

Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits

Within Reach

Spring 2023 | ISSUE 152



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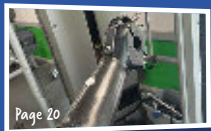
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Meet our Wonderful Branch Coordinators

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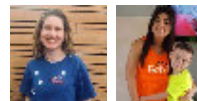
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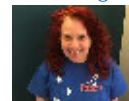
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Branch Coordinator Needed
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Northern England



Suzanne Parker
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Events

JUN

- 25th - South West - Reach on the Beach
- 17th - South London - Bocketts Farm Branch Meet Up

JUL

- 14th - 16th - North West - Patterdale Hall Family Weekend
- 30th - 6th Aug - Reach Activity Week - RAW

AUG

- 12th - Berks & Wilts - Branch Meet Up
- 27th - Midlands - Sports day
- TBC - Wessex - Branch Meet Up

SEP

- TBC - The first ever 18 - 25 Reach Retiree. (Subject to funding) To find out more contact emily@reach.org.uk

OCT

- 20th - 22nd Reach Annual Family Weekend & AGM

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



STOP Reach emails going into your junk folder!

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

Hello!

From the Editor & Designer of withinReach
We're celebrating 45 years of Within Reach Magazine. When it began it was written on a typewriter and photocopied to send out to members, so Tom and I are very pleased for the invention of Word, InDesign and the Internet! We hope you enjoy this spring's issue; we always welcome comments, requests, or suggestions for future issues, so please feel free to email us 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 who are interested in furthering the work of the association. The UK and Ireland subscription is from £36 (£35 via direct debit) and the International subscription is £40.

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

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Stay up to date

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

Want to volunteer?

A huge THANK YOU to branch coordinators Tash Pocock & Hannah Harrington who have left as BCS. It's never goodbye from the Reach family! Thank you for your hard work because without our volunteer coordinators our local events and meet ups just wouldn't be possible.

If you're keen to get involved, we're looking for coordinators! Please feel free to get in touch today with the Reach Team. Why not come along to a Branch Event in a neighbouring area and chat with someone who is doing it! Or call the Reach team and we can tell you more about it at reach@reach.org.uk.

Welcome

Hello! My name is Sarah-Jane, most people call me SJ

I am very happy and proud to be the new Charity Operations Lead for Reach. Right now, I'm busy connecting with everyone in the Reach Family, learning all the systems with a very patient Ashley, and beginning to get ready for this year's events. I can't wait! Me before Reach? 10 years working as a Stage Manager in the Theatre was a great warm up for 20 years+ working with amazing children and young people in play and social care. I've worked across the country, for local and national charities and for local authorities. I've been lucky and for most of my career my job has been to listen to what children and young people want to do and help make it happen. Really looking forward to meeting you and your children.

Until then, please contact me anytime, I'm here to help: sarah-janel@reach.org.uk / Mobile: 07932 747 654

PS: I am also the Safeguarding Lead for Reach so if you're worried or need some advice in the context of safeguarding, please contact me anytime.



On the road with Reach!

Coming into post as your new Operations Lead I took to the road to come and meet some of you in person, to understand Reach and all that you do. Honestly, I am really impressed. Reach is more than a national charity, it's a family, with real people, young and old(er) all over the country volunteering their time to help families, and make a difference in the lives of children and young people with upper limb difference:

People like June near York, inspired by her amazing granddaughter Lexie, to fundraise for Reach at the village fete this summer and Tracey, Branch Coordinator for the West Midlands, her husband Jason and the whole family helping to run a fantastic branch meeting at their local community hall with families coming from all over the Midlands to join in soft play, ball games, lunch, scrummy cakes and a science workshop.

Tracey & Jason are already busy planning a Reach Sports Day for the Summer - Midland members - WATCH THIS SPACE!

I've been to see the hotel in Gateshead where the Annual Family Weekend is going to be held in the autumn and it's lush! I've driven past Thirsk where this year's RAW is running. I've drunk a lot of coffee in a lot of coffee shops with Branch Coordinators: Joanne (Berkshire), Sue (Northern), Melissa (South Wales) and had online meetings with Branch Coordinators from all over the country who have given me their time to help me learn what's going well and what me, Ashley and the Reach Trustees can do to help make it even better! THANK YOU - to use a north London colloquialism "You is amazing!"

Please may I end with a quote given to me by someone recounting her sons' first trip to RAW. Like most of us would be, this mum was feeling a bit worried as her son got on the bus. But he turned to her and said:

'Don't worry mum - I'm with my people'.



SJ

Sarah-Jane
Charity Operations Lead
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Reach Board of Trustees

Chair: Chris Creamer
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Co Vice Chairs: Ruth Lester OBE
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Co Vice Chairs: Gary Phillips
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Once upon a time on 18th February 1978...

... 2 mothers of young children with upper limb difference watched a feature about myoelectric arms on Tomorrow's World programme on BBC2. Dr Rolf Sorbye in Sweden was fitting young children with modern arms and the mothers were determined to find out if their children could be fitted "on the NHS". Independent of each other, Maureen Brennan and Elizabeth Southwick organised public meetings in Finsbury Park and in Romford. Out of these parents' meetings, Reach was born 45 years ago. So this year is a significant birthday for Reach. The first issue of Within Reach was produced on a typewriter, then photocopied for distribution to members. Each issue documents the progress that our volunteers achieved in forming regional branches, organising local events for families to show them they are not isolated but part of a unique group of problem solvers.

Imagine how the first Reach parents would feel if they could time travel to 2023 to meet our Reach Adults and Role Models - who help and inspire our children today. To participate in our Annual Family Weekend, to listen to our older children describe the life-changing experience of our Reach Activity Week run by our specially trained leaders, to find information on our website or to enjoy reading about the lives of other families on our social media is truly mind-blowing.

And if that's not enough in 2023, we have so much happening it is dizzying. Please wish "Welcome to the Reach Family" to Sarah-Jane Lowson, Charity Ops Lead and to Ashley Blackburn, Business Support. They will be very proactive in supporting our Branches, visiting and meeting many Branch Coordinators, communicating with members on our social media and highlighting events for families in Within Reach. So please think about how you can participate and drive Reach upward to even greater heights.

The new Trustee Board elected by the members at AGM in October 2022 is made up of veterans and young people who want to make a difference in the lives of children born with an upper limb difference. This is both a challenging and a highly exciting time for Reach. We are primarily a Parent Support Group, but now we draw on the rich experiences from the lives and achievements of our 20+ members coming back to give back to Reach. The future for our children will be so positive and exciting because of interacting with their older peers. We have Doctors, Teachers, Engineers, IT Wiz Kids, Sports Stars, Actors and Musicians to name but a few. For our children, to learn from those "who wear the t-shirt every day", is hugely beneficial.

I would earnestly encourage all parents of children with an upper limb difference to try to get involved in your local branch and the nationwide organisation. If we believe we can make the world a better place for all, we will make a difference. A group of parents got together in 1978 and achieved just that for our children.



Chris

Chris Creamer
Reach Board of Trustees Chairman
chris@reach.org.uk

Contact Reach

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Phone: Ashley Blackburn (Business Support) on 07932 747654 or Sarah-Jane Lowson (Charity Operations & Safeguarding Lead) on 07932 747652

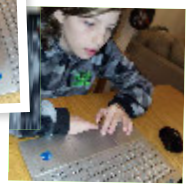
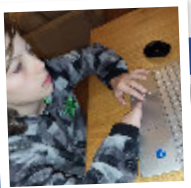
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Twitter: @reachcharity
Instagram: @reachcharity1
Facebook: facebook.com/reachcharity
LinkedIn: Reach Charity Limited
Registered charity in England and Wales no.1134544
Registered charity in Scotland no.SC049805

Bursary Siobhan & Andrew

"Thank you so much to Reach for the bursary of £429 to fund a laptop for Andrew for high school.

