


Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits

# Within Reach

Summer 2024 | ISSUE 156



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# Events

**AUG** • 4th - 11th | Reach Activity Week (RAW) | Calshot, Southampton  
• 18th | West Midlands Sports day

**SEP** • 7th | Northern Branch | North East Wake Park

**OCT** • 25th - 27th - Annual Family Weekend | Portsmouth

**NOV** • 10th - Climbing with The Grit Collective & LimbPower | Bristol

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



**STOP** Reach emails going into your junk folder!

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## Hello!

*From the Editor & Designer of withinReach*  
Within Reach Magazine has been sharing your lived experiences for more than 45 years, and it only grows stronger with every issue because of YOUR heartfelt contributions, fabulous fundraising and our branch coordinators' dedication. We hope you enjoy this issue; we always welcome comments, requests, or suggestions, so please get in touch with us at [withinreach@reach.org.uk](mailto: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.*

# Meet our Wonderful Branch Coordinators

3 Counties Herts, Beds & Bucks



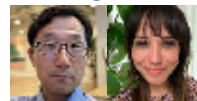
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East Midlands



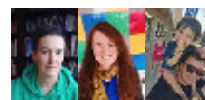
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Sophie Ustahuseyin  
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Ireland



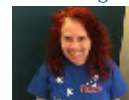
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Kent



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Suzanne Parker  
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North London



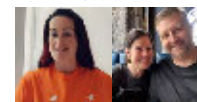
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## Stay up to date

All event news is on our website [www.reach.org.uk](http://www.reach.org.uk) and facebook page [www.facebook.com/reachcharity](http://www.facebook.com/reachcharity).

## Spring most definitely sprung for Reach!

With 10 Branch events delivered in the UK and Ireland March – May 2024, a regional family weekend in Swansea, and our first ever 18-25 retreat.

**Thank you to volunteer Branch Coordinators:** Jane & Cheryl, Becky & Andy, Kavita, Tracey & Jason, Sue, Jen, Ruth & Siobhan, Navdeep & Jay, honorary Branch Coordinator in Kent (holding the fort) Hannah & Lesley, Marianne, Hilary & James, for enabling **109 Reach children**. We've had ice skating in the East Midlands, an afternoon in the park in the Northwest, climbing in the West Midlands, Farm visits in Ireland & Northern Ireland, visits to activity centres in Kent and Northern England, a 'Teddy Bears Picnic' in East Anglia, plus, an invitation to LimbPower's Family Fun Day in 3 Counties.

We held our **first ever Reach Retreat**. **Thank you to Trustee, Emily Tisshaw**, for driving/facilitating this much needed project supported by our **wonderful RAW Mentors:** Tony, Tom, Louise, and Within Reach magazine editor, Max Swinhoe. The project was quite the success and puts a marker in the sand in terms of how we as a charity want to extend our support for young adults with upper limb difference. A Project Development team has been initiated that includes young people aged 18-25, Reach Trustees, Emily, Ella\*, Rebecca\* and Steve and is, at this time, being led by RAW Mentor, Tony. If you would like to get involved, you can connect with the team via [reach@reach.org.uk](mailto:reach@reach.org.uk)

May Bank Holiday Mayhem or rather a wonderfully constructed **regional family weekend**, 13 families got to come together for a long weekend by the sea in Gower, they got to beach comb, explore local heritage, play, cook, eat and surf together supported by local **Branch Coordinator, Melissa B** and local Reach mum, **Sian M** – thank you, both for having the mind and force of nature to make this happen - we wish we could bottle it – in fact we're going to try to – watch this space! Read more about the weekend here: <https://www.reach.org.uk/news/reach-on-the-beach-swansea-family-weekend-in-wales>

Our wonderful Branch Coordinators, Jane and Cheryl in the NW and Kavita in North London stepped down after well and truly serving their Reach community - a hard act to follow for sure. We are delighted to **welcome two new Branch Coordinators** for the North West, RAW Mentor, Chris and Reach Mum, Lindsay and in North London, Reach Mum, Shaheen.

We are also delighted to welcome **two new Trustees**, \*Rebecca and \*Ella, appointed to the Board in June, both young adults with limb difference and rich professional experience in comms and legal process – most excellent additions to the Board!

And that brings me on to governance – it's that time of year and we would like to invite anyone with an interest in **becoming a Reach Trustee** to please put themselves forward. We are interested in people who can help us raise funds and sustain Reach as we turn the page and look to a new chapter. If you're interested, contact us at [reach@reach.org.uk](mailto:reach@reach.org.uk) and we can send you a recruitment pack. **Deadline for applications: 2nd September 2024.**

Separately, on **9th September** we will be posting the **proposed new articles of association and draft byelaws** on SharePoint for your consideration ahead of the **AGM on 26th October**.

If you cannot attend the AGM in person – you can vote by proxy. To register to vote by proxy email: [reach@reach.org.uk](mailto:reach@reach.org.uk) and submit your proxy vote before **19th October 2024**.




**SJ**

Sarah-Jane  
Charity Operations Lead  
[sarah-janel@reach.org.uk](mailto:sarah-janel@reach.org.uk)

## Reach Board of Trustees

Chair: Chris Creamer  
[chris@reach.org.uk](mailto:chris@reach.org.uk)

Vice Chair: Gary Phillips  
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## Your Vote counts ...

In the Spring Edition 2024 of Within Reach, we outlined a Calendar of Communication Briefings to explain to our members the proposed changes needed to (1) update our Articles of Association (our Constitution) and (2) to then engage with the Charity Commission to update the Objects of Reach Charity Ltd. The communication process has been well received and we have had enthusiastic participation by our volunteer Branch Coordinators, old and new, as well as by family members. It is rewarding to see our members' commitment to the success and further development of Reach.

Working with Charity Law Specialist Lawyers, we have modernised our governing documents to reflect developments in communications and technology e.g., use of online meetings and emails, as well setting out clear guidance as to how we want Reach to operate for many years ahead, e.g., by having a minimum 70% of Trustees drawn from the membership with lived experience of upper limb difference.

The most significant development we want to see is changing our Objects to support our members beyond the age of 18. I'm sure you will agree that these years are formative for all our young adults. For many, leaving home for the first time, perhaps to attend college, to choose the course of study that will perhaps lead to their choice of career; living alone or together with other students in campus accommodation, liaising with the college Disability Support Officer to get the best support for their studies - I think we can acknowledge that this is truly a turbulent rite-of-passage for all young adults. We are also aware that each of our young adults presents themselves to a whole new world of strangers with a visible limb difference.

Many of our young adults have already travelled this road. They have learned, through their participation in Reach, that they are not alone, that they have a host of friends built up from involvement in Reach Local Branches, Reach Annual Family Weekends, Reach Activity Weeks and regular communication through our social media. They also know that when "I'm with my people," it is a comforting source of confidence-building to hang out with other Reach members. Many of our young adults, rather than ending their involvement with Reach at age 18, are enthusiastically coming back to offer their lived experience, knowledge and support to the child members coming after them. Our Leaders and Mentors at the Reach Activity Week are young adults with a limb difference. Our role models in multiple sports, various social media, arts, theatre and television, not to mention professions and trades – are all willing to play a role in the future of Reach. And we now have young adult Trustees on the Board.

We would be foolish not to adapt to the exciting opportunities our young adults bring us whilst also supporting each other. When you vote for change at the AFW in October, we will engage with the Charity Commission to broaden the Objects of Reach so that we are supporting our children beyond the age 18.



