read the article: Secondhand Fashion Has a Disability Gap: <https://www.visible-voices.com/magazine/article/secondhand-fashion-has-a-disability-gap>



The Power of Belonging



Belonging doesn't happen out of thin air. You have to create a space for it.

The Reach 18–25s Retreat isn't about adults telling young people what to do, or mentors teaching them how to navigate life with a limb difference. It's about bringing young adults together with others at a similar stage of life – a stage that can bring immense challenges – and giving them the space simply to be themselves.

That is what makes it meaningful.

So, how did this year's 18 – 25s Retreat go and what's next?

The 2026 retreat brought together 16 young adults with limb differences - twice as many as 2025 – alongside mentors, for a weekend focused on connection, shared experience and simply spending time together.

Aside from having fun trying new activities including Bungee Fitness and a Nature Walk, the 18 – 25s Retreat report highlights the importance of time to simply be amongst peers.

Knowing that mentors have travelled the same road can hopefully bring comfort. But, most importantly, that fellow participants, are on it with them now. That's what makes it.

There is great power in the feeling of belonging, and it might be that a young person doesn't feel they need it yet, but we can never underestimate the weight of simply knowing the support is there.

When asked about expectations for the Retreat, young people talked about:

Feeling part of a community; connecting with people straight away; feeling understood without the need to explain yourself; comfort in feeling free to talk openly with people you've just met; being with other young people with ULD; feeling connected and part of a community; the chance to relax and be themselves.

These are just some of the comments from our young people post-retreat...

These experiences are profound; they can help to lay the foundations of confidence that will carry someone through some of the hardest stages of life. Simply knowing that your Reach community is there for you as you begin navigating the world on your own for the first time carries a weight that cannot be ignored.

The value of this kind of connection isn't necessarily something we can measure immediately. Rebecca, who attended this year's Retreat as a first-time mentor, reflects on what it might have meant to her younger self:

"I think I would have benefited hugely, but I don't think younger me would have perhaps appreciated how much I needed it or in what way it was beneficial."

Looking back now, Rebecca recognises that growing up without a strong connection to a limb difference community taught her to be fiercely independent, but also made it difficult to ask for help or accept adaptations when she needed them.

"I think a retreat and belonging to a limb difference community at a younger age may have allowed me to 'play and adventure' without the need to prove myself."

What's next for the 18-25s Retreat Project?

Following the Retreat, two-thirds said they felt MORE CONFIDENT, MORE OPTIMISTIC and MORE POSITIVE. And a key takeaway that shouldn't be overlooked - ALL would recommend the Retreat to other Reach members aged 18-25.

So, it seems the Retreat project did what it intended: it created a meaningful space for our young people to connect, build confidence and feel part of their community.

But despite the encouraging evidence from the 2026 evaluation, its future isn't guaranteed. With current funding coming to an end, Reach needs to find a way to continue providing this opportunity for our 18–25s.

If you believe in the power of connection, please consider helping us keep the Retreat going. Whether through fundraising, making a donation or helping us spread the word, your support could help create the space for the next generation to find their people.



Upcoming...

Retreat 2027 - 2nd - 5th July!

Online Mentorship Programme

Starting in September, consisting of monthly 1.5 hours sessions over 9 months. A safe and supportive online mentoring/peer support community where mentees and mentors come together to explore topics and themes related to the challenges and triumphs of being a person with a ULD.

If you're interested in the mentoring programme or attending the retreat next year, get in touch with Jenna, 18 – 25 Retreat & Mentorship Project Coordinator at jennaR@reach.org.uk or 07484 462462

Thanks to The National Lottery Community Fund!



The Limb Loss & Limb Difference Alliance | LLLDA

Campaigning for Change

Working together to make sure people with limb loss and limb difference get the support they need, wherever they live.

At the end of April, Reach announced that they had joined the Limb Loss & Limb Difference Alliance, bringing together leading UK charities to raise awareness, share lived experience and campaign for better support for people with limb loss and limb difference.