Andrew struggles with his writing due to being right hand dominant (his missing limb) and had been worrying about completing schoolwork without access to a computer, as he had access to a laptop at primary school.

Also, Andrew loved being able to buy his own laptop and did his research to find the perfect one for him. The process for applying for a bursary is very simple and such a massive help to families."



Spreading the news of Reach!

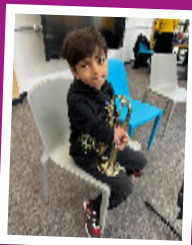
"The Italian Medical Society of Great Britain (IMSGB) have opened a fundraising appeal for Reach membership sponsorship. One of the targets is to fund the joining of 100 new families to Reach. The opening of the appeal was announced at an event hosted by the Italian Ambassador and the President of the IMSGB on Monday 27 February at the Italian Embassy in London. The invitees were medical professionals and practitioners connected to the IMSGB. Dr Ruth Lester (Trustee) and Kavita Reese (North London BC) were invited to speak to emphasise the value of Reach membership to families and their own experience of the charity. The event was well received and was a valuable opportunity to spread the wonderful work of Reach!"

Luca's visit to OHMI!

Branch Coordinator for North London Kavita Reese and son Luca's exciting trip to meet the OHMI team:

"Two weeks ago I took Luca to Hereford to meet up with members of the OHMI. (One Handed Musical Instrument society) Children with upper limb differences were invited to perform as part of an OHMI orchestra. I heard of the opportunity through Reach and the day comprised of a series of workshops for the children, culminating in an end of the day performance for parents and staff. Luca took his cornet and performed in a series of pieces, and did a solo performance. He enjoyed the day thoroughly and did a sterling job making himself (and me!) very proud.

I have to say he did really well, was very independent, focused and professional! The whole day was an uplifting experience for both of us, seeing all the wonderful children and their achievements. It was a fantastic opportunity - very special!"



Christmas parties

Thanks to West Midlands Branch Coordinator's Tracey & Jason Smith for sharing their wonderful Christmas party photos!

"We had 22 families attend for our party games and disco and even a visit from Father Christmas and Rudolph! Plus, OHMI also joined us. Thanks to everyone who came!"



Welcome back Phil!

This is my second period as a Trustee of Reach, having previously served as the Treasurer a few years ago.

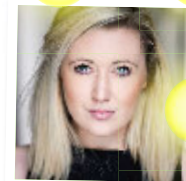
I worked for a major international bank for many years before taking an early retirement to concentrate on my charitable interests. As well as my involvement with Reach, I am the Treasurer of The Hedgehogs, a Farnham, Surrey based charity supporting local people and families in need, and a volunteer driver with a local community meals service.

I am very involved with Scouting, being a District Treasurer, a District Explorer Scout Commissioner, a Group Scout Leader, a mountain expedition leader, and District DoE manager and expedition assessor. I am also a life-long member of St John Ambulance.

I have two adult children – a son who is a senior biomedical scientist in haematology at our local NHS hospital, and a daughter who is a senior compliance manager with a major bank and about to make me a grandfather for the first time.

Casting Call to Reach Parents

You may have seen this casting call pop up on your social feed already, but **BROKE & BONES** the production company behind 'Black Mirror' is on the look-out for children with an upper limb difference to be part of a new four-part drama for a major streaming platform.



The series highlights the story of a young boy growing up with limb difference - and could be a very exciting opportunity for budding young actors.

No previous acting experience is necessary, and you're not expected to know how the world of TV works. Reach Ambassador and actor Melissa Johns is working with the casting team to ensure children and parents are supported through the process.



Who are they looking for?

3 children at different ages to play the same character.

- One child aged 8 – 12 years with a lived experience of having an upper limb difference; someone with real presence, cheeky and self-assured with a smile that lights up the room.

But they also need two more children with upper limb difference to play the same young boy at different ages:

- 6 – 18 months old
- 3 – 4 years old

About the role:

- No acting experience is required and support will be given throughout the process.
- The full filming schedule is 11 weeks in summer 2023; the child will only be needed on particular days and not required to attend every day/week.
- These acting roles will be paid.
- Filming location is most likely in the North of England.
- Travel, accommodation and daily allowance (i.e., to cover meals not on set) is provided for child and parent/guardian.
- A professionally trained and licensed TV children's chaperone will be provided.
- Local authority (local council) license will be sought by production.
- Tutoring will be provided if engagement falls over the school term time and is required. (As per local authority regulations.)

How to apply:

Please email tcasting@shaheenbaigcasting.com asap with the following information:

- **6 – 18 months / 3 – 4 years old:** email with recent photograph, name, age, and location of your child.
- **8- 12 years old:** email with the name, age and location of your child, and a short video (max. 2 minutes) of your child chatting about their interests.**

**Please note that the Parent/Legal Guardian must confirm in the email they were present when recording and include that they give their consent to the video being used for the purposes of casting.

The Casting Team are also holding an **OPEN DAY** when you can come along and meet, have a chat and find out more. Please see below:

Open Casting Day – SATURDAY 13TH MAY 2023

12.00-3.30pm: St Martins House, 7 Peacock Lane, Leicester, LE1 5PQ

<https://www.stmartinshouse.com/contact-us/>

The conference centre is located in the historic centre of Leicester and a step free venue.

No need to book in advance, just come along and say hi.

Got **ANY** questions or concerns stopping you from taking that first step? Please get in touch! tcasting@shaheenbaigcasting.com

Tribute to Jo Neal

Reach adult, RAW mentor and trustee Jo Neal sadly passed away at her home with her family on Christmas Eve. Jo touched the lives of so many and will be remembered for her generosity, infectious laugh, and enthusiasm for Reach. It was a privilege to have had Jo as part of the Reach team. The tributes are shared from her online Remembrance Book: <https://remembrancebook.net/book/joanna-neal/>



Adam Richardson

Jo was my co-leader on many camps from when I started leading at RAW at 18, I can't believe she's passed and there are no words to convey the loss we all feel at Reach. She truly was 1 in a million, and it won't be the same without her by my side.

Tracey and Jason Smith

We only met Jo a few times at the Reach AGMs, but she was always a bundle of fun and we shared some happy times. I know she has been an incredible inspiration to so many of our Reach family. Sending love to her family and friends.

Amber Thacker

Whilst I write this I am thinking of Jo's family and friends. Jo was an inspiration. I will always remember her cheering us on during Reach activity weeks. She impacted my life and I am sure the lives of hundreds of other reach children and families. I was looking forward to working with Jo as we both joined the board together last year. My heart goes out to her loved ones. She will be missed xxx

Ria Walker-Chamberlain

Jojo
Small but mighty. You loved and laughed with such passion and our hearts are full for knowing you. You always thought of others, shared all your possessions and made us giggle with your impressions. I taught you to tie your shoes but you taught me kindness, compassion and fearlessness. I once heard you say "I'm just a teacher" but you were so much more to those who knew and loved you. Whilst there is much that could be said, I just want to say thank you Jojo
Ri x x x



Debs Bond

Jo, I am grateful to have known you. You were a rock for Kate and I at Reach head-office, you never over complicated anything and always put us at ease. You and Claire held our hands through ensuring that RAW continued to happen even during the COVID lockdown. You knew how important it was to maintain contact with our Reach children. You were an independent spirit who lived life your own way but never forgot to support and help others. You are going to be greatly missed. Debs (Reach National Coordinator 2019 to 2022).