*Chris*

Chris Creamer  
Reach Board of Trustees Chairman  
[chris@reach.org.uk](mailto:chris@reach.org.uk)

## Join our Trustee team

**Have you got skills or experience that could help Reach grow? Whether it's fundraising, legal, financial or community services expertise, consider becoming a Trustee for Reach.**

## Contact Reach

Address: Room 4, The Library Rooms, First Floor,  
59 The High Street, Totnes, TQ9 6PB

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

Email: [reach@reach.org.uk](mailto:reach@reach.org.uk)

Office hours: Monday-Friday 9am - 5pm

Website: [www.reach.org.uk](http://www.reach.org.uk)

Twitter: [@reachcharity](https://twitter.com/reachcharity)

Instagram: [@reachcharity1](https://www.instagram.com/reachcharity)

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

LinkedIn: Reach Charity Limited

Registered charity in England and Wales no.1134544

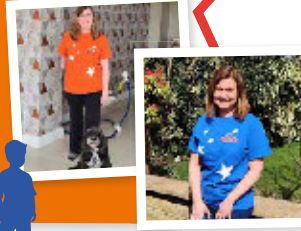
Registered charity in Scotland no.SC049805

# Thank you and goodbye

To Branch Coordinators – Jane & Cheryl

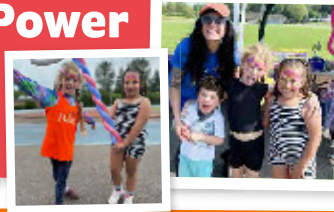
"May I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Trustees and Staff, to say a big "Thank YOU" to Jane and Cheryl for your dedicated hard work in providing a North-West Branch for Reach. If it wasn't for volunteers like you, we wouldn't have Reach Branches throughout the UK and Ireland, and Reach Parents and their children would lose out on the marvellous life-enhancing activities that you so generously provide. Your time and application made a difference."

- Chris Creamer on behalf of all of the Trustees.



# MaraFUN Reach x LimbPower

"It was absolutely brilliant to represent the 3 Counties Reach branch and the whole of Reach at the LimbPower family fun day. It was wonderful to see so many familiar and new faces at the event. LimbPower put on a brilliant show for all ages and abilities. The balloon artist was a particular favourite of ours! We look forward to continuing this partnership with LimbPower and hope to plan future events at Stoke Mandeville Stadium." - Jen



# The Annual Family Weekend 2024

The next AFWs will be...  
**2025: Swansea**  
**2026: Manchester**

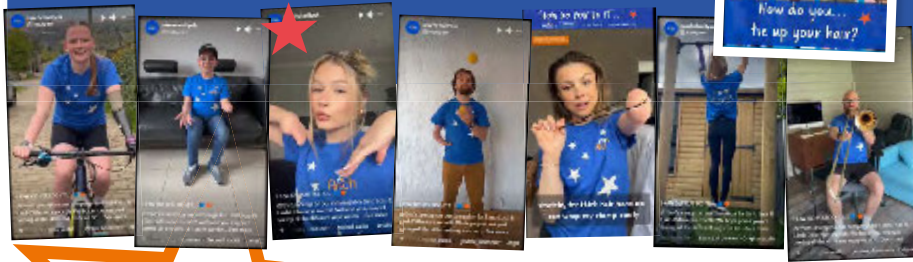
**The event of the year!** A time for play, creativity and growth. A wholesome opportunity for parents, young people and children to connect and feel supported, a safe space where guest speakers inspire and uplift, where lived experiences are shared and the Reach community does what it does best – come together as a family.

**This year the AFW is in Portsmouth. Book here:** <https://www.tfaforms.com/5108030>



# #LimbDifferenceAwarenessMonth

In April the campaign 'HOW DO YOU DO...' jumped into action with lots of our members taking part in daily videos highlighting how individuals from the limb difference community tackle physical tasks or handle social situations. Thank you to everyone who took part!



# Research study looking for participants

Lancaster University

## DO YOU HAVE A LIMB DIFFERENCE?

*We are conducting research exploring the emotional experiences of adults who were born with a limb difference*

We're looking for people:

- Who were born with an upper body limb difference
- Over 18
- English-speaking

What will it involve?

Speaking to a researcher via video call or telephone. To answer questions about emotional experiences related to your limb difference.

If you would like to take part, contact Anne Risby, Clinician, Clinical Psychologist and Lead Researcher at

[a.risby@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:a.risby@lancaster.ac.uk)

# Reach Activity Week 2024

Now Fully Booked!

4th – 11th August - Reach Activity Week (RAW) is back on the water this year at Calshot, Hampshire.

ACTIVITIES: Sailing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, indoor velodrome and dry slope!

For Reach members aged 10-17 years old.



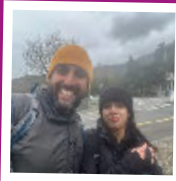
# Snowdon Hike 2024

At last year's AFW Trustee Lee won the auction prize of a guided hike up Snowdon with Mountain Leader and Within Reach designer, Tom Swinhoe... In April he invited Reach members to join himself and Rue on their attempt. Unfortunately severe weather meant they didn't make the summit but everyone had a wonderful time nonetheless!

"We loved our day even if the conditions weren't great. It gave us some great bonding time, we got to see Wales for the first time properly and loved meeting the group. It also set us a challenge to come back and conquer Snowdon!" - Jag

"I thought it was such an amazing experience, especially with my limb difference. I thought it is a really cool thing to do and say that I've done. I also thought it was really lovely meeting Max and Tom and hearing about theirs and other people's experiences - it was definitely one I will remember!" - Kiki

"Even though we didn't get to the top we learned so much from Tom about being prepared, the essentials and also the brace position in high winds! We all thoroughly enjoyed our day despite the wind and rain, thank you Tom, Max and Lee." - Jane



# Celebrating upcoming and past events!

Here's what the Reach families and Branch Coordinators had to say about their favourite elements from their most recent events:

## West Midlands meet up.

We visited Rock Up in Birmingham and had the best afternoon which really challenged and encouraged our lovely members. We have our next Sports Day in the diary for August.



## Northern Event at Adventure Valley

"Time spent with other parents."  
 "Brilliant venue, there's something for all ages."  
 "Thank you to all involved for organising another great event."



## Ireland Branch head to Glendear Farm

"Fabulous location."  
 "My son seeing he's not alone that there is other boys and girls just like him."  
 "It was all very well organised and in a great place."  
 "Chance to talk to other parents."



## Northern Ireland visit Streamvale Farm

"A Great family day out with something to suit everyone."  
 "All of it."  
 "The venue was great as we could explore as a family and interact with the other families at our leisure."



## Reach on the Beach Swansea

14 families attended

"The weekend gave us as parents an opportunity to connect and share experiences, hopes and fears in relation to our Reach child. For Chloe being with other children of all ages with limb differences really builds her confidence and pride in being part of such a special community. It felt like a really special family holiday shared with strangers who became friends."

"The best holiday I have ever had. I usually hide my hand, but here I don't have to and it feels more than amazing." - Reach Child

"We don't get much opportunity to get away as a family, but to do it with other Reach families is the icing on the cake. The kids got to spend valuable time with other reach kids and us parents got to talk to other parents for more than an hour during a brief local meet-up. Can't beat it."

"A huge thank you to Mel, Sian and family for the enormous amounts of work that went into making this such a brilliant and memorable weekend. Also to Bethan for helping everything run smoothly throughout the weekend. I think it worked really well having an older reach helper as a role model for the young people."

## Kent Event under 5's visit Ollie Polly Play Café

"Feeling safe letting our child play without the worry of how people would respond to her limb difference."  
 "Chatting with other Reach parents and sharing ideas."

"It was very relaxing venue and safe for my daughter to play with other kids."

"I wish to thank Hannah for organising the meet up. And her husband is always supportive."