The Alliance includes Reach, Blesma, Finding Your Feet, LimbPower, Steel Bones and the Amputation Foundation. Together, the organisations represent thousands of people and families across the UK.

Now, the Alliance is taking the next step: campaigning for change.

More than 13,000 major amputations take place across England and Scotland each year, while around 1 in 1,600 children are born with a limb difference. Yet access to prosthetics, rehabilitation, mental health support and specialist services can still vary depending on where someone lives. The Alliance believes that support should not be determined by your postcode.

Its recommendations to Government include creating a national audit and registry to measure services and outcomes, developing lifelong and joined-up pathways of care, improving access to mental health support, and ensuring families receive clear information at diagnosis.

The Alliance is also calling for action to address shortages in the specialist workforce, including prosthetists, orthotists and rehabilitation staff, and for lived experience to be formally embedded in the way services are designed, monitored and improved.

In July, representatives from the Alliance and people with lived experience came together at Parliament for the launch of its recommendations, bringing issues including mental health support, inequalities in prosthetic provision and public attitudes directly to decision-makers.

For Reach, being part of the Alliance means helping to make sure the experiences of children, young people and adults with limb difference are part of this conversation.

This is just the beginning – and together, we can make our voices harder to ignore.



The growth of the Metacarpal GEM

When we spoke in 2023, Metacarpal was still in its early stages. What has been the biggest milestone for the company since?

The release of GEM: going from a company that designs things to a company delivering a medical device to real users. We've brought a lot of expertise into the team to help production, clinical training and the sales process to ensure they're made to the best quality, and can be supported by professionals.

What has feedback from people using your prosthetics taught you?

The first thing is, that people will use the device whichever way that they see fit. If they think that the hand works best backwards for a certain task that's how it will be used. We quickly learned that it's not up to us to say you cannot do that or operate the hand in that way; we have to work around how our users want to use the device.

Similarly, we have to design for how our users want to use the device, not how we want them to.

Is there a particular user story or experience that really captures the impact Metacarpal can have on everyday life?

We have one user, Gareth, a construction worker who had nearly given up on prosthetics. In his 14 years as an amputee, he had gone through 12 robotic hands! Typically, this was a durability issue. However, the last one he had, while operating a forklift he had a muscle spasm which caused the myoelectric signals to breakdown which nearly led to an accident and he promptly threw the prosthetic out of the forklift!

Since getting GEM, he no longer has to worry if the hand will do what he wants it to do, the hand will withstand his lifestyle. It's something he can actually trust.

This is what I felt was missing in prosthetics - trust – Gareth found his through GEM.

How has access to Metacarpal devices changed? Are there any developments regarding UK limb centres or NHS access?

As a new device and technology, the NHS is something that we are currently navigating. The big challenge is that it can be different in every region. We know that clinicians in the UK are eager to fit GEM hands, and together with enthusiastic patients, we can make the justification for access today, not tomorrow.



The GEM has evolved significantly. What are the biggest improvements and which features have users found most valuable?

The number one improvement has been making the hand so durable that users who previously would have only been able to wear a split hook are able to wear the device.

The only answer; to use the highest quality materials, expensive manufacturing methods and surface finishing. However, the result is something that our users can wear without worry. Doing exactly what the best prosthetics should strive to do – being invisible and enabling independence.

Metacarpal is now reaching users internationally. How has the company's growth changed your perspective as a founder?

Well, it is very clear that there are regions around the planet where prosthetics are needed most, and they are provided least. I built this company to build the best prosthetics in the world, and make those available to all that need them.

You were recognised in the Forbes 30 Under 30 Europe list. What did that recognition mean to you, and for the Metacarpal team?

The recognition is a real badge that loads of people know which is quite cool to wear, I'd be lying to say otherwise. I get the recognition but it's all supported by my team and advisors, investors.

Where do you see body-powered prosthetics heading, and what role do you hope Metacarpal will play in that future?