Sheila & Celia Mack

Rest in peace, your work here is done special prayers for you and all your family. Xx

Gary Phillips

My thoughts are with Jo's family at this sad time. Jo will be greatly missed and her jovial and pleasant manner was a winner with every Reach child that attended the Reach Activity Week. She was a dedicated and respected member of the Reach family and a great mentor. Rest in Peace.

Aaron Mason

Looking back on my memories of the Reach Activity Weeks I attended from age 10 onwards, starting in Wales, I can always remember Jo's joyful, enthusiastic, caring and funny presence. Jo is there in some of my earliest memories of meeting new people like me and I can remember just how comforting and easy to talk to she was, I even remember looking at her arm as I learned that everyone's is different and unique. Jo personified exactly what it means to be a reach mentor and I'm gutted that so many new kids attending RAW won't receive the guidance, motivation and spirit she brought to each week. I learnt a lot from Jo and I credit her and the other RAW mentors for a large part of who I am today. My deepest condolences to her family and loved ones.

Colm

Jo, it's hard to write this cause how do you say the last goodbye to a friend? How do you put a feeling/a sense/an energy into words? Cause that's what things were like hanging out with you! It was feeling! What the kids would call 'a vibe'! Your heart was in every conversation and your love always shone through! You were compassionate and friendly – seeing you helping other Reach kids, talking to parents or just having a laugh at the bar was an honour and a privilege! I'll definitely miss you! I know many others will too! All my love - to you, wherever you are now! And to your family!

Linda McMeekin

Jo me and my girls are going to miss you so much! we had so much fun at the family weekends, they are definitely not going to be the same without you! Thank you for all the help and advice you gave me and Cerys, I still can't believe you are gone Fly high my beautiful friend – until we meet again xxx

Emily Tishaw

I was 10 years old at my first Reach camp and I remember Jo greeting me at Peterborough services where I boarded the coach (19 years ago). I would go on to see her every year at the Reach activity weeks and AGM's. As I grew up, I then had the privilege of working alongside Jo as a mentor in 2021 & 2022 at the kids' camp and then as a trustee when we were both nominated onto the board last year. I will remember her for the fun, kind and sunshine-like person that she was. Jo was always such a key figure of the activity weeks and it is such a great loss to the world that she is now gone. My love and best wishes go out to her family at this difficult time x

Charlotte Fielder

Jo inspired so many people and I wonder if she was even slightly aware of the positive impact she had upon us all. She was a beacon and a beautiful soul. My favourite memory of Jo is when she participated in 'Reach out and Jump'. She was so determined and prepared to jump out of an aircraft attached to someone she had just met, to fundraise for Reach. Above all she was just so lovely. Such a natural and authentic person. Thank you, Jo, for being you.

Ether Lees

I have really struggled to get my head around this loss of such an amazing woman. Life is so unfair. Jo has been an absolute inspiration to me from my first ever RAW at the age of 12 and on returning as a mentor in the last few years. She was a friend, a role model, a support system and a right good laugh! As I became a teacher, I had so many questions for Jo about her job and she always had fantastic advice and stories to tell me. She was a no-nonsense person and I truly admired that! She gave her time every year to support the children at RAW and as seen in the amazing tributes she was very loved and appreciated. I only hope she knew just how many lives she touched, including my own! We have had such fun times at AGMs too over the latter years and enjoyed a few drinks and laughs together. Jo is one of the main people I associate with Reach and I feel so sad for the people who will now go through the charity without experiencing how amazing she really was. I will do my best through mentoring at RAW to ensure that her work, loyalty and inspiration is never ever forgotten. My thoughts go out to her family and friends at this difficult time. RIP to our lovely Jo

RAW Reach Activity Week

Many memories and friendships have been made during the Reach Activity Week over the past 20 years. Jo loved being a mentor, giving her time every year to support, inspire and cheer on the Reach members.

We've had so many entries from those wanting to follow in Jo's footsteps and become a mentor for this year's Reach Activity Week, so a huge thank you to all who have put themselves forward. Mentor training is booked in for May so all our Mentor's and the Reach team will be equipped to ensure your Reach child is comfortable, supported and has an unforgettable time, no matter whether it's their first or fifth RAW event.

Where: Carlton Lodge, Thirsk, Yorkshire

When: Sunday 30th July - 6th August 2023

Who: 10 - 17-year-olds

Book now! <https://reach.org.uk/8757-2/>



Annual Family Weekend & AGM

Come along to Newcastle for this wonderful annual event to meet other Reach families, to socialise and share experiences. From cooking workshops and celebrity guest speakers, to our Gala Dinner and Auction - it's going to be a jam-packed weekend with a wide variety of activities catering for everyone!

Where: Marriott Hotel, Gateshead

When: Friday 20th - 22nd October 2023

Who: All Reach Members!

Book from 1st May 2023

Questions? Email: reach@reach.org.uk



Gill Thomas

The Life-Changing Sewing Bee



How is training for the London Marathon going?

I'm not a natural long-distance runner but it's OK. I wouldn't have done it a few years ago because it would have felt like it was just too hard but after doing the show, which was very difficult, it taught me that I can do anything - even if I don't do as well as I wanted. I guess I'm not as afraid of failure!

I've always been into fitness, although I haven't run to the degree that I'm running now, but it makes me feel powerful and in control of my body, and I have more confidence doing it without the prosthetic.

Is it different running without your prosthetic?

Yes! It was always really uncomfortable. I'd run so far and then I'd have to stop to drain the sweat out - which is disgusting! But I underestimated it, thinking I would just stop wearing it and I'd be fine but it really effected my balance, even with walking. But now I feel liberated and free! I do feel powerful and it's definitely good for my mental health.

What made you choose to run for Reach?

I wanted to run for Reach because it was something I didn't have as a child and I believe it would have made such a big difference to my internal narrative. My self-esteem wasn't very good and I think that was because I'd never seen anyone that looks like me, so how can you feel like you're 'normal' (that's such a horrible word).

I didn't feel like I belonged, I was different and it was never really talked about, so I think if I'd had the support of an organisation like Reach, and if I'd met other people similar to me and been able to share experiences it would have made such a massive difference to my confidence. I think it would have really helped my family too because it must have been lonely for them, so I wanted to raise awareness of Reach but also raise some money.

Does creating clothes that fit your body empower you?

[When you have a limb difference] you do just put up with things [struggling with fastenings etc.] and it becomes 'normal' but then suddenly not having to do that is empowering and the confidence that you feel is amazing! I choose where fastenings go so I'm able to get in and out of things easily and I know it's going to fit me!

I see you've been holding sewing workshops?

I stopped working in public health after the Sewing Bee to do different things; some being more creative like workshops with different sewing shops and studios. I also work in a fabric shop and I do public speaking for crafting groups, schools, women's groups, and community groups. Sometimes I talk about the Sewing Bee but mostly about difference, coming to terms with having a disability and being authentic. It's just amazing to think I'm regularly talking to groups of people around limb difference and what it's like as someone who has a disability.



I've also done some modelling, but if I go back 18 months, I was terrified of people who knew me seeing me without my prosthetic, so to suddenly be on the front of a sewing pattern and being in magazines - I can't believe it!

How do you deal with low confidence days?

I still feel incredibly vulnerable at times, and it's not like you just have an epiphany and then it's all fine. I think people thought after the show that I was now 'out' but that's not how it works. I've lived a certain way for forty-odd years, I have so much social conditioning and internalised ableism that I need to deal with.

I'm still very different to the majority of people I interact with on a day-to-day basis and they can never possibly understand, but one of the things I'm most proud of is that I'm increasing representation in an area that isn't about disability. So, all the things I do, the emphasis isn't on limb difference, it's just the fact that I'm there as I am and people are seeing that and becoming more familiar with it and that's what needs to happen.