13 families attended

## Kent visited Bowles Activity Centre

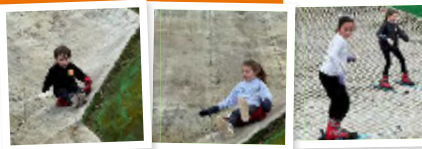
11 families attended

"Many thanks to Lesley and her other half for the lovely eats - and for organising it all so well. We had a great time. Many thanks also to Reach for their support of siblings/ cousins attending. Manisha is an only child but exceptionally close to her 2 cousins who are more like brothers to her. They have shared and supported her in every step of her Journey, so we really appreciate having the opportunity for them to share some of these experiences with her. Thank you!"

"Great centre - really good venue for a Reach activity."

"Really well organised, just the right level of plans and let people have fun and find their own way. Really great day!"

"Thank you so much Ashley for coordinating today and for picking up H's additional needs which resulted in a 1-2-1 session which H greatly benefited from. She was incredibly nervous trying skiing. The instructor was incredibly kind and caring and inspired H to successfully ski for the first time."



# Decades of dedication!

This year we said thank you and farewell to Jane and Cheryl as Branch Coordinators so we wanted to catch up and find out a bit about their experiences, why they dedicated so many years to Reach and what advice they'd give to new Reach members.

## How long have you been Branch Coordinators for Reach?

**Cheryl:** I started running the branch around about 1998/99, it's gone very quickly! I was approached after a few wines at a family weekend!

**Jane:** For me it's been approximately 14 years - I started to help Cheryl with arranging meet ups. My first meet up with Tom was when Tom was 3 at Blackpool Tower.

## How many events have you organised? (Separately or collectively)

**Jane:** Approximately 34!

**Cheryl:** Too many to count! Obviously the 34 with Jane, but many others! We could not have had done nearly as many without all Jane's fantastic fundraising efforts!

## Have you got a highlight or favourite event that stands out for you?

**Cheryl:** Patterdale is a highlight as you get to spend the whole weekend together, not just a few hours. I also liked the play centres for giving you chance to chat and cuddle the babies.

**Jane:** Definitely the Patterdale family weekend. We are now in our 4th year. It has been great to organise grants and fundraising over the years. Reach North West has organised 3 charity balls raising over 30k, plus grants from the National Lottery, Warburtons, UK Healthcare, Arnold Clark, and the post code lottery.

## What was the best part for you about being a BC?

**Cheryl:** For me it's meeting up with lots of little people (and some adults) who are just like me! Seeing them grow up from little babies to flourishing adults. I have made lifelong friendships from being Branch Coordinator.

**Jane:** The best part is making new friends and staying in touch. Helping each other with tips and again, Patterdale Family Weekend!

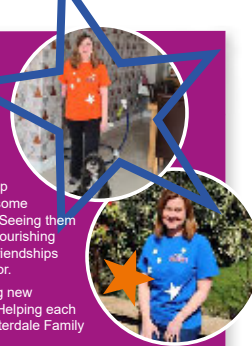
## What does it take to become a BC?

**Cheryl:** You just need to have a little organisation and be happy meeting new people, it's very rewarding, having help from Jane made my last 14 years very easy, she's been an absolute star!

**Jane:** I always wanted to think of new places to try that perhaps would challenge Reach families. Patterdale has rock climbing, gorge walking, paddle boarding. Sometimes having the confidence to try new activities but being with children who have a similar difference can help.

## What do parents/children get from branch events? Would you recommend new members attend their local events/ meet their local BC?

**Cheryl:** Children get to feel like they are not the odd ones out for a change. Parents get to see other children like their own and feel a sense of belonging. It is amazing.

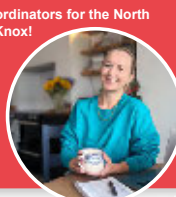


# A warm welcome to our NEW North West BCs!

We're welcoming new Branch Coordinators for the North West - Lindsay Wright and Chris Knox!

"The community and support Reach brings is phenomenal, and it is something we as a family have truly appreciated over the years. I cannot wait to meet you, get some events in the diary and begin fundraising."

- Lindsay Wright



"After appreciating the long service of support Cheryl and Jane had given to the region and their need to stand down that would leave a vacancy for a very large region, it was suggested to me that I could help. So despite, living in Cumbria and part of the Northern group, we are one big family and I'm happy to help, after wasted years of not being involved."

- Chris Knox



## East Anglia visit the Thetford Forest

"Watching the children play together."

"Great location to relax and for the children to play."



4 families attended

## Gloucestershire swimming

"Talking to the other parents."

"It was so much fun." - Reach Child

"My child meeting other people."

5 families attended



## 3 Counties & LimbPower Family Fun Day

"Seeing other children with limb differences and being able to try the bikes." - Reach Child

10 families attended



# Reach Retreat 2024

By Emily Tishaw



Almost two years ago, as a Reach-child-turned-Reach-adult and entering a stage in my life where I thought it was about time to get my ducks in order, I decided to become a trustee for Reach. My hope was that I could use my lived experience to continue the brilliant work of all the board members who came before.

One of the first things I brought up to the board was that I had noticed that a lot of us who have the privilege of being involved in the Reach community in our younger years often wind up becoming distant as we get a bit older. To tackle this I had an idea, picture this:

It's the summer before your eighteenth birthday and you've recently returned from your stay in the wilderness climbing trees, playing tag in a canoe and finally hitting the bullseye in archery with your limb difference friends.

Having been down this road many times before, you feel a sense of belonging and confidence after spending a week with a community of people who look the same as you do. But this time it's different; you're going to be an 'adult' soon, which could mean starting university or entering the world of work. It also means that this was your last Reach Activity Week and you're not sure when — or if — you'll see your friends again.

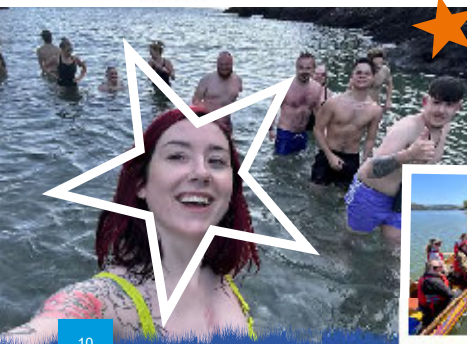
“It was really nice to have an event like this now we're too old for RAW. It was definitely helpful being able to have some of the deeper chats with other Reach adults that you don't normally get to, so I really appreciate it. I won't forget this weekend”

Izi Chapell

It could be at the annual family weekend in October, spending your student loan at the bar of a plush Marriott hotel. Or it might be at a local branch event in December watching the Christmas pantomime version of Cinderella sat next to your family whilst your younger sister shouts "HE'S BEHIND YOU!"

But you want to have your own space, surrounded by people your own age. You want to continue to grow and learn from others as you navigate adulthood, or even just to connect with people who look like you so that you feel less alone.

**COMMUNITY FUND** Thanks to the Lottery for funding this pilot



If this sounds similar to your experience, then I know how you feel. Because it was mine.

This is exactly why, once appointed as trustee, I put forward the idea for the 18-25 Reach Retreat. And guess what? A few months ago, in April, we pulled it off!

Sixteen of us; both young adults and mentors, gathered in the south of the UK in a wonderful little town in Devon. We spent a long weekend camping in fancy tents with wooden flooring and sharing stories of living with a physical disability.

We also danced with a Clubbercise instructor overlooking the sea, foraged wild plants for our dinner and canoed across the Dartmouth estuary — on the only sunny weekend in April (I planned this too!)

But the best moments to observe were the ones of connection:

The bus rides to the activities where words of advice were given on how to approach negative attitudes towards disability. Eating meals together as a group and bonding over shared experiences of how to do certain tasks. The impromptu evening walk to the beach for a sea swim, coaxing each other into the cold with encouragement, unafraid of people staring.