Body-powered prosthetics are certainly not considered as advanced as the robotic hands that we see on the internet and TV. We see so many people that have been fitted with the robotic hands, often paying out of their pocket, then finding that the functionality is nowhere near their expectations.



I see it as my job to make body-powered or mechanical prosthetics sexy. To encourage people to see the most advanced prosthetics as the one that gives the highest levels of ability; allowing people to complete complex tasks, overcome everyday hurdles in the fastest time. One that gets out of the way, rather than taking centre stage.

We have started with the terminal device, but now have a platform for more research into how we can harness more body-motion, to control more aspects of a prosthesis.

How we can keep this simple and out the way, yet functional when it needs to be.

What are you most excited to be working on next?

Well, within the next month, and probably by the time this magazine has been released, we will have been able to launch GEM Lock. This is the first upgrade to the GEM that was launched around a year ago. It's the most requested feature

on the product and something that takes the functionality of GEM and amplifies it for a whole host of new possibilities.

Suddenly users will be able to have fine control of a hand as previous, but at any time relax pressure whilst still maintaining grip. It's a huge step forward in body-powered prosthetic control and functionality, and something we are immensely excited to be launching.

Finally, how can people get involved and begin their own Metacarpal journey?

Since our last conversation – we are now a multinational company – manufacturing these in Edinburgh, we are ready to facilitate trials to anyone interested. If this is something that you are interested in, get in touch: info@metacarpalprosthetics.com

Talk to your prosthetist, or OT about us. More awareness of our work helps us to improve access, in the UK and then globally.

The Reach Language Guide

An Essential Tool

Have you ever stopped yourself from saying something because you weren't sure if it was right?

Talking about disability is and can be complicated but with guidance and compassion, productive, inclusive conversations can lead to big change.

The Reach Language Guide is just that, a catalyst for progress to empower people and give them a place to start.

Why it exists and how it can impact the Reach community

The important thing about language is it can impact the way we interact with the world. But it's also not something we need to be afraid of. It can feel like a minefield discussing disability; knowing what to say, understanding different terminology and whether it's appropriate to use it or not. It's made more complicated by the fact that everyone is an individual with their own lived experiences and ways of describing themselves.

But Reach's language guide isn't about restriction, it's about building confidence; equipping people so they can get involved in the conversation, and therefore empowering them to be more inclusive.



Steve Haynes, creator of the Language Guide says, "As a trustee of Reach and as someone with an Upper Limb Difference (ULD) myself, I wanted to create this guide because language matters. I'm a vocal advocate of the social model of disability. The words used about children and adults with ULD do not just describe us; they help shape how others see us and, just as importantly, how we see ourselves.

The guide uses examples such as, "Born without an arm" and suggests using "born with an upper limb difference" as a more inclusive, positive description that negates any perceived lack of anything.

Naturally, the guide will evolve over time, and should as language evolves, and it will always respect personal choice above all else.

"This guide is not about policing language or telling people how they must describe themselves; personal choice will always come first. It is about helping media professionals, educators, healthcare workers, researchers and the wider public use language that is accurate, respectful and rooted in dignity."

The Language Guide highlights the importance of challenging the medical model of disability which tends to lean on the concept that something is wrong with the body, missing or deficient. Steve highlights Reach's intentional step away from this kind of language.

"The most important shift is moving away from language of loss, deficiency or pity and towards language that recognises difference, capability and individuality."

Another aspect of language that the guide tackles is within the area of representation, with 'inspirational' being a common label given to everyday tasks as opposed to genuine achievement.

"People with ULD are not problems to be fixed or inspirational simply for existing. We are people with talents, ambitions, challenges, choices and full lives. The language around us should reflect that."

A mammoth project, Steve ensured that the consultation process also involved Reach members with ULD, parents and carers, trustees, the Policy & Language Working Groups and the Within Reach editor, before being drafted for release in March 2026.

"I'm incredibly grateful to everyone within the Reach family who contributed to the Language Guide and helped shape it into something that reflects our community."

What can Reach members do?