We love hearing about representation in action - how did you feel about your LEGO Friend Autumn?

It was weird, I didn't anticipate feeling any kind of emotion other than excited but then in the middle of the shop I felt so many emotions because it really does make a difference, people can't say that it doesn't.

Children make comments but mostly it's adults, and as I was taking photos in the store, there were children saying, "Ooh look she's like Autumn" and that isn't normally what happens! Usually it's a child pulling at a parent's sleeve and pointing and a parent becoming embarrassed. So, to not have a negative response was amazing!

The only way to make change is for people to keep getting out there on social media or through any kind of representation.

Do you still get nervous before events?

Yes, but the important thing is acknowledgment and being kind to myself. I am different, people are going to stare, who wouldn't be nervous in that situation?

I feel once you've faced a fear that fear can't control you. Before, I wasn't aware of it but fear informed every decision I made - what I wore, where I went, my job, my free time... All in some way shaped by my fear of being seen, so facing that fear makes it feel like 'OK' I've done that now, what's the worst thing that can happen? Someone might say something, yes it will hurt but I'll move on - that fear doesn't control me anymore.

@theonarmedsewist

Has social media helped your confidence?

I was born in the late 70s, around the time that Reach was established, but coming from a very small community in a rural area, there wasn't the internet and I never saw other people with limb differences. Seeing other people on social media was enormous and really helped me with my confidence before the show, and it's how I found Reach. It's also when I learned it was referred to as 'limb difference' - it had always just been 'my arm'.

Have you experienced any negativity online?

I get so many heart-warming messages but equally there's a lot of ableism. People say things that I don't necessarily agree with and I don't feel I can respond the same way I would if I were to sit and have a conversation with them. Even people with good intentions can be completely unaware that they are being offensive, it's just that they've not had the interaction or exposure to this type of disability or difference.

How has it been opening up about your limb difference?

With my family and friends, it's been fine because we've had lots of open discussions. But some people who knew me in a professional capacity were really shocked because for them I was very successful in my career and they perceived me as being very confident, standing up and giving presentations etc., so I think they found it hard to align that with me coming out and saying it's been such a struggle.

It's a complex and personal thing, and it depends on where you are on your journey of accepting who you are. But sometimes I wouldn't recognise things as a struggle, I would just automatically go through the process and adapt to fit a world designed for two hands. And if I did acknowledge it, I would have internalised it, felt upset, and assumed it was me who needed to adapt better. But hearing other peoples' experiences makes me realise I wasn't making it up, it was an issue, so now I do say if something isn't accessible or appropriate.



Fans of The Great British Sewing Bee and Reach members will know how special it was to cheer Gill on week after week, and shed a tear with her as she said goodbye in week 7 and revealed what a life-changing experience it had been. With so much support for Gill on the Reach socials, I wanted to catch up with her and find out what life has been like since the show and how life has changed.

Gill, how has life been since the GBSB?

Very busy! When I applied I never anticipated what was going to happen. I just thought I would go in, be there for the first week and then I'd come home and go back to normal life. I never anticipated the change in terms of my confidence, and accepting that I do have a disability. Before, I had never really acknowledged it and now everything has changed!

How has it been adjusting to life without a prosthetic?

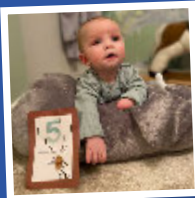
Only 18 months ago I went into work for the first time without wearing my prosthetic!

It's funny because I had taken a selfie in the office without my arm on and sent it to my friend and said "OMG I'm doing this! There's no one in yet, I don't know how I'm going to cope with them seeing me!" I was terrified. So I've gone from that, to being 'outed' on national TV - which felt like a small conversation at the time but it was being aired to about 6 million people!



Welcome to Reach

Jaxon



Aida



Dylan



Ajit



Fundraising & donations for Reach

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

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

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

Ideas for fundraising



Running Events

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



Virtual Fundraising

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



Community Fundraising

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



Fundraise for your Birthday

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

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

How to donate



Leaving a Gift in Your Will

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



Via Paypal

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



Via Bank Transfer

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



Via 'Work For Good'

Flexible fundraising for businesses and charities. Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/34hjxmh8>

Donations

- £50** Sundridge Primary School
In way of thanks for Claire Cashmore doing a Q&A Assembly.
- £40** Chris Amos
Tracey Walker nominated this donation in lieu of a christmas gift.
- £10** Jane Kayley
Profits from the handwoven shawl Jane made to sponsor Reach.
- £26** Barry Armstrong
On behalf of Gina Wilson, whose warm heart and gentle nature will be sadly missed.
- £65** Max Swinhoie
Donation on behalf of author Emily E K Murdoch.
- £75** Andrew & Jenny Grace
Funds raised by taking our ride on railway to a local village fete.
- £10** Julie Detheridge
- £100** Dawlish Ladies Social Club
- £204** Robbie, Amelia & Laurie
Donations collected during Lauries christening at christ church.
- £50** Thomas Richards and Book Club Members
- £100** Lloyds Bank Foundation Matched Giving Scheme
Nominated by Jane Crook.
- £500** CMS Foundation
- £1500** Joseph Strong Frazer Trust
- £1250** Mattioli Woods
Nominated by Sandra Hart.
- £1719** Mark Goodman-Walsh & Veritas Investment Partners
- £1500** Hat Trick Productions
Melissa Johns donated this to Reach from her appearance on Celebrity Mastermind.
- £350** Taylor Wimpey
- £1359** Poland Syndrome Support Group
They have unfortunately closed down, donating their remaining funds.
- £10** Anita & Mike Smith
In memory of Meg.

Fundraisers

- £50** Sheldon Coffee Morning
- £175** John Hall
Fundraising BBQ.
- £400** Mark, Lynn, Garth & Judy
Collected during a coffee morning.
- £254** Linda Stokes & Julie Detheridge
Card, Coffee & Cake Sale.
- £1600** HMP Holme House
Climbed National 3 Peaks in 24 hours.
- £1035** Jessica Thomas & Hallie
Cycling 20 miles.
- £2738** Nils Oppel
Completed the fire and ice marathon in iceland, running 250km.
- £2738** Rebecca Dryden
Walk 5k every day in August.
- £1795** Laura Molloy, Tom & Karen
Run 5k every day in August 2022.
- £50** Sarah Ballinger
Park Run.
- £1035** Becky and Terri
Chose to support Reach at their annual afternoon tea.

My Life Story

By Graham Kelly

Friend of Reach Graham Kelly shares his life story, from being a Thalidomide affected child in the 60s to leaving home for university and landing his first job.



On a late Sunday evening in April 1960, the midwives at St Catherine's hospital in Birkenhead were in for a shock. As midnight approached a baby was born with no arms, just a small hand protruding directly from the right shoulder and containing only two fingers.

That was me entering the world. The midwives removed me immediately and refused to let my Mum see me for the next two days. She was in the big hospital rather than the maternity hospital precisely because her anxiety had raised her blood pressure to a concerning level. The swift removal of her first baby must have pushed up her blood pressure level even further.

At the time very few people in the UK had heard of Thalidomide. It was marketed here under the name Distaval, and aggressively marketed to GPs as a "wonder drug" which was "non-toxic" and safe to take, even in pregnancy. My mum had been prescribed it to calm her down and lower her blood pressure.

It was another year before a doctor in Australia made the connection between this "wonder drug" and an unusual spate of babies being born with physical deformities, in his Sydney hospital.

The 1960s are nowadays remembered as the "swinging 60s", a decade of new ideas and increasing social tolerance, but we shouldn't forget that these were new trends emerging in a deeply conservative, and often discriminatory society.