I loved listening to the topics discussed about the different adaptations that are used in the kitchen, how to get over rejection when dating, and what it's like going for a job interview when someone notices your arm.

This is exactly why the Reach Retreat was created: to facilitate a space where these discussions can happen organically and effectively. Social media is booming with creators sharing their stories of disability and the limb difference community online has provided such reassurance, but nothing beats a face-to-face opportunity to create bonds.

At Reach we are also changing our articles of association to include everyone affected by upper limb difference, and this is now being reflected in what we do. We are acknowledging that yes, at eighteen you are more socially aware, adept to the world and independent, but it's also a really important development stage in life and without the correct support it's easy to get lost.

Thank you to the trustees for supporting and developing this project, to the Reach staff team for helping to get it moving and to the Reach mentors; Tony, Max, Tom and Louise, for also volunteering to facilitate this event.

**Are you aged 18 - 25? Come along to AFW 24 and help us build our 18-25 programme**



# Welcome to Reach

Ahmet



Asher



Isobel



Maya



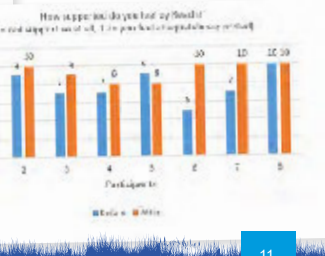
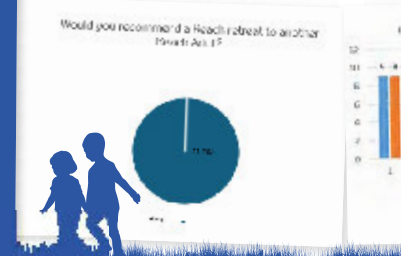
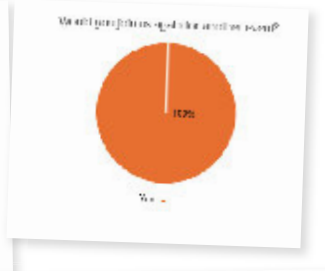
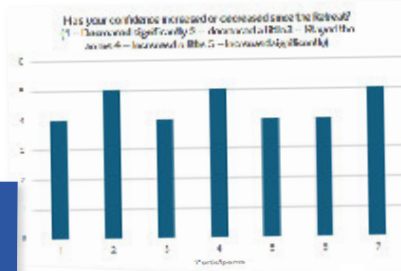
Odhran



Paris



## Reach Retreat feedback



## Make it Monthly

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



## Monthly Donations

- £10 Heather Nash
- £5 Annette Gabbeday Goldsmiths
- £12 Durray Zeb
- £10 Jonathan McGee

## Donations

- £60 Sandra  
In Memory of Maureen
- £40 Barbara Collis  
In Lieu of Christmas Cards
- £100 John Hall
- £50 Old Parmiterians Society
- £700 Northolt, Greenford and Harrow postal workers
- £350 Chris Talbot
- £40 Glynis Sutton  
I am donating in Loving Memory of my cousin Jean Carol Ann Bleach who passed away on 26th March 2024.
- £100 Rayware Ltd
- £500 Siemans  
Ben Fishers work donated £500 to us when he completed the half marathon.
- £650 Lloyds Bank Matching Funds  
Matched Funds From Janes Snowdon Fundraiser
- £130 Neil Bleach  
in memory of Jean Bleach, Supporter of Reach, and attender of Reach Weekends all over the UK & Ireland
- £20 Mr Brand
- £60 J Barden
- £50 Karen Foster/Probus
- £1077 Dr RW Keyte, Trustee of Elizabeth & Prince Zaiger Trust
- £25 Mrs Ravenhill
- £50 D Veck

## Fundraising

- £931 Ben Fisher  
Half marathon
- £510 Salesforce  
Chiltern Walk
- £894 Mums N' Roses  
On Tuesday 18th June the wonderful Mums N' Roses choir in Tunbridge Wells invited friends and family to their summer evening concert at The George Inn in Frant for a fun evening with a wonderful selection of music and singing. At each concert the choir selects a charity to support and kindly for this occasion they were fundraising for Reach, so after an introduction to Reach by Lesley and a super hour of uplifting singing and the obligatory encore. Thank You to the Mums N' Roses choir and friends for their amazing support; it means so much!
- £300 Coral House  
50 Miles
- £588 Suzanne Parker  
Coast to Coast
- £1265 Hike Snowdon Fundraiser
- £1510 Stephen Cunningham  
Belfast Marathon
- £1600 Durrey Zeb  
Ramaden Fundraiser
- £601 John Hall  
Cars and Coffee get together in East Anglia

## Fundraiser top tips from Lesley Goodfellow



1. Be genuine and make it personal; why does it matter to you? Use photos, visuals, or a personal story.
2. Emphasise the positivity of Reach and explain how the audience and their contribution is immediately relevant – this offers them the feel good factor!
3. Make it simple to donate. Let people know in advance if it is cash on the day/night and seize the moment. However, be prepared with a QR code, or the web address and logo on hand-out cards, to ensure everyone can easily donate from home should they forget their wallet!
4. And be sure to say 'THANK YOU' as soon as possible to those who support you.

## & Alex Madden



1. Don't be afraid to try new things, think big and be bold, you never know what might work!
2. See any opportunity as a networking opportunity, fundraising can happen anywhere.

# Calling on Merlin for support!

Kate McBirnie is the Accessibility Officer for the Merlin Group who own most of the major theme parks in the UK and numerous other tourist attractions such as Madam Tussauds. Kate is keen to work with Reach to improve accessibility to their attractions, so Within Reach asked how parents of Reach children can find out more about rides and attractions before they visit, how to access their 'limb difference guides' and for more details about the restrictions themselves.

Firstly, how do you feel working with the Reach community will help to improve accessibility to the Merlin Group attractions, what do you hope to get from this insight into upper limb differences?

We want to be the attraction operator of choice for visitors of all abilities and are committed to elevating the accessibility of our attractions to ensure our guests can experience more joy and create memories when visiting.

We always seek to connect with people and organisations who can share their lived experience and knowledge, to help shape and inform our approach. We look forward to partnering with Reach and benefitting from their valuable insights.

Have you consulted with charities like Reach previously when it comes to accessibility?

We work with multiple charities and groups to help inform our approach to accessibility. We also listen and learn from both guest and employee feedback and experiences to implement changes.

Does the Merlin Group offer concessionary tickets for those unable to use all facilities or attractions?

Merlin attractions offer a free carer ticket for any guest that has a disability or long-term health condition. This ensures that an individual's accessibility requirements can be met without additional cost.

One topic that's come up several times between parents on the Reach Facebook page is about frustration when it comes to knowing what ride or attraction their child will or won't be allowed to go on until they get there. I noticed there is a 'limb difference guide' for Thorpe Park... Are there guides for all attractions?

All of our UK Theme Parks have a limb difference guide on their attraction websites, which can be viewed in advance. If a guest has further questions, we encourage them to contact our accessibility teams in advance of their visit, through the contact information provided on the attraction websites.



One point related to these guides is that every upper limb difference is just that, different, in length and in functionality etc., so from the members' point of view, some are not 'missing' limbs, so the chart potentially simplifies something that is rather more complex. Many people with limb differences have their own ways of using them, and it seems that every experience at an attraction is different, whilst some are being allowed to go on all rides, others are being restricted.

I would advise any guest to get in touch with their chosen Resort ahead of their visit to discuss their specific requirements. Every guest is different and our teams are trained to be able to provide personalised rider requirement information to help them understand the accessibility specifications of each ride in advance. Factors that are considered in our key rider requirements include the location of the limb difference or amputation, ability to grip, ability to brace and conditions to be safely contained. We recommend guests review the limb guides as well as the main ride restrictions guides before their visit. Where we do have restrictions that means guests are unable to ride, we are committed to working with manufacturers and health and safety experts to enhance accessibility.