Spread the word. Share this guide with friends, family, professionals and teachers – whoever is willing to listen. Empower the people in your lives and communities to grow in confidence to use more positive, progressive language.

We are a diverse community, there is no right or wrong, but now we have a great place to start, let's keep the conversation alive and growing.

<https://www.reach.org.uk/resources/language-guide>



From Spring WR magazine to Springwatch | Humphrey's journey

From childhood bug hunts to working behind the scenes on *Springwatch*, Humphrey Keeper has always been drawn to the natural world. This year, he found himself on screen, sharing his passion for wildlife and talking openly about his limb difference. Here, for WR Magazine Humphrey reflects on his journey, the role his arm has played along the way, and how an unexpected difference can sometimes open unexpected doors.



By Humphrey Keeper

My earliest memories are of animals and nature. Looking up from a buggy at bats against a starry sky, looking under plant pots at my grandparents' house in search of millipedes, watching tadpoles squirm in the shallow water of a neighbour's pond. Like a lot of young people with an enthusiasm for nature, I had been drawn to the natural world by the work of David Attenborough and his contemporaries, and so an appearance on television talking about the creatures I loved so much would be something like a life goal. My appearance on this year's *Springwatch* made that dream a reality, but what I didn't anticipate as a result of it was the editor of *Within Reach* reaching out to ask me to write this article on my journey and the impact my arm (or lack thereof) has had on my life.

I suppose this shouldn't have been surprising. In the segment I talked about my limb difference and how it has impacted my life, and my arm itself is fairly conspicuous, but I have a regrettable habit of forgetting that it's there. My left arm stops halfway along the forearm; the only times I ever really clock that I have it are when I'm doing something I'd usually need two hands for (driving a car, taking a throw-in while playing football), or when I'm in the presence of the dreaded 2–6-year-olds who haven't yet been conformed by societal niceties and can't stop themselves pointing and asking "What's that?". But it is something I feel I should be more aware of, and there are several key points in my life when its presence has become quite important for me.

I was born in Lewisham, London, on the 4th of May 2001. My parents were originally going to name me Luke, but felt that being born on Star Wars day and carrying that name would have been too on the nose, so they named me Humphrey, after my great-grandfather on my mum's side. My limb difference came as something of a surprise to my parents, it had been missed on all of the ultrasounds, and the nurses kept me aside for a while before returning me to my mum. They didn't know what to do at first, but after a fair bit of worry my paediatrician was able to get them in contact with Reach, and the brilliant support provided. They went to their first family weekend in Stoke in 2001, when I could have been no more than 6 months old, and I was on the cover of this very magazine half a year later.

From very early on I began to fall into the rabbit hole of the natural world. I insisted on frequent trips to the local Horniman Museum which housed a terrific natural history collection, and that paired with my paternal grandparents moving to North Norfolk, a national hotspot for



biodiversity, allowed me to develop into a budding young naturalist. I didn't specialise in the more charismatic species like foxes or birds of prey however, I was always drawn to the weird and the odd. I knew I was visually different, and I felt a kinship with the moths and the beetles that everyone else was all too eager to overlook. I joined the amateur entomologist's club (entomology being the study of insects), kept stick insects for many years, and would always point out the oddities I found on walks to my always receptive family.

As I grew up, I remained connected to the Reach community. I had been frequently attending family weekends with my parents, and later sister, and in 2015 I attended my first of four activity weeks, which I recall very fondly. It was very fun to do these activities I had done many times on school-trip-type away weeks, and finally not be told I did a good job given my 'circumstances'.

My final activity week was in 2018, and after that I very much fell out of the loop with Reach as I left secondary school to go to Cornwall, where I was going to be studying Zoology at the University of Exeter's Penryn campus. My three years there flew by; I spent time between lectures looking for newts, days off down on the Lizard Peninsula scouring shrubs for rare birds, and evenings looking for badgers or going nothing.