Me with my swimming trophy from the Stoke Mandeville games, at eight years old (1968). All I can remember is that I won the race and got the trophy, but I have no idea whether it was in any particular category other than "children". I don't think there were any impairment categories in those days.

My mother was told that I shouldn't be allowed out to play with "normal children" because the sight of me was so disturbing. Most of the 400 or so Thalidomide affected children in the UK were sent to "special schools", simply because of their physical differences. I was lucky in that my parents found a local head teacher who was prepared to give me a chance in a mainstream primary school to see how I got on.

Academically I coped well and I was allowed to continue in mainstream education. My teachers were great, and the other children quickly accepted me, as young children tend to do once they've overcome the initial surprise and curiosity of meeting somebody who looks different.

Of course, it wasn't all plain sailing. As a youngster I inevitably fell over quite a lot, and with no arms to break my fall, I had my fair share of cuts, bumps and bruises, including a particularly fine black eye acquired the day before the annual school photo!

However, there were still people who put obstacles in my way. I was always mystified as to why I never got selected for the school football team, but many years later I found out that this was because the local authority refused to allow me to play in formal matches due to concerns about their insurance policy! Even worse, when I won the boys breaststroke swimming race at school, I was initially denied the right to enter the town Championships because - and I am not kidding, nor exaggerating - the rules specified that contestants must finish the race with both hands on the bar! My lovely Headteacher was so furious about this that she threatened to withdraw the whole school team, and the Jobsworths at the town hall backed down.

There were many Thalidomide affected children in Merseyside, and the positive of this was that the parents came together as a supportive community. Sharing ideas for making and adapting clothes for non-standard bodies or how to encourage the children to dress, wash and toilet themselves.

In my teens I was averse to having any special equipment, disability aids or anything that I thought would make me stand out even more than I already did. I didn't want to drive because the car would need to be adapted. However, after seeing an adapted car I changed my mind.

My car was adapted to have a steering wheel on the floor, which I operated with my left foot. Switches for the wipers, lights etc were in a box on the door, connected with a long wire stretching to the original control points. Many people are surprised that I passed first time, but of course steering with your foot is only tricky if you're used to steering with your hands. I had nothing to compare it with, and it felt perfectly natural.

At 18 I went to university in Leicester. Living away from home was a big challenge, especially given that I had never even washed my own hair before. However, I relished the challenge and adapted quite quickly, with a bit of effort and creative thinking, such as needed when employing top loading washing machines with my feet.

If I had been born without a disability, I think it's very unlikely that I would have gone to university. The norm for the boys in my extended family was to leave school early and get an apprenticeship. At 16 I would have dearly liked to do that but there were simply no feasible apprenticeships, given my disability. University opened up options for white collar work and was the place where I met my wife to be, so overall it proved to be quite a success!

On leaving university my big fear was that nobody would want to employ me, given that this was an era when disability discrimination was perfectly legal, and I'd never seen anybody who looked like me in paid employment. One teenage careers report said there was a good chance that I'd never be employed but could perhaps seek employment in something like telephone sales, because at least the customers wouldn't have to look at me. As if that wasn't daunting enough, it was the early 1980s and an era of mass unemployment.

I'd never had weekend or holiday jobs like other students because those opportunities in factories, shops or catering, tended to require dexterity which I clearly didn't have. However, after a few failed interviews I was successful in getting a job with a Construction Materials company, i.e. quarrying, asphalt, concrete etc.

That sort of heavy industry might seem a surprising place to get a break, but in fact there was a tradition in the industry of employing disabled ex-service people in certain jobs, and the HR Department seemed quite relaxed about taking me on. I'll always be grateful for them giving me that first chance, and I went on to work for 38 years, during which I never had a single day when I was out of work.

Technological change during my working life has been enormous, and generally beneficial to me. For the first 15 years of my working life everybody hand wrote reports and letters, giving them to the secretarial typists to make presentable. In the 1990s Typists were phased out and staff received a desktop computer. This was quite a threat to my productivity, since there was no way I was going to be a speedy typist. Just as I was starting to worry about my future employability, along came Dictation Software and saved the day. Though the early products

were awkward and time-consuming to learn, they enabled me to write very quickly, and probably quicker than most of my colleagues - notwithstanding the fact that dictated text needs very careful proof-reading, because it can sometimes contain hilarious errors. I remember one occasion on which I nearly sent a letter that should have ended with "Yours Sincerely", but in fact ended "Yours Sizzling"!

I'm now recently retired and enjoying life at a slower pace. One of the benefits of having more time available is that I can do more exercise and keep myself fit. I feel that flexibility and fitness are particularly important for anyone with a disability like mine, as my lack of arms means that I need to do more stretching and bending than most people do, and it's important to maintain good balance when you don't have arms to break your fall!

We hope to have Graham with us this year at the Annual Family Weekend so members can meet him in person. Graham would like to help young REACH members navigate the world of getting into work!

My Church Lads Brigade uniform featuring my artificial arm, at 9 years old. My mum spent ages altering the uniform for me, and I only stopped wearing it after a few weeks!



horse riding in the Camargue

“ I went on to work for 38 years, during which I never had a single day when I was out of work. ”

My wedding day



Navigating the world of work for the first time

Reach children and adults become adept at navigating a world created for two hands, but it doesn't mean we have all the answers when it comes to significant life events, like getting your first job or how to prepare for an interview. It's true, that no one is born knowing how to do these things, but when you have a difference to consider too, it can be a daunting experience.

When I was 16 I got my first job at a supermarket; I had to stand to get the heavy items through my checkout, eager to prove to my manager and the customers that I was just as quick and capable as my colleagues. My neck and shoulders would burn with pain due to over-using my right arm but I was too shy to make a fuss and ask for an extra break or to change tasks.

Reach parents have often discussed this topic on Reach socials so I thought it would be helpful to chat with long-standing Reach member Meghan Walker, who also happens to be on the Civil Service Human Resource Graduate Scheme. She shared her valuable insights on how to tackle interviews, what to write on applications, and if adjustments can be made to in the workplace to help people who need it...

So, Meghan, let's start with applications, should people declare on an application that they have a disability?

"This is a difficult question. Prior to working in the Human Resources space, I would always tick 'no' as I didn't consider myself to have a disability. However, I have changed my mind on this! From joining conversations around disability and recruitment I have found that many have now reclaimed the word 'disabled.'

'Disabled person' is now more commonly used than 'person with a disability,' as it reflects the fact that you are disabled due to your environment and not having the correct support to perform at your best. For this reason, I would now tick the disabled box. It is also important to note that the definition of 'disability' is much larger than most people initially think with neurodiversity, mental health conditions, and long-term illnesses just to name a few examples.

Some organisations have found that disabled applicants often do less well in their interview processes and by selecting that you have a disability you may be eligible to apply under a disability scheme. One example of this being the Civil Service Disability Confident Scheme, which means if your application has been scored a pass, you are guaranteed an interview. It is important to remember that you interview processes must be fair and therefore having a disability is not guaranteeing you a job. It isn't cheating like I first thought!"

Should people discuss or bring up their limb difference in an interview?

"This is completely up to you! I usually wouldn't discuss my limb difference in an interview unless I was asked to complete an activity where I thought an adjustment would help me, but this is just personal preference. In most cases, you should be offered the chance to request any reasonable adjustment prior to the interview, but under the Equality Act you never have to prove that you require the adjustments or explain why – although sometimes this can be helpful as the employer can speak to you about adjustments available to support you in performing your best during the interview process.

However, others may feel more comfortable and wish to bring up their limb difference in the interview itself. A good way to do this would be to use your limb difference to get a better understanding of the culture of an organisation. For example, you could say 'I was born with one hand, what is the organisational culture around diversity and inclusion as that is something that is very important to me.'"