Where can people find these guides and this accessibility information, and is it in the same place for all Merlin Group attractions?

Yes. Guests can head to <https://www.accessibility.merlinentertainment.biz/>

[www.accessibility.merlinentertainment.biz](https://www.accessibility.merlinentertainment.biz/)

for all their need-to-know pre arrival information for our UK attractions.

Assuming restrictions often come from health and safety concerns, which is understandable, but sometimes not entirely clear, please can you explain what those concerns are so parents and Reach members can better understand the restrictions.

The minimum safety requirements for guests to enjoy certain rides at our resorts are based upon the strict guidelines and best practices set by the equipment manufacturers and industry associations. We adhere to their guidelines with the utmost attention and accuracy in order to ensure guest safety in all potential situations. Restrictions are based on several factors, including the ability to brace against ride forces. This includes not only active bracing, such as tensing muscles or gripping, but also passive bracing, where the gravitational weight of the body naturally opposes ride forces and the kinetic energy is absorbed by the ride's containment systems. Additionally, riders must be safely contained within the restraint system of the ride. Other considerations include ensuring safe and secure accommodation to prevent injury, adherence to emergency procedures, and passenger evacuation protocols. For amputees, an evaluation is conducted to determine if they can be safely contained within the restraint system, and where applicable, if their prosthetic limbs can be securely retained during the ride.



# Run4Reach Dad Craig o'Rourke

We're always talking about the importance of parents finding Reach as early as possible, which couldn't have been truer for Reach dad Craig, who since the birth of his Reach child Florence, has valued the support he's received from Reach, other dads, and Reach families, and in his appreciation he's made it his mission to raise essential funds for Reach by running... a lot!

First and foremost, you've raised a whopping £6000 for Reach! I think I can say on behalf of everyone, thank you! Where did your running journey begin and why?

I ran from a young age at school athletics etc., but in my adult life I really got back into consistent running again during Covid. In terms of the running journey for raising funds, I felt that Reach had a massive impact on our family and I was really determined to give something back.

When did you find out about Florence's upper limb difference and how did it make you feel?

We only found out on the day she was born so we have no warning or time to prepare. I'm not sure whether I would have liked to know beforehand or not but it was a shock! I think it was very conflicting for me because I had this beautiful girl and I was thinking about her hand more than anything because we had no information.

What would have been helpful or supportive to hear from the health professionals at that time?

It would have been great if they had had a leaflet or something that could point us in the direction of Reach. Orla in 'Edinburgh Sick Kids' has been awesome too, so if the nurses had been aware of her existence and could have arranged a quicker interaction that would have made a massive difference to the first few days.

If you could go back to the moment when you met Florence, what would you tell yourself now?

It's a very small part of who Florence is and she will flourish no matter what.

What were your initial worries and concerns for Florence? Have they changed? Do they evolve as she grows?

My main concern was how she will deal with it all and when she grows up how she will respond to comments etc. I think that's about instilling an acceptance and robustness which kids need as coping skills anyway. There are many more that come and go but they will certainly evolve as she grows.



What would you like people to know about limb difference?

Just that everyone's unique in their own way. A limb difference is a small part of a person as a whole but it certainly doesn't define them. Also, it's OK to ask questions if you have them.

What has finding Reach meant to you as a dad?

It made a huge difference to my way of looking at differences in general. I have found meeting other dads a really unique and uplifting environment to be in.

What would you like to say to any new Reach parents?

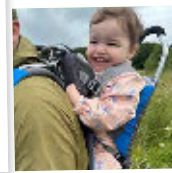
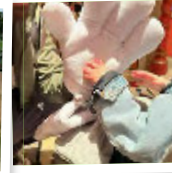
Use it all as much as you can. Speak to other families a bit further in the journey to understand their experiences to be more prepared yourself. Try to get along to the family weekends and any other events you can, you won't regret it!

What has been your proudest moment?

As unexpected as it was and despite my surprise, probably being brought up on stage at the Reach weekend to discuss my fundraising. It did feel like I was doing something to be proud of and that was making a bit of a difference.

Most challenging or biggest obstacle overcome?

In terms of the running then the 93km ultra marathon from Glasgow to Edinburgh during an amber weather warning! In terms of with Florence, the surgeries and the subsequent trips to the hospital with her dressings.



Regarding Florence's surgeries, would you change anything if you could? When it came to making those tough decisions, what information would have helped you beforehand that might help families looking at surgery as an option for their future?

No, I don't think I would change anything. I think we have made the best decisions at the time and the surgeries have gone well (apart from the multiple bandage changes).

I think the best advice I can give is to have an open mind regarding what you think the outcome might look like and be aware that things might change on the day and the surgeons might do more than initially planned.

You started running in 2022, you dedicated 2023 to running and raising funds for Reach... Have you and will you keep running? If so, what's next?

I absolutely will keep going and in 2025 I intend on raising funds again so I will have to go for something BIG!





# Kim Daybell

## From Paralympian to Doctor



WR caught up with Kim Daybell, the retired Paralympian turned doctor, who, despite facing obstacles along the way, defied expectations and followed his ambition straight to medical school. Kim talked to us about Poland Syndrome and the organisation PIP-UK, competing at the Paralympics and what it's like being a doctor with a limb difference.



### Hi Kim, tell us a bit about you...

My name is Kim Daybell, originally from Sheffield and currently living and working in London. I was born with Poland Syndrome - a condition that affects my right hand and chest wall muscles on my right side. I currently work in Intensive care and retired from international table tennis last year after a 16-year career playing for Team GB.

### Describe yourself in 3 words?

Thorough, hardworking and empathetic

### When did you start playing table tennis and how did that lead you to competing and then the Paralympics?

I began playing Table Tennis when I was 8 years old. I started, first on an old table in my garage, and quickly started going to sessions. By aged 10 I was one of the top ranked junior players in England. I played for England up until age 16 when I was approached by a member of the GB Paralympic Table Tennis team. He suggested I get classified and compete on the Paralympic circuit. Around this time, London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and my mind was made up. The Paralympic team took me in and trained me for my first Paralympic Games in London. I never looked back and played for the Paralympic team for the rest of my career.

### When did you know you wanted to go into medicine?

Playing Para Sport! After meeting all the other disabled athletes, I saw what modern medicine had done for them. This also got me thinking about what it had done for me. I decided at that point becoming a doctor was the best way for me to give back to the medical field. I applied for medical school and started in 2011.

### What are some of the challenges you've faced in your career so far?

Being a disabled doctor has not always been easy. When applying for medical school, there were senior doctors who questioned my physical ability to perform the skills needed. Luckily, there were some amazing tutors and teachers who supported me, whilst the drive and determination that I had developed from playing elite level sport helped me to learn and thrive. Balancing sport and medicine has also been a tough challenge. Both are essentially fulltime jobs and it was difficult to achieve what I wanted to in both fields. But again, with good time management and amazing support I was able to find a way to do both.



There are some careers I think people with limb difference would shy away from, being more 'hands-on' - what have you learned so far about limb difference and doing things people perhaps don't expect of you.

From doing it myself, and seeing the amazing feats of my Paralympic colleagues, I have learnt that you can achieve your goals if you set your mind to it - it may take some adaption or more practice but it is possible. Only you know what you are and are not capable of, and to find out you have to try!



You often have to work in different hospitals, how do you manage expectations when you start somewhere new, like asking for help if you need it, and do you acknowledge your limb difference rather than asserting that you can do everything?