In my final year I had taken over the running of the university's *Springwatch*-style documentary society, called Naturewatch. I presented to camera, organised shoots, and edited the footage into several episodes which we put out on YouTube throughout that year. Making them confirmed my feeling that what I wanted to do was make wildlife documentaries, like the ones I'd grown up on, and I was lucky to be accepted onto the National Film and Television School (NFTS)'s two-year Master's course in wildlife documentary making after I completed my undergraduate degree. During those two years I became a more capable filmmaker, making two films, and learning from a revolving door of industry tutors.

However, without my limb difference, I would not have been able to even begin the NFTS course. I couldn't afford to finance moving to Beaconsfield (where the course was run), and pay the course fees on my meagre savings, even if I had a part-time job on the side. Fortunately, the

university offered scholarships, and I was accepted onto one as a result of my arm, which helped immensely with costs. My arm proved a hero once more post-NFTS as, during my final couple of months at the university, I saw a job advertised on a platform called Creative Access, which is a brilliant organisation that provides people from minority groups, those with disabilities included, exclusive access to certain job roles. The job was as a trainee researcher on *Winter and Springwatch*, programmes I have long been a fan of. I applied and was fortunate to get an interview. While I didn't get this role, my familiarity with the producers from that interview provided a brilliant platform come the

next year when they recruited for *Springwatch*, and I joined as a Junior Researcher in the April of 2025.

My time at the BBC was a blur, and I can't quite believe I worked there. My 3-month stint consisted of assisting one of the production teams with stories and facts about the wildlife we were seeing. It felt like the culmination of my life's work, but after those three months it was over. The one downside of the *Watches* (as they are known in the industry) is that they only employ you in short bursts, and people have to find ways to subsist between them. I worked as a research assistant for my old university with some researchers I knew studying wasps for the rest of the summer, but from that point onwards I was at odds and ends. I applied for all manner of roles across as many fields as I could, working in cafes, hotels, restaurants, but none came up trumps. I was out of work until April again this year. There was a chance of getting back on the *Watches*, and I had an application in, but I had successfully applied and got a more permanent job in public engagement with Birds of Poole Harbour (BoPH) in Dorset, and I decided to take that leap.

I've been with BoPH for 4 months now, and I enjoy it immensely. My job is essentially acting in equal parts a tour guide and a spotter on birdwatching trips around Poole Harbour, using the skills I've learned over a lifetime of birdwatching. I am quite lucky to have stumbled into something that I enjoy doing that is adjacent to what I had originally hoped to work in, but I think if I had one tip for people at a similar stage in their career journey, I'd probably say be open to trying new things. We live in a time where the world of work is shifting rapidly, and even having a job

is an achievement. Even if it's not what you hoped for, it might be wise to ride out the storm doing something new and see what the job landscape looks like in a few years when the dust has settled.

My appearance on this year's *Springwatch* was as a result of my producer from the previous year reaching out and asking if I wanted to do a short film for them, and I am incredibly grateful for that opportunity, which still stems from my limb difference. So perhaps my other takeaway is that there can be times where a limb difference can give you a leg up, so take advantage when you can!

"There can be times where a limb difference can give you a leg up, so take advantage when you can!"





A Q&A with the voices behind the Offhand Podcast...

Tell us about the Offhand Podcast...

LEAH - For me, it's a podcast that takes up space in a good way. We discuss topics that are rarely addressed in the world. From what we call our limb differences and bullying, to awkward interactions that make you feel like hiding. It's a place to hear real experiences and opinions from people with limb differences.

LOTTIE - I would say that Offhand is a podcast all about sharing experiences. It creates a unique space for 18–25 year-olds to share with and for other 18–25 year-olds; it really is a creation by and for the limb difference community. Because of this, hopefully the listeners are able to see themselves and their experiences reflected and represented in the hosts, and feel recognised, reassured, and encouraged.

As Reach is now for adults as well as children, I think Offhand is a hugely positive tool, to allow us to 'reach' (pun absolutely intended!!) out to young adults in the community, who might not yet know about the charity that there's a supportive family open to them.

How did you become hosts?