Teaching out in Spain for a year.

What would you say is the best way to deal with questions from colleagues?

"I personally have found that as I have become an adult, people tend to ask far fewer questions, especially in the workplace. For me personally, I prefer to get started in the role and get to know the team before I start discussing my little hand. I often find that colleagues will wait until I feel comfortable and start the conversation about my limb difference before they ask questions.

However, I am aware that this may not always be the case. If, for example, a colleague did ask about your limb difference on your first day at work, please remember that you are perfectly within your rights to say 'I am sorry I feel a little uncomfortable and don't want to talk about that now.' From experience though, most questions from colleagues come from a positive place, where they genuinely want to learn more about you and how you can be supported to work your best."



If someone's work requires a uniform, can they ask for adaptations or different styles? And if it's office-based, is there help with the desk setup?

"Yes, definitely! Reasonable adjustments are a legal requirement for employers to provide! Employers may not always know what adjustments you need so do not be afraid to ask, as they cannot be experts on every difference/disability.

After being offered a role, this is something I would usually discuss with my line manager before my first day to ensure everything is in place for when I start. Sometimes, employers may require you to complete an occupational health assessment. These can be very helpful as I have been given things like a comfier chair to support me, having not realised I get bad neck pain because I over compensate and lean to one side when typing at my desk all day!"

Have you got any other helpful tips for getting that first job?

"A final tip is, never ever be afraid to ask for support at work. In my first role at 16 I worked in a high street shop and was expected to gift wrap at Christmas! I did just get on with it, although very slowly as I couldn't even sit on the floor to use my knees to help. Now looking back, I should have just asked for help. Employers want to be as helpful as possible but they themselves are unlikely to understand some of the things that we may find slightly more difficult and especially where you just get on with things like I did, they wouldn't want to step in and stop you!"

And remember, having a limb difference has given you experiences and skills that others won't have, use that to your advantage!"

When looking for a job should prospective employees try to investigate the company first and find out what their track record is like in terms of employee satisfaction? And if so, how might they go about this?

"I would recommend doing this whether you have a limb difference or not! I think it is incredibly important to work for an organisation that is inclusive and diverse and so for me I look for these key words on their websites, LinkedIn pages and job adverts. It can sometimes be more difficult to find employee satisfaction statistics, but if you wanted to find out more from an employee perspective you could always find someone on LinkedIn and drop them a message."



Celebratory dinner after visiting the London office for the first time.

My trip to Metacarpal Prosthetics

METACARPAL™

Editorial by Max Swinhoe

Whilst visiting Scotland earlier this year I had the fantastic opportunity to hop on a train to Edinburgh and visit Metacarpal Prosthetics, a small but mighty startup based at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh.

Co-Founder and CEO of Metacarpal, Fergal Mackie, was kind enough to pick me up at the train station and after winding our way through the busy streets of Edinburgh we made it to the grand Royal Observatory where he began the tour, and told me all about his university masters project turned Scottish Startup venture.

Fergal is a design engineer with a real passion to transform peoples' lives and it's this drive and determination to create something new that isn't just accessible but is genuinely helpful for people with upper limb difference, that led to his Royal Academy of Engineering, 1851 Commission Enterprise Fellowship, his award for Young Innovator of the year 2021, and his winning of the Young Innovators Award.

But the truly special part of it all is that this team of experts have chosen to fight the upper limb difference corner through their work and I don't think they realise how amazing that is, for a community like Reach to know that there are people working every day on solutions to very real problems, that will one day help to empower, build confidence and promote independence for many.



So, what do Metacarpal Prosthetics do?

They create 'fully body-powered yet bionic, prosthetic hands.' For Fergal this means, "a hand with all of the most desirable features of the robotic multi-grip hands, but which operates through the more functional, reliable and robust: body-power control."

'More than half of UK users prefer body-power, with split hooks being the most popular devices.'

'For the last 30 years, the upper-limb prosthetics industry has been entirely focused on making advanced robotic hands. But, despite all of this effort, simple body-powered hooks that have been around since the Titanic sank, remain the most functional products.'

Fergal showed me Metacarpal's workshop space where they create and test prototypes, assess materials, experiment with grips and different cables... You name it, they test it all to ensure durability and functionality of their product.

Then, it was time for a look at a Metacarpal hand for real, which to my surprise, came out of a lunch box, although Fergal explained that this was a secure and practical way to travel with the prosthetic (which had also been a surprise for airport security on a recent trip).

At Metacarpal their interest in creating upper-limb solutions over other prosthetics comes from the fact that hands haven't had the focus or success at restoring functionality for the user that foot and leg prosthetics have had, with the NHS estimating that 32-45% of people with an upper-limb difference wear no prosthetic at all.



Fonder Fergal displaying a Metacarpal Prosthetic

How does the Metacarpal hand work?

'A cable comes out of the hand, is wrapped around the users back to a shoulder harness on the opposite shoulder. Through movement of the shoulders, arm or elbow, this pulls on the cable and closes a grip in the hand.'

'Metacarpal add extra functionality to this. The adaptable grasp is automatic, but grips can be controlled by a toggle on the side of the hand. Similarly, the user can easily switch to different flexion and rotation positions on the wrist.'

What level of amputation or difference is compatible?

'From wrist to shoulder disarticulation (including transradial, elbow disarticulation and transhumeral). However, this is based on what is possible with current body-powered products. "We will do our own testing to ensure that the product works for each level. We are working to include bilateral amputees also, but this may require a separate product."

Prosthetics without compromise

This is Metacarpal's mantra, because with most current prosthetics a benefit usually comes with a compromise, whether that's weight, aesthetics, function or self-perception. But Metacarpal are 'looking to make a product which does not compromise across any of these aspects.'

Next up, it was time to meet some of the Metacarpal team, so we headed upstairs to the Metacarpal office where I met Senior Design Engineer, Christopher Nisbet, and Junior Design Engineer, Stefan Baldacchino. We soon got chatting excitedly about possibilities for the prosthetics, and I was happy to be able to help add to their list of 'everyday' tasks and activities that their hand could assist with, like hair-tying – something I took many years to figure out myself.

It was wonderful to have the opportunity to share a bit about Reach too; about my personal journey since rediscovering Reach and how my confidence has grown, and most importantly, about the wonderful family community that all the members are a part of. The Metacarpal team are eager to meet more of the Reach family as they grow, learning from those with lived experience about how prosthetics could genuinely help, with an aim to have prosthetics ready in a year's time that hopefully Reach members can put to the test.

Before I knew it, it was time to head back to the station but I felt so grateful and left with a genuine excitement after meeting Fergal and his team. They are passionate engineers at the start of a great journey and imagining that one day their prosthetics could and will change lives is amazing. Knowing that they've chosen to use their expertise to seek solutions for functional hand prosthetics to empower and truly benefit amputees and limb different people is nothing short of spectacular and I cannot wait to see where the future takes them, and for you, the Reach family to meet them.



Max meeting the Metacarpal Team in Edinburgh

Featured in.



Why I Don't Use a Prosthetic for the Aesthetic



By Emily Tishaw

I've had several prosthetics throughout my life. It began when I was a toddler, I had an over the shoulder attached fake arm, I also had a hook and a knife attachment which I used intermittently but I found that I coped better without it. My parents thought that a prosthetic would be beneficial for me but they discovered that after a few wears I would then try and pull it off. My mum's favourite story to tell is one in which I threw my arm across the room at the church hall on pancake day, frightening a group of old ladies in the process — whoops!