Having a limb difference obviously brings up some challenges - especially in an environment as crazy as hospital! In a setting like that it is obviously important other members of my team are aware that I may need support in certain areas or with certain skills as the stakes are so high. When I started somewhere new, I always made sure I explained to people that I did have a disability and may need more help than others - but I also made sure they understood that there were lots of skills that I was very competent with as I had put so much practice into them. People are always receptive and helpful if you are open and honest yourself - by being upfront I think I enabled others to feel like they could offer advice, extra training or support to help me on my way.

### You want to specialise in sports medicine? Does that stem from being a sportsperson yourself?

Absolutely! I love the sporting environment and wish to work in it now that my days of competing are coming to an end. I also love the exercise/public health aspect to sports medicine. I firmly believe that exercise is the key to long term health and to help the growing burden that chronic disease and obesity is putting on the NHS.



### You're an ambassador for the charity PIP - can you tell us about PIP and why you are part of the charity?

PIP-UK is the UK charity for people with Poland Syndrome (this is the condition I have). The CEO of PIP (Sam Fillingham) is an amazing lady who has grown PIP into the organisation it is today. She set it all up on a voluntary basis and now it has hundreds of members across the UK and abroad. As an ambassador I support them where I can and my main focus is helping them with medical research on Poland Syndrome so that we can show the need for the NHS to invest in diagnostic pathways and treatment.

### You had surgery when you were young, can you tell us a bit about what procedure you had?

I had one operation when I was two years old. The operation was a double toe transfer. The surgeon took my second toe from each foot and stitched them onto my right hand to give me opposable digits. I was offered an operation as a teenager to reconstruct the muscles on my right chest wall but I decided against this as I felt I was managing well and didn't want to be operated on again.

### What advice would you give to new parents of Reach children who might be worried about their child's future?

I won't say not to worry because I think that is what parents will always do! But there is no reason why a child with a limb difference will have a smaller world than those without. My disability opened the door to some of the greatest experiences of my life and it is a big part of my life though it does not define me. With support and the right people around, they will do just fine! The most important thing is utilisation of great organisations like Reach and PIP-UK, to get support and learn from all the amazing people within them.



# James Thompson

## “The Pilot Guy”

**B**reaking the mould and annihilating the barriers, James Thompson set his sights on becoming a pilot and he wasn't going to let his limb difference stop him. We chatted all things flying, his career journey and how it feels to represent limb difference.



**What was it about flying that drew you to it? It's not a career that society would automatically match to a person with an upper limb difference - do you think that was part of the appeal?**

Indeed, it certainly is not a career that you would associate with anybody with any type of physical disability, let alone someone who doesn't have 20/20 vision (I'm going back to decades ago when that was a requirement for both military and civil pilots). The main thing that drew me towards this career path was the enjoyment and excitement I already held for flying, plus the lure of seeing some of the world, not having to work behind a desk from 9 till 5, and I suppose the responsibility and professionalism that I knew the role contained. Having an upper limb difference and giving myself even more of a mountain to climb may well have added to the appeal now that you mention it. I used to play golf with my grandfather a lot as a teenager and I said to him that I wanted to be the first one armed PGA Pro. Well, that didn't work out as you can see, so yes, I guess I did definitely want to break the mould, break boundaries and blaze a trail forwards!

**How does it feel to know you're representing upper limb difference in an industry some would never have considered for themselves?**

It feels great. I can tell you worldwide, there are about half a dozen of 'us'. By us, I mean pilots who work in the airlines with a significant upper limb difference, most of us wear a prosthesis with an appliance to manipulate the flying controls of the aircraft. So slowly, slowly, we are all doing our part to represent upper limb difference all over the world. It's a huge undertaking to become a pilot, and that's for your average bright able-bodied student. Having a disability adds to that, but with the right mentality and of course the right unwavering support, I'm glad to be able to say that it's completely possible.

**(Don't miss James this October, he'll be on stage as a guest speaker at the Annual Family Weekend 2024!)**

**When did you know you wanted to be a pilot?**

Great question and one I often get asked. Well, when I was a child I didn't have any relatives who were a pilot or who had served in the RAF or anything. I stumbled on flying from joining the Air Cadets when I was 13 years old. I went on my first 'air experience flight' when I was 14, in a Bulldog. Later on, during my time with the cadets, I completed a gliding scholarship on the Vigilant motor glider at RAF Syerston. On leaving school, I applied for, and won, a flying scholarship at my local airfield, Sywell in Northampton, which took me up to my first solo flight in a Robin. By this time, I had decided that I wanted to work at training to become a professional pilot and fly for my living! "Happy emoji" as my daughters would say!



**Did you face any negativity/discrimination from your peers or instructors on your journey to becoming a pilot? Do you ever face it now?**

I'm rarely asked this question, but yes! I certainly did! Thankfully I have only experienced this type of negativity once, and never once in the airlines I've flown for. The only time it happened was when I was taking my private pilot licence (PPL) lessons in Yorkshire. I was paired with an instructor that I heard on the grapevine was somewhat gruff and not the most understanding. We flew one sortie together, the syllabus was basic climbs and descents, turns etc. Once on the ground she refused to fly (instruct) with me again, because she complained that she didn't think that I was safe, because of my arm, even though I was only a student and didn't even require a medical certificate at that stage (I had one anyway). Her behaviour towards me made me really upset and, thankfully, I never had to fly with her again. If we ever cross paths in aviation again, I'll certainly give her a piece of my mind, because one never forgets how somebody makes them feel.

**What's been your proudest moment? (Career, personal, any part of life.)**

My proudest moment in terms of my career would have to be gaining a promotion and becoming a captain at my previous airline Flybe in 2016. In terms of my personal life, that would have to be becoming a father of my twin daughters.

**The biggest challenge you've faced in your life so far?**

In recent years, I've faced a lot of large challenges, of which all have required me to navigate paths forwards. Each time I change aircraft types (last year I began flying a Boeing 737) it involves a lot of challenges, namely lots of time designing and having my bespoke prostheses manufactured.

**It certainly sounds like you like a challenge! Have you got any bucket list challenges or goals lined up for the future - flying related or not?**

"This is going to sound like a bit of a boring answer, but honestly, right now at this stage in my life, no I don't really. I'm quite content with all the challenges that daily life is throwing at me for now [haha]. I'm subtly enjoying the present and not thinking about too many challenges or goals for the future, at least outside of my flying for the moment. The last few years have been really challenging, for reasons outside of work as well, so for the next year or two I'm just taking stock of everything before deciding too much for the future."



# Every day is a lesson

By Max Swinhoe



**I'm feeling more comfortable in my own skin...I think.** The tough part of this journey at times can be seeing where other people are at on theirs. Comparison is a lifelong battle, and I think it can get worse as we get older, as we set unrealistic expectations and milestones for ourselves.

Some people express a true love of their limb difference, others say they'd never change their difference/s given the choice, and many have said that they don't ever worry about people staring. I've never been able to agree with any of those statements. When you've spent most of your life stressing about people staring (or hiding in case they do), it's a tough pill to swallow. You can't help but compare yourself to them. To wonder why at 35 I haven't got this confidence thing wrapped up already. You doubt whether you'll ever stop worrying or being anxious at some level about being different. The truth is, I may never stop thinking about it, and that's OK. Or at least I try to tell myself that.

Lately, however, I've had a rather profound realisation that perhaps seems obvious; that this is me and that's never going to change. I've said it before, but I didn't really believe it. Truthfully, I usually go through phases of total uncaring and then go right back to hiding or worrying so I was reluctant to even write all this down. Perhaps it is just another phase.

But this time, something does feel different. These realisations don't usually come when I'm alone walking along the road or perusing the aisles of a supermarket. Those times, when I'm on my own, are usually when I feel my most vulnerable, when it just feels easier to blend in, so to experience flurries of confidence during these 'vulnerable moments' - this is new. And the thought goes...