LEAH - I saw Reach's Instagram post announcing they were preparing a podcast, so I immediately started looking for ways to get involved. I signed up for a presentation workshop to build skills in areas like social media and podcasting, and made a few connections that helped me take the next step.

I've always loved the freedom that comes with podcasting — I've hosted and produced a few before — but I'm especially proud to be part of Offhand. It feels meaningful to contribute to something created by and for our community.

LOTTIE - Similarly to Leah, I also spotted Reach advertising the presenting workshop and I read that Reach was opening up to adults. Having been involved with Reach for a short time as a baby and young child, I thought it would be a lovely opportunity to get involved again, so I jumped at the chance! I had worked on a couple of podcast episodes while I was at university, but the Offhand concept in particular really spoke to me, and I thought it would be a lovely project to be part of!

Why is 18–25 such an important audience?

LEAH - When I first joined Reach as a child, there was a clear cut off at 18. So, when I went to university, I genuinely didn't realise I could still be part of the community. That gap matters. So many services emphasise that everything stops at 18, just at the point when young people are navigating huge transitions — body image, independence, university life, and the sudden shift in how services treat you once you're classed as an adult.

Bridging that gap is essential. Young people need to know they're still welcome, still supported, and still part of a community that understands their experiences.

LOTTIE - Despite having grown up feeling confident about my limb difference, and still feeling that way as an adult, I know that it is definitely since leaving school at 18, that I have really encountered a lot of situations where I have felt more unsure / uncertain about how to approach things with my hand, or I have perhaps had more challenging and unexpected conversations and experiences.

I think this is exactly why it is so important and brilliant that Reach is connecting with 18–25 year-olds, as those years of life are a really pivotal time, when young adults will be encountering new and challenging situations, such as living independently, starting work/university, dating etc. I think it is a time when support, encouragement, and advice from a community that understands, is really vital. Hopefully young adults will be able to engage with Offhand, hear the advice, and feel that support and encouragement, and know that that is all available to them in much larger quantities, if they get involved with Reach!

Have any conversations stayed with you?

LEAH - The mental health podcast with Marie Tidball and the limb alliance charities felt particularly significant. It opened my eyes to just how large and connected the limb loss and limb difference community really is — and reminded me that I'm not alone in advocating for better services and support.

It was an emotional day; one I won't forget. What I once saw as a relatively small community suddenly became something

much bigger: a network built on understanding, compassion and creativity. Everyone in the room shared something I could relate to, and that sense of collective experience was incredibly powerful.

Listen now: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/7omog4LBtY3DAIZoLFO8hP?si=1Dsvm7I-TN6QxCKIIdPZJA>

LOTTIE - Leah's podcast episode about her surgeries really stuck with me. I found it hugely eye-opening and informative, and I learned so much, but I was also just really moved by how profoundly Leah articulated her whole experience. Definitely worth a watch.

Any moments that surprised you?

LEAH - I found the episode on confidence and body image very liberating, and the more episodes I've done, the more I realised I've manifested being confident and speaking publicly about topics I never thought I would.

LOTTIE - I might sound clichéd but I have been really inspired throughout the whole process. It's been so encouraging to meet other young adults with limb differences and to hear their experiences.

My eyes have really been opened to the fact that nothing is impossible, and that people with limb differences are doing incredible things in the world. It's very hard not to be inspired by that!

What have you learned from the Reach community?

LEAH - Meeting people my age and younger who are athletes, advocates and creatives has been genuinely eye opening. Everyone I spoke to was carving out their own path with this competitive confidence in content creation and self expression.

LOTTIE As someone disabled, it's been such a relief to realise just how many avenues are open to me. I'm starting to notice more people with limb differences becoming actors, influencers, singers and creators, and that has inspired me on a really personal level. It's made me feel that any job can be shaped around my journey, and that I can explore far more hobbies and interests than I ever thought possible — especially with the encouragement and advice from such a lovely group of people. I also think that working in the NHS currently is opening my eyes to accessible services and to how important healthcare has been for this community.