It wasn't until I was a teenager that I again went down the prosthetic path to get a Myoelectric. When I got to high school I found myself desperate for an arm, I was being bullied and I remember that the reason for wanting one was because of this. I thought that a false arm would be the perfect disguise to hide behind. I eventually got my arm and at first it was great, I loved showing it off to my friends and I wore it to school every day. But once the initial excitement wore off, I was left with a 'foreign attachment' on the end of my arm, and although it served as an exciting prop, it was cumbersome, heavy and impractical. I had learnt to do things for so many years without the use of a prosthetic that having one at this point was more of a hindrance than a help. I also felt that I wasn't being my true self because the motivation behind getting one stemmed from the desire to hide away and hiding away was only as good as putting a plaster over a deep cut, and although I was tired of my prosthetic, I still hid my arm up my sleeve.

As I grew older I learnt to accept all the things us limb different folk have to put up with, like stares from strangers or not being able to carry lots at once, and as I learnt to cope with these things, I decided that I didn't want to change how I looked. I no longer wanted to cover up my arm or be upset if I couldn't do something, this was exhausting, and what I really wanted was to love my body and accept the skin I was born in, so that's what I set about doing.

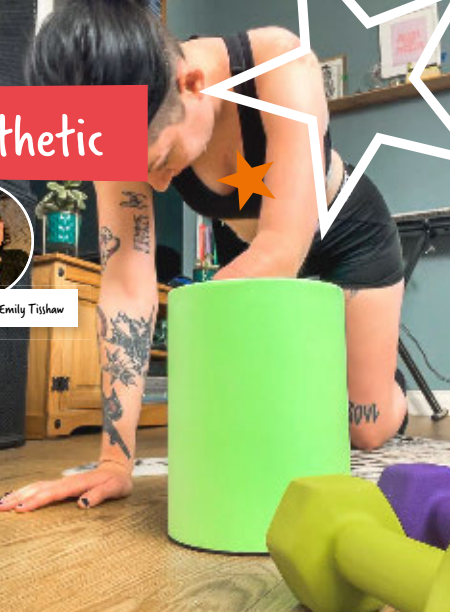


This wasn't an easy process; we are constantly infiltrated with images of how we should look and sold things that are supposed to enhance our appearance. It is difficult to break out of the constant torrent of conflicting messages about our bodies, but because I knew that my hand wasn't going to magically appear, I had to accept that having one was okay and therefore any cosmetic pursuit was wasted.

I found that learning to love the skin I was born in and accepting that I am beautiful no matter what, and that is something only I get to decide, not anyone else, was monumental for my self-esteem.

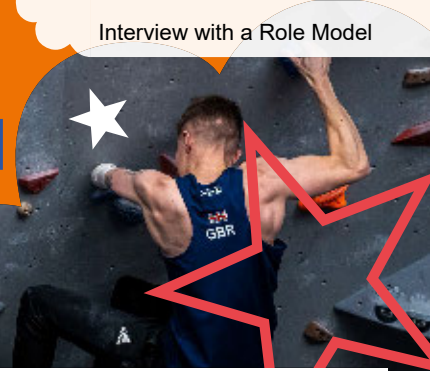
Since using realistic looking prosthetics, I have now opted for a more practical one; the only prosthetic I use now is the one that my local limb centre made specifically for the gym. I asked them to come up with something that I could use for my strength training and even though it looks different and stands out when I go to the gym, it provides me with a necessary tool for gaining muscle in my little arm. I also have a big green podium that I can lean my arm on when stretching and exercising and this too has proven to be really beneficial for me.

I can now happily say that I no longer feel a desire for my difference to be covered up, neither do I want my hand to look like anyone else's by wearing something that has been moulded to what we deem as a 'normal' arm. Having said this, when I did want that, that was okay, I felt that I needed it because I wanted to fit in and there is nothing wrong with that, I just much prefer now to stand out!



Get Climbing

We caught up with friend of Reach, GB Paraclimber and inclusive climbing advocate James Rudge.



So James, when did you first hear about Reach?

"My parents introduced me to Reach from a young age. I went along to some activity days and visited the Southmead clinic for help on a few occasions from around the age of 8. I think my first actual experience of climbing was at a Reach activity day in Southampton in the early 2000s."

When did you go back to climbing?

"I've always been into adventure sports; jumping off walls, climbing up trees. I started Parkour 2006, then started climbing in 2014. My first national competition was in 2017 and then I made the GB Para squad in 2019."

Wow, from competition to Team GB in two years! What do you love about climbing competitively?

"I love that it brings together a collective of adaptive athletes who come together to challenge themselves. There is a very supportive network with a shared attitude to utilise the strengths they have and not to be held back by any societal barriers.

Going to the international competitions is amazing as we get the chance to visit some beautiful places, to climb on routes set to our needs and watch incredible and inspirational athletes do what they do best."

How did you get into the GB Paraclimbing Team?

"I attended their 2019 selection event to challenge myself and for a bit of fun. Not long after, I received an email saying I had made the team. I'd never attended the national events with an 'end goal,' so to make the team was an amazing surprise and it changed my life forever."

You've done a lot for the paraclimbing community, why is it important to you to encourage people to climb?

"As someone who has been through his own journey of self-confidence and acceptance, I have seen how much impact having opportunities to take part in things like climbing can have, and how much of a positive influence I can now have as a role model for younger people.

Seeing someone else climbing with an arm like yours can give you the confidence to try climbing and to progress through the sport. I believe everyone has the right to be a "Thrill-seeker" and to try sports like climbing, and I want to help open the doors for as many people as possible to realise it too."



What is the GRIT Collective?

"GRIT Collective is a CIC company I set up to help introduce more people from a young age to climbing. I believe climbing is for everyone, and I want to use messages of positivity I've learned through my own experiences to tell young people that anything is possible, no matter what size, sex or ability level you are.

We put on coaching sessions in a variety of formats (one-one, two-to-one or grouped) for people with various ability levels or inclusive needs."

Who can get involved in GRIT events?

"The short answer is, everyone! Through time, we want to start putting on events that cater for specific audiences. For example, a day for people who use a wheelchair. An example of this was an event we put on with British Blind Sport for visually impaired climbers."

What's next for you in Team GB?

"It's an exciting year of competitions coming up. I'm going to the USA for the first time to compete in the World Cup in Salt Lake City this May. Then there is another World Cup in Switzerland as well as the World Championships in August. The World Championships happens every 2 years so it's the big one!

We are all united in our goal to get climbing into the Paralympics but it is not proving to be a quick win, despite climbing being introduced at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics."

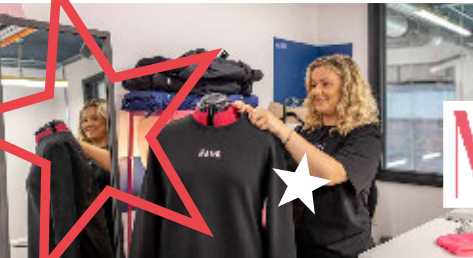
What would be your ultimate climbing achievement?

"My big goal is to make a paraclimbing final and secure a medal. I would love to also help athletes in the transition to competing in the Paralympics."

3 Steps to Climbing

1. Find a climbing gym or wall near you that is inclusive, join a GRIT event or contact the Paraclimbing Collective for initiatives and clubs around the UK <https://www.ukparaclimbingcollective.com/>
2. Book a Taster session or a 1-2-1 beginner session for ropes and/or bouldering to see if it's for you or your child. (You don't need to buy any specialist equipment, it can be hired from the centre)
3. Go climbing, slowly build up confidence and strength.