"I have a limb difference and I can hide all I like for the odd stranger here and there, or pretend I don't need help just to get out of the shop, but the truth is, this is my arm, and it's never going to change. I best crack on and others, well, they can accept me or not."

So, why now, how has this come about. It doesn't really matter, but maybe it is an age thing, or maybe it's because I have connected with more Reach adults this year. An unconscious reminder that there are other people living these kinds of experiences with me. In April I attended the first ever Reach 18 - 25s Retreat. I was uplifted, moved and heartened by the confidence of those around me, by their stories, and their lived experiences. And upon saying goodbye I was overcome by emotion, in all the best ways, and I think it's because I was sad to say goodbye to my brothers and sisters. The only people who will ever truly understand.

I call them brothers and sisters because they feel closer somehow. I don't have siblings but I would like to think it's a similar feeling. These people who we have shared something so personal with. Not a life with the same upbringing or home, but a lived experience of growing up with a similar difference. That authentic understanding of life's highs and lows, at times, both, intertwined.

Will my new-found confidence stick around. There's no knowing. The lesson here is to be kind to myself. To remind myself daily of how it feels to let go of the anxiety and genuinely accept myself despite other's stares, reactions or questions.

# A second opinion

## Is surgery the right option? It wasn't for me.

By Steve Haynes

I have such a positive relationship with my parents now; I love them and respect them enormously, so I wanted to understand their thought processes from day one.

"There was no information back then [in the 80s] and we didn't find Reach until you were a child," my dad told me. "We were lucky to have a supportive GP whose partner was a paediatrician."

"The first surgeon we saw wanted to cut away the middle section to give a more distinctive pincer movement," my mum continued, "but we were adamant nothing should be removed from the little you had." In hindsight this was an excellent decision, as now my strongest grip comes between what would be my thumb and first finger knuckle.

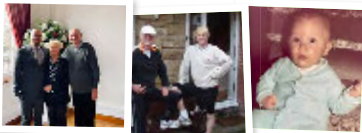
Toe transfers were new and my parents spent many hours travelling from Yorkshire to London to discuss this option. They ultimately settled though on a surgeon closer to home, who my dad tells me really listened to what I wanted. What I find interesting here is even at five, I didn't have the unrealistic expectation of my right hand being like my left. I'm told instead I asked for one finger to be straighter and the other to be stronger, which shows a level of acceptance I hadn't realised I had. Whilst the notion of me calling the shots is comforting, I'll never know whether at that age I fully appreciated the impact and consequences of what I was signing up for. It was new territory for the surgeon, who admittedly got it right second time. My feeling is this would've never been permanent though, given the delicate structures of my hand, and me being an active child. I take solace though that the surgeon took learnings from my operations.

On reflection, surgery wasn't right for me. I went through two significant operations and the outcome was the same as what I already had. It took me away from activities I loved and must've, albeit subconsciously, emphasised my feelings of difference and needing to be fixed. My right hand was never going to be like my left, and my efforts may have been better spent continuing to work towards self-acceptance and being kind to myself. It's hard to be honest with ourselves but openness with those we trust helps. I know my parents did their best for me at that time and I'll always love them for that. I'm also glad society's attitudes are changing, and I'm proud of the work Reach does to support this.



When I was five, I had a bone and a ligament taken from my wrist and grafted into the only two digits on my right hand. I use the term digits, as fingers would've been doing some heavy lifting in that sentence.

The objective of the operation was to strengthen one and straighten the other, to give my right hand more capacity, it being my dominant side. The operation was unsuccessful, so they tried again when I was eight, this time taking the bone and ligament from a toe on my right foot. This meant being a wheelchair user for a while as I was unable to use crutches. With no wheelchair access at school, I had to be home schooled through this period. I also couldn't play the trombone for a time, something I loved and ultimately undertook as my career. The second operation was successful, until I broke both fingers playing football a few years later.



There aren't many obstacles my hand has caused me that I haven't been able to think around. As a trustee for Reach now, I often talk about our superpowers from growing up this way; creativity, self-awareness and determination (my partner would say stubbornness). I used to write in mirror image, which could be related to having to write with my non-dominant hand. Shaking hands has always been a conundrum for me, which I unpacked in a video for our recent How Do You Do It campaign. Other than that, I don't have any access requirements for my upper limb difference. Sure, I get frustrated when I instinctively use my right hand first, but I also weight train (using straps so my wrists take the weight) and play golf.

I'm interested then in why my parents chose to subject me to these two operations, especially now I'm a passionate advocate of the social model of disability. My parents always brought me up to get on with life and not be phased. I'm not sure I would have worked in the West End for ten years without this mindset. I'm also not sure whether this mindset led to me having a breakdown in my thirties, when it finally dawned on me I was different.

# I am more than my difference.

Hi, my name is Dexter and I'm 8 years old and I'm a year 3 at St. Gilberts Primary School in Stamford. I was born with a 'wrecking ball' hand and no one else in my school has a hand like mine, except for one boy also has an upper limb difference and is in year 6. I'm missing 4 fingers on my left hand but that hasn't stopped me from doing anything I want in life. I live with my little brother Zakk, who's 6, my mum and dad and our Australian labradoodle puppy, Whisky, who I love infinitely.

Dexter, do you have any hobbies?

**Beavers & Cubs** - I have been doing Beavers since I was 6 years old. Now I'm 8 and have moved up to Cubs. When I was in Beavers, I achieved lots of badges and got the Chief Scout Bronze award which is the highest award a Beaver scout can achieve. I was also made Lodge Leader and got to boss over a group of Beavers. I like going to Beavers and Cubs because you learn new skills, how to work as a team and make new friends.

**Kickboxing** - I have been doing kick boxing for a bit more than a year and have achieved my red belt. I'm now working on getting my yellow belt. I think kickboxing is fun because we do lots of kicks and punches and I like to kick the pad, so it flies off. I also like training with friends that I have made there. After every kickboxing session my friend Olly's dad picks us up and he is always silly, chasing us around. We also always end up listening to music in my friend Theo's dad's car, which is loads of fun.

**Cycling** - I used to cycle every Saturday with my dad before I started swimming. He taught me how to ride a bike. Riding my bike is one of my top 7 things to do. I like to go riding on the estate where I live and sometimes, I meet up with my best friend Arlo, who also lives on my estate to go riding. I like riding the bike because you can go fast. I helped to teach my younger brother how to ride a bike and now he keeps stealing my bike whenever we go out on a walk with our dog, so I end up riding on the scooter, which isn't too bad.

**Swimming** - I go to swim school every Saturday and can swim on my own in the deep end. I am in stage 3, almost level 4.

**Bowling** - I bowl like a grown up. I like going bowling with my friends and we always play on the Arcades afterwards. My favourite Arcade machine is the motorbike game.

**Ice-skating** - I couldn't ice skate the first time I went ice skating. On my fifth time I got really good at it and now I can ice skate properly.

**Climbing**

I'm a really good climber. Once I got to the top of a big tree in a park near us. It was exciting climbing up that tree because I hadn't been that high up before. I also like climbing up climbing walls. Last year I climbed to the top of a climbing wall at JCB World and was too scared to jump down (I had a rope attached to me). I was the only one out of the group who managed to climb to the top. I also like climbing on our slide and our climbing frame that we have in the garden with my girlfriend Marley, when she comes over to play. Marley is a very good climber as well and always comes up with new ideas on where to climb.

**Running** - I love running and do it whenever I can, even at home. In March this year I took part in a cross-country running race, between my school and 3 other schools. It was really long, but I came 8th and my mum, dad, brother and grandparents were really proud of me. At the start of the race it was easy and then it became harder but I kept running.