Finally, on a more personal note, the whole experience of helping to present Offhand has brought me back into the Reach community, which I am so pleased about and grateful for. I have felt so welcomed and supported over the last few months, and I feel really proud to be a tiny part of the Reach family. I wish I had come back sooner!

Which episode should new listeners start with?

LEAH - I think the Adapt and Thrive episode is a really good start, as there are some good day-to-day adaptations and ideas that can help

anyone within the community. I think talking about the social model of disability can really open your eyes to a lot of the difficulties faced in daily life and how gaps have appeared within society for those who are disabled.

Listen now: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6jvyTh8AZox2IK7cqXrMdm?si=2ce7967a585945fa>

LOTTIE - I completely agree with Leah - I think the Adapt and Thrive episode is a really great place to start! That was a huge eye-opener for me - I wasn't aware of the vast range of adaptations on offer, I will definitely be investing! I have no idea why, for so much of my life, I would spend half an hour trying to get an onion to stop rolling around on a chopping board, when I could just chuck it in a chopping box and it be ready in 30 seconds!!

I think that episode really highlights the importance of the Reach community, even tips on the little things in life can make a huge difference, and knowing there are other people who completely understand.

Any topics you're hoping to explore in future?

LOTTIE - I would love to explore parents' perspectives in a future episode. I think it would be great to interview a Reach young adult alongside their parent/s, so that we could gain an insight into how a parent's perspective

may change / develop as their child grows older and begins to encounter different challenges. I think it would hopefully be a beneficial episode to reassure and encourage new parents of children with limb differences that, although there may be challenges along the way, their child will be okay, and will thrive as they progress into adulthood.

Finally, why should someone listen to Offhand?

LEAH - I'm definitely biased, but I genuinely think Offhand is the first podcast I've come across that openly explores limb differences and the full range of experiences that come with being a young person in the world. It's also amazing to listen to guests discuss issues and experiences that I relate to as it can be very isolating being disabled and it truly makes you feel a part of Reach.

LOTTIE - I am also biased, but I think that a podcast is a platform for stories, and for hearing people's voices and experiences, and I would say that Offhand is a perfect example

of that. I think it is a really unique space to hear the perspectives and voices of young adults in the limb difference community, and to dig into topics that might normally be avoided. I really hope that listeners can take something away from each episode and feel supported and seen.

I know I would have absolutely loved to have had Offhand as a resource when I was first entering the adult world, but I am so glad I can be part of it now :)

Follow & listen to the podcast now:

Offhand: Living life with an upper limb difference



As editor of Within Reach magazine I never aim to be the voice of Reach. My lived experience is different to the next Reach adult's but I do believe it's important to share honest, authentic accounts of moments in my life in the hope that it may resonate or help others, wherever they are on their journey.

A letter to my younger self...

Dear Max,

No matter how you're feeling today, in this moment, just know everything is going to be OK.

One day you will make it through the dark. You will understand the reason why, gain the confidence you need to thrive, and have days when you embrace your body just as it is.

You spend so much time hiding, floating under the radar, scared of being seen. I'm sorry the world you live in makes you feel that way. I'm sorry you have no one in front of you to follow, and that the fight for representation didn't start sooner. But it's a fight you will champion and take on yourself one day, because you know.

I promise you that in the future, you'll leave the cardigan at home and care far less about what people think. You'll still have your bad days and your sad days, but you'll also actively seek opportunities to share your difference. You'll be driven to help others see that difference is part of life, because you want children growing up with a difference to feel included and understood.

There are going to be tough moments. Moments when you wonder why you were born as you were. Moments when questions will frustrate you, and times when you welcome them.

You're going to search for ways to be more easily accepted, and then realise that no one actually cares. There will be times when you want to fight, and times when you still want to blend in – and that's OK.

You're going to have moments when you feel you're not enough. That you need to be doing more, saying more, sharing more. Moments when you don't feel seen, and moments when you feel seen too much.

You're going to push yourself, sometimes too far, to prove you can – to yourself, to the world, and sometimes without even knowing why. But that determination, that resilience and the compassion you are cultivating will be essential for what comes next.