Why Inclusivity in Fashion Matters



WearMatter was founded by Gemma McAllister's passion for fashion from a young age. Pursuing her dream, she obtained a first-class honours degree in Textile art, Design and Fashion in Northern Ireland. However, after graduation, Gemma worked in the banking industry for many years but feeling unfulfilled and disconnected from her passion, she took a leap of faith to pursue her dream. Gemma secured internships and landed a permanent job at a well-known high street fashion brand.

While Gemma loved working in the fashion industry, she became increasingly disillusioned with the lack of creativity and focus on profit over quality.

"The fashion industry often fails to consider the most crucial aspects of clothing, such as practicality and accessibility, and fails to address the needs of disabled individuals both in the workplace and as customers."

Determined to make a difference, Gemma transitioned into disability services and founded WearMatter to create fashionable and accessible clothing for all individuals.

Gemma, why do you think inclusive clothing is important?

"As a society, we've come a long way when it comes to diversity and inclusivity but improvements are needed. For far too long fashion has been exclusionary, catering only to certain body types and genders, and perpetuating unrealistic beauty standards. This has left many individuals feeling left out and marginalised.

This is why inclusive clothing is important. It can be a powerful tool in helping people with disabilities fight ableism and can remove barriers to independence. It also ensures that people of all body types, genders, and abilities have access to clothing that fits them well and makes them feel comfortable and confident. It recognises that people come in all shapes and sizes, much like the diversity of 'matter' that constitutes the world!

Fashion brands can help promote body positivity and self-acceptance by designing clothing that accommodates a variety of body types and sizes, but ultimately, inclusive clothing is just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to fighting ableism and promoting inclusion and diversity in society.

Consumers can and should support fashion brands that prioritise inclusivity and accessibility and fashion industry professionals can and should work towards creating more inclusive and diverse fashion. Together, we can make fashion a space for everyone.

At WearMatter, we believe offering repairs and custom modifications is necessary for promoting inclusivity and accessibility. By going above and beyond to meet our customers' needs, we hope to make a positive impact and contribute to a more equitable and accepting society for all.

MATTER

I was delighted that Alpkit offers repairs and custom modifications, should more brands be offering this kind of service?

"It is crucial for clothing brands to prioritise inclusivity and accessibility, especially for people with disabilities. In fact, this responsibility extends to every brand and business. One way clothing brands could do this is by offering repairs and custom modifications. This would not only improve customer loyalty, brand reputation, and competitive advantage, but would also align perfectly with the industry's focus on sustainability. A more personalised or better-fitting product will be cherished and worn for longer.

Brands that cannot offer these services in-house should still make suggestions of where this service could be obtained. Additionally, customers should not be afraid to ask brands for these modifications, as it may take more individuals to voice the need before brands make a change and offer these services."

What's in store for WearMatter for 2023?

WearMatter is here to empower and serve a purpose. Committed to designing clothes that make a positive impact, with processes in place to only design and sample what is necessary – designing for a reason, and excitingly, WearMatter is set to release their first garments over the next few months!

"At WearMatter, we believe every person matters, and our clothing reflects that. We want to collaborate with the right people and make a real impact. Our team is dedicated to growing within our fabulous community, listening, learning, and having a great time while designing for a purpose.

WearMatter is not just a clothing brand, but a movement that strives to create a positive impact. We want people to realise how much they matter. We want to empower people to feel confident and comfortable in their own skin. We believe that everyone deserves to feel good about themselves, have options and be included. We are excited to bring our unique vision to the world, and looking forward to collaborating with like-minded individuals and brands.

This is just the beginning of WearMatter's journey."



Representation Matters

We love to see brands embrace representation and inclusivity.

Joules

Joules established the 'Inclusively Joules Action Group' made up of volunteers from the Joules team who share ideas or concerns to ensure they continue 'creating sustainable, meaningful change every step of the way.'

Charlotte Jackson, Joules Senior Press Officer explains what diversity means to her:

"It's a true representation of the society we live in today. It's about creating a space, both internally at Joules and through all of our channels, where differences are celebrated and everyone is able to feel comfortable and confident to be who they are and are truly valued as individuals."

Read more here:

<https://blog.joules.com/post/meet-the-inclusively-joules-action-group/>

Spot Reach member Gracie modelling the 'Tate Artwork Long Sleeve T-Shirt' on the Joules website.

<https://www.joules.com/Unisex/Collections/Tate/Artwork-Long-Sleeve-T-shirt-0-24-Months>



The matter of Inclusion

Adapting for difference

When I approached the outdoor clothing and equipment shop Alpkit in Betws-y-Coed, North Wales, to make a modification to the sleeve of my waterproof jacket, little did I know the impact that small change would make to my life, or that I would discover an area of life where inclusivity appears to be underrated but could make a huge difference in the lives of those with a disability or difference. So, I got back in touch with Repair Hero Bea at Alpkit and we talked about inclusion, sustainability and the importance of adapting for difference.

Tell me Bea, why were you excited to help with my jacket modification?

I was so excited to do your alteration because I could tell it meant a lot to you. It felt like I was able to provide a service for you that you should have been able to access a long time ago. I think access to the outdoors is such an important and underrepresented concept and the kit you use is entirely tied up in this. Having a warm or waterproof jacket that fits you right feels to me like a way of saying to yourself and to others that you belong in the outdoors just as much as anyone else.

It's really cool that Alpkit offer repairs and alterations on all brands, do you think more companies should offer this kind of service?

Yes 100%, I think that it's something that all clothing brands, but especially outdoor brands, should consider entering into. It would open up an entirely different attitude to kit. It should be a given that if you invest a lot of money in something that it can be altered to best suit you, and be kept going for as long as possible. This is something that other sustainable brands such as Patagonia and Paramo have been engaging with for years, and it just shows the calibre of Alpkit as a brand, that they're putting the same ethos of repair and alteration into practice.

Etsy

The Etsy 'For the life you're making' campaign <https://www.ispot.tv/ad/17Ye/etsy-the-life-youre-making>

Did you know that Etsy has a Limb Difference section? https://www.etsy.com/uk/market/limb_difference



The GAP Kids recent 'Everyone belongs' campaign: <https://www.gap.co.uk/discover-gap/everyone-belongs>



alpkit

Repair Hero Bea

Do you do many adaptations for difference at Alpkit?

Alterations for difference are not something that I do very regularly (I would definitely love to do many more) but they're often some of the most creatively interesting and thought provoking jobs we do. In the past we've done things like attach a pull strap to a winter climbing boot to allow the customer to more easily pull his boot on, something that had been previously difficult with his prosthetic leg, improving both his safety and the utility of his kit. In the Ilkley Repair Station Charlotte has worked with a man to install zips into the backs of his jackets, enabling him and his carer to easily take off and put on his coat whilst in his wheelchair. Here, through ingenious customer ideas, and our expertise, we are able to imagine new functionality into existence. A process that I definitely find very empowering and I hope that our customers do too. We just need to spread the word about what's possible.

What do you love most about the work you do?

I think it's really beautiful that in my work for Alpkit I get to marry two things I feel really strongly about, increasing inclusivity and accessibility to nature and sustainability, also get to talk to people about the memories and adventures that are bound up in their most precious kit. An idea that I often discuss with customers is that the most sustainable kit you will ever buy is what you already have. So have a look in your wardrobe, and ask yourself what could be brought back to life? Or take on a whole new life altogether?

What Reach Does

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

RAW (Reach Activity Week) 'Incredible Delivery' Pack

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

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

Annual Family Weekend

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



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



How to Fundraise for Reach...

Run for Reach!



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

Work for Good



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

easyfundraising



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

We need your help

Your fundraising & donations enables Reach to keep going.

Did you know: you don't need to raise hundreds of pounds or run a marathon to fundraise for Reach.

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

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

Birthday Fundraisers



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

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



Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits