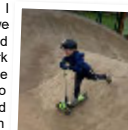
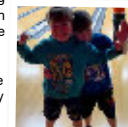
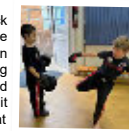
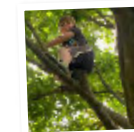
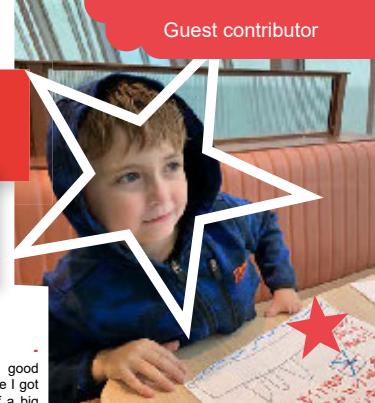
**Swimming** - I go to swim school every Saturday and can swim on my own in the deep end. I am in stage 3, almost level 4.

**Belgium** - We have some good friends in Belgium which we go to visit almost every year. The Belgian family we visit are 17-year-old Nina, the dogs Junky, Topsy, Miranda and Mirielle. I call Miranda uncle Miranda and he loves to joke with Zakk and me. We also always get presents when we go there and do fun things like bowling and go to water parks.

**Bowling** - I bowl like a grown up. I like going bowling with my friends and we always play on the Arcades afterwards. My favourite Arcade machine is the motorbike game.

**Ice-skating** - I couldn't ice skate the first time I went ice skating. On my fifth time I got really good at it and now I can ice skate properly.

I asked my parents if I could be in the Reach Magazine because I think that there is a lot of interesting people in it. And that made me want to be in it so I could be famous and show my friends and my classmates. I love looking at the Reach magazine and I love my 'wrecking ball' hand.



Miranda is a newly qualified yoga teacher and the creator of a clothing line; inspired to help people use and understand their own bodies, Miranda wants people to feel comfortable in their own skin, in their own unique ways, and express themselves freely through the clothes they wear and the movements they make...

Introducing...



By Miranda Littlewood

some way wrong, the yogis had all been wonderful but they hadn't known how to adapt to my needs.

My back pain has now completely gone, and this is why I am committed to becoming a yoga therapist so I can adapt to people's individual needs. As we know, one size does not fit all, but we can work with what we have and, most importantly, learn to love the body we were given.

When I was in my teens, I would wear jumpers in summer to hide my arm; the thought of having it on show made me feel physically sick. Drinking allowed me to overcome this, however, it obviously didn't end well and was not the answer to my problems, in fact, the very opposite. Through all the inner work of meditation, yoga and other helpful tools I've picked up along the way, I have learned to love my body and embrace my uniqueness.

I have now created a clothing line that aligns with the new me; it doesn't allow me to hide the best part of me, because if it wasn't for my arm I wouldn't be who I am today.

My goal is to inspire others to love the body they have through the actions they take, and the clothes they wear. Fashion and yoga go hand in hand, they are an expression of self-love and, to me, that is the best feeling in the world.

Created or written, I don't know, but I've learned to love the journey with all it's ups and downs.

You can follow Miranda:

- @kismattumi
- https://tinyurl.com/53edvx82
- https://tinyurl.com/yck9ynet
- https://www.kismattu.com/



"Do we create fate or is destiny written?"

Growing up with one arm in the environment I did, led to me having a serious lack of self-esteem, which led me to making a lot of bad decisions as a young adult.

When I started turning my life around, I found out all the years of living off-balance had caught up with me. My back pain was bad and the doctors had given me pills I didn't really want to take for the rest of my life. It was then that someone mentioned yoga to me.

I had already started doing mindfulness, healthy eating and started going to the gym, which I had found so helpful with my mental and physical health.

I always find it awkward going to new places, because it means going through the whole arm conversation again, but it's something you get used to over time. I said to the teacher at my first yoga class, "just teach and I'll adapt," what I didn't know at the time was my adaptations were actually incorrect and could have caused more damage over time. Every class I had done until I started my teacher training was in



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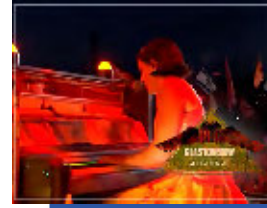
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"A picture paints a thousand words."



Victoria Canal Singer-Songwriter

No one should ever underestimate the power of representation; it speaks for itself. The more we see differences in film, TV or in magazines, the more we normalise and include.

Victoria Canal is a singer-songwriter who was signed by music label Parlophone Records – you may recognise her from her recent performance with Coldplay, playing and singing 'Paradise' on stage at Glastonbury. She also happens to have an upper limb difference but as she's said in interviews, her difference is not what defines her.

However, seeing her play, could be exactly what inspires a Reach child to pursue a music career, simply because she's helped to move difference one step closer towards 'normal.'



Arthur Hughes Actor

He recently played the character of Shardlake in the Disney series of the same title. In a recent Guardian article, he talks about disabled actors playing stereotyped parts, "People expect disabled characters, disabled people, to be one thing. So, you do something else. That unexpected edge can be your power."

Throughout the drama the character of Shardlake faces a lot of prejudice, as disabled people would have in Tudor England, which is why he thinks it was important for him as a disabled actor to play the part.

"Just to know what it's like to be stared at, to know what it's like to feel different, or like people are wary of you or don't know what to do around you. That's why disabled actors should play disabled characters."

He goes on to add that he also believes it's important for disabled actors to, "play roles that aren't focused on disability, to show that disabled people lead all kinds of lives."



Friends of Reach, companies & resources



[www.boldkids.co.uk/](http://www.boldkids.co.uk/)

'BOLDkids is a unique collaboration between Professor Tamar Makin, an expert on brain plasticity at the UCL Plasticity Lab, and Dr Dorothy Cowie, an expert on motor development at her Durham University Movement Lab.'



[www.openbionics.com/en/](http://www.openbionics.com/en/)

'Open Bionics develops medical devices that enhance the human body. Our first product is the Hero Arm for people living with a below-elbow limb difference.'



[www.yourkoalaa.com/](http://www.yourkoalaa.com/)

'At Koalaa, our users are the driving force behind our innovation. By amplifying their voices, we gain a profound understanding of their unique needs and aspirations. This enables us to create prosthetics that go beyond comfort and affordability, offering intuitive designs that empower users to approach tasks in new and innovative ways.'



[www.limbpower.com/](http://www.limbpower.com/)

'LimbPower support amputees, individuals with limb difference and their families to bridge the gap between hospital rehabilitation and community and school engagement to rebuild lives and improve physical, social and mental well-being.'

LimbPower events calendar

- 3rd & 4th August - LimbPower/Surfability Weekend, Caswell Bay
- 17th August - Superhero Series, Dorney Lake
- 20th September - National Fitness Day, Online
- 28th September - The 02 Climb, Greenwich, London
- 30th September - reVAMP Programme Starts
- 5th October - LimbPower Ball, Lingfield, Surrey
- 18th - 28th October - Machu Picchu Hike Peru
- 30th November - Beyond Boundaries, Oxted
- 3rd December - European Limb Loss Day

# What Reach Does

Find out more by visiting: [www.reach.org.uk](http://www.reach.org.uk)

The UK & Ireland's Upper Limb Difference Charity Supporting families and individuals with community, information and more.



## Reach Activity Week

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

## Welcome Pack

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

## Annual Family Weekend

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

## Within Reach Magazine

The Reach publication sharing the voices of our upper limb difference community; real stories, celebrations, events, inspiration and representation.

## Social Media Community

Public platforms focusing on representation and awareness, and private groups providing a safe space for sharing and celebration within our community.

## Branch Meet Ups

Helping Reach families make meaningful connections through our 19 Branches across the UK by organising meet ups and events.



Helping children with upper limb differences live life without limits