But right now, just as you are, holding that cardigan over your arm on the hottest day, know you're not alone in your journey. There is a whole community waiting for you. Friends who just know. Friends you can rant and rave to, moan and cry with about the lived experience moments that anger, frustrate and confuse you – but also the wins, the moments that matter most.

One day you're going to meet someone, and he's going to love you for exactly who you are. You'll adventure together and create a life you won't believe.

And a huge part of that life will be about helping people.

Through Reach, sharing the voices of this amazing community and mentoring Reach children on RAW.

Through mountain rescue and SARDA, helping people in the mountains – people who are lost or missing.

And as a mountain leader, guiding people who have lost their confidence and helping them discover what they are capable of.

You're going to share your lived experience so the world can learn how it should have been – and, hopefully, make it a little easier for those following you.

So, Max, keep going.

Leave the cardigan at home when you're ready.

And remember: you were never the problem. The world just wasn't ready for you yet.

Love,
Max x

Splash!

A poem inspired by Reach Ambassador Claire Cashmore...

By Elmwood Class, Woodlands School,
Leatherhead, Surrey

Splash, splash

Time to play.

Dip your toes, feel the pool
Soft and quiet, Calm and cool

She tried slow, then a bit fast,

Kick, kick, kick

She swam at last!

Dive in like a cannonball

SPLASH went the sound

Water jumping, all around.

Swimming, swimming

Nice and proud

Not too quiet, Not too loud

Play and splash

Smile wide, Happy feeling

Deep inside.



Did you know that Mountain Training England have a Disability Training Fund? Check out their courses...

<https://www.mountain-training.org/help/support/funding-for-qualifications/mountain-training-england-disability-training-fund/>

irwinmitchell

Meet our team at the Reach Annual Family Weekend 2026

We're committed to helping families access the legal advice and support they need when it matters most.

Visit our exhibition stand for an informal conversation or to discuss any questions you may have.

Between 3pm and 5pm, we will be offering a free legal drop-in in a private and confidential setting, with consultations lasting up to 15 minutes.

Contact our expert



NICOLA ASHTON

Senior Associate Solicitor,
Medical Negligence

T: 0161 838 5587
E: nicola.ashton@irwinmitchell.com

Excellent ★★★★★ 13,166 reviews on ★ Trustpilot



What does it mean to be a member of Reach?

Regional Family Weekends

Family-focused weekends balancing activities & relaxation to connect you with Reach families around the UK.

Annual Family Weekend (AFW)

Our National annual family event in October; a conference all about sharing lived experiences, inspiring stories, invaluable resources, and reconnecting the Reach family.

Branch Meet Ups

Local get-togethers & fun, relaxed meet-ups with local members and families near you, encouraging meaningful connections.

Reach Activity Week (RAW)

In July/August every year, Reach children aged 10–17 go away for a week of fun & friend-making on RAW. Adventure guaranteed; from climbing, abseiling & canoeing to problem solving, archery & coasteering.

The Reach Retreat for 18–25s

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

Membership Benefits:

Welcome pack - A care pack for new parents with information about what to expect, the support available to them, & 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 & representation, all delivered straight to your door & available online.

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

Reach Blog: - Articles from Within Reach & fresh pieces about lived experiences, editorials, interviews and features from your upper limb difference community.

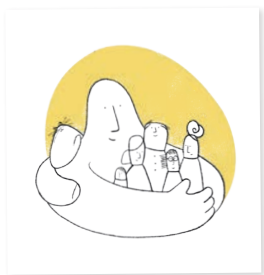
Social Media Community - Public platforms focusing on representation & awareness, & private groups providing a safe space for sharing & celebration. Stay connected with the wider community, ask questions, & share experiences.

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

Access to the Reach Support Fund - for essential equipment & adaptations.

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

Write your will for FREE!



Reach have teamed up with will-writing specialists Farewill... 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>

In partnership with
Farewill



Our supporters:

