



OUR Newsletter

By and for members of enabled



NEWS

- Disabled people and the impact of COVID-19
- NHS Blueprint launched on social care reform
- Time to think again: Disability benefits and support
- Disability Employment - Sandra & Ian Atkinson
- **Enabled Easter event**
- **Enabled Summer School Logo Design**

AUTISM AWARENESS

- Vanessa Bobb - National Autistic Society
- Paul Isaacs - Autism Advocate
- Peter Hobson - Salvation Army
- Elaine & Samuel Doran - enabled members
- Christine & Jack Richardson - enabled Members
- **Results of the enabled Photo competition**
- **Time for Reflection**

Disabled people and the impact of COVID-19



On February 8, 2021, eight researchers from London School of Economics (LSE) submitted key recommendations to the government based on the findings of the research they conducted on disabled people and the impact of COVID-19.



69 disabled people and 28 staff from disability organisations, or in education, health, or social services in England and Scotland took part in the research between June and August 2020.

The research discussed the dislocations caused in everyday life; the failures of social care; the use of new technologies; and views on leadership and communication.



Everyday life has been disrupted. Rehabilitation sessions and health checks were cancelled. People described how their health care and support changed significantly.



Video conferences or phones services were not successful. Disabled people face a digital divide that is twice as bad as that faced by non-disabled people. Provision of assistive devices was severely affected.



People were fearful about the virus. Many found it impossible to practise proper social distancing. People who were hard of hearing faced communication challenges due to face masks: transparent masks for lipreading have been in very short supply, leaving people excluded from the spoken world.



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was provided for hospitals, but not for care homes, and then in care homes, but not for home carers and personal assistants.



Disabled people appear to have been an afterthought in the response to COVID-19. For example, non-disabled children learning from home were provided for first but not children with special educational needs and disabilities, and learning materials were often inaccessible or inappropriate.

Disabled people and the impact of COVID-19

Increased anxiety and reliance on family members and other informal carers due to the closure, or suspension of day centres, day services and large sections of the social care system and social care contracts were cancelled, put on hold, or severely limited. This caused increased anxiety and loss of confidence.

Social services appear to have been largely absent in some authorities. Some people had some funding for their normal support services stopped completely and they had been left without any other alternative.

People received conflicting information, often at the very last minute. There was no routine sign language interpretation of UK government briefings, which sends a very negative message.

Recommendations

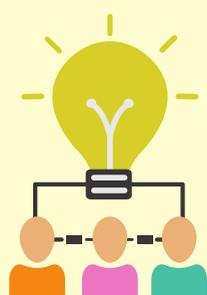
Decisions should be communicated in accessible formats and in a timely manner.



Local authorities should fully reinstate social care packages and invest resources to address the backlog in social care assessments.



Policymakers and social care providers must work collaboratively with disabled people and their organisations to address their needs.



Post-pandemic social change is required to enable disabled people not only to regain what has been lost through the pandemic, but also to gain full citizenship rights.

Read the full report:

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/disabled-people-impact-of-covid19/>



NHS Blueprint launched for social care reform following pandemic

The department of Health and Social Care launched new proposals in February to join up health and care services and embed lessons learned from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The pandemic has shown the impact of inequalities on public health outcomes and the need for government to act to help level up health across the country.

Key measures included in the 'Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all' white paper include:



- Support for recovery by stripping away unnecessary legislative bureaucracy, empowering local leaders and services and tackling health inequalities



- Reform the NHS's Long Term Plan proposals and a bill will be laid before Parliament to carry the proposals into law. Modernise the legal framework to make the health and care system fit for the future.



- The NHS and local government to come together legally as part of integrated care systems to plan health and care services around their patients' needs, and implement innovative solutions focusing on preventative healthcare.



- Establish new assurance and data sharing measures in social care, update the legal framework to enable person-centred models of hospital discharge, and introduce improved powers for the Secretary of State to directly make payments to adult social care providers where required.



- Ensure the safety of patients is at the heart of NHS by putting the Healthcare Safety Investigations Branch permanently into law as a statutory body so it can continue to reduce risk and improve safety.

Read the full NHS blueprint launch here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/blueprint-launched-for-nhs-and-social-care-reform-following-pandemic>.

Time to think again: Disability benefits and support after COVID-19

Research conducted by Social Market Foundation with support from SCOPE has demonstrated the many failings in the current systems of support for disabled people.

The report argued that a new approach is needed to boost disability employment and reduce poverty (both for those in and out of work) and ensure that disabled people that need to rely on the system do so within an approach that delivers dignity, fairness and respect.

Report Findings

- More than 4 in 10 people (42%) living in families that rely on disability benefits are in poverty.
- There are 1.8 million more people in poverty who live in a family that includes a disabled person than there were fifteen years ago.
- The disability employment gap remains above 40 percentage point for many disabled people, including those with a primary mental health condition and those with a learning disability.
- As well as facing a disability employment gap, disabled people face a pay gap when they are in work.
- 92% of the public think the welfare system should ensure disabled people who are unable to work are not in poverty.



Why it's now "Time to Think Again"

Disabled people have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. Now is the "time to think again" especially as we begin to adjust to life, living with, or after COVID-19.

The government's upcoming Green Paper on disability benefits should focus on the assessments processes, improving disabled peoples' experiences of the system and employment support.



Time to think again: Disability benefits and support after COVID-19

Disability benefits after COVID-19: designing a better, fairer system

A number of disabled people said they felt that they were simply “existing, not living”, moving from assessment to assessment, not being shown any trust or respect and repeatedly needing to prove they deserved the benefit.

Recommendations that could be taken forward by Government, in partnership with disabled people and a wide range of stakeholders to make the system work for disabled people in both the short term and long term include:



- **Provides adequacy:** By ensuring that a combination of earnings and benefits provide adequate financial support and dignity for the individuals and families that need to use it;



- **Works for disabled people:** Working with disabled people to create a system that is adequately personalised and tailored to reflect the range of needs that different disabled people have. The system will need to provide appropriate, effective and personalised support to enter work and ensure that those at risk of falling out of work because of a fluctuating condition or the onset of a condition are given all the support they need to stop that happening;



- **Works for and with employers:** By enabling them to fulfil their ambitions for a diverse, flexible and productive workforce;
- **Building trust:** A system that builds public trust and is designed with and supported by disabled people.

You can read the full report:

<https://www.smf.co.uk/publications/time-to-think-again/>



Disability Employment Sandra & Ian Atkinson Enabled Members

In the UK, only 6% of people with learning disabilities are in employment. People with disabilities, especially learning disabilities, face many challenges in getting employment, as well as sustaining employment due to many factors, some of which are linked to the harsh recruitment environment, lack of job satisfaction or placed in employment without tailored reasonable adjustments.

Sandra and Ian run a project to promote disability employment in the North East England region. Sandra is an enabled member at Gateshead Corps. Sandra was diagnosed with arthritis at the age of 13 and Ian has cerebral palsy. They met while working for a disability charity where they were both trustees and got married in 2012.



Employment empowerment projects when linked with other agencies can make a massive impact on people's lives and improve their employability opportunities in life.

The project which is in partnership with DWP delivers training to Community Interest Companies and vulnerable groups. This includes people with disabilities, learning disabilities, autism and mental ill health.

The project started in January 2021, initially it was meant for 3 months but it has been extended to 6 months due to the demand for the service in the region. In total, they will train 120 people.



Disability Employment Sandra & Ian Atkinson Enabled Members

The project aim is to prepare people to get employment by building their confidence, communication skills, interpersonal skills, and how to tell their stories in a positive way especially during interviews. They also give information about Access to Work and Personal Budgets.



Individuals are enrolled in a 10-week online workshop. For those who do not have access to online sessions, they arrange one-to-one telephone sessions for them.



Many of the statutory services including social services and the DWP do not tend to work together and the process can be appear to be difficult, so people have felt let down. This directly affects the 10 weeks meant for individuals to gain the essential skills for employment. For example, one gentleman who has Dyslexia had problems working out his correct medications because they keep changing the packaging or manufacturer. He was also not always given or signposted to the correct help for filling in the necessary forms for benefits. Another person cannot afford to get dyslexia assessment but nobody else seems to fund it. Other people need equipment for mobility or communication devices but they have no access to it. These make it difficult for people to move into employment.

The project is supporting individuals to become more confident in the community, not just for employment, but also to be able to know where and how they can access different help and support services in their community.



Since the start of the project, two people have already got employment while others have improved their confidence in the use of online sessions and speaking. For example, one lady had no confidence to talk during sessions but she has developed confidence to start engaging in online sessions, even if not yet turning on her camera.



Through the project, they have been sending feedback to DWP on some of the things that may impact greatly on people's confidence in getting employment. For example, people are encouraged to apply for many jobs, whether they are suited to them or not.

The inevitable amount of rejection letters has a huge impact on people's mental health and confidence and how useful they see themselves. People would like to find the right job rather than being forced to find any job as failure, for whatever reason, takes away their confidence. The use of rejection letters rather than feedback mechanisms also affects their confidence. The project is working with DWP to ensure that those with disabilities and mental ill health are not simply sent rejection letters, but a session is arranged to explain the feedback to them. The key issues identified which has direct impact on disability employment includes;



1. Pre-existing family and home situations. If you haven't got the support for daily living, then being ready to work is even more challenging. For example, there are some people feeling suicidal, so they have been working with social services to ensure that they access the immediate support they need.

2. Limited funding to address all the key areas for example they are funded specifically for the project but the extra work in the community and linking with other statutory organisations is not funded. Also services are not necessary joined up well.



3. COVID-19 restrictions mean most places are closed, and people are restricted within the confines of their homes. Even online groups can be so much more difficult to participate in due to people being afraid of online security and safety and if you have mental health issues or learning difficulties.



4. Job adverts not being inclusive enough, employers not stating on job adverts that reasonable adjustments can be made for those with a disability. With many people working from home, disabled people still need to be supported while working from home.



5. Job coaches sending inappropriate job advertisements e.g. for a fork lift truck driver to someone who has difficulty controlling their movements but who is skilled in many other areas. While nobody should have their opportunities limited, on this occasion as on many others, it wastes a lot of time and effort and just doesn't make sense!

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates and relates with others. Autism is a spectrum condition that affects people in different ways. Below are some of the difficulties faced by autistic people;

Autistic people may:

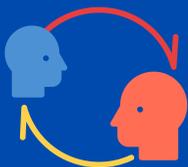
- Feel anxiety about changes or unexpected events
- Be under- or over-sensitive to sound, smells, light, taste and touch. This is called sensory sensitivity.
- Need time to process information, like questions or instructions
- Face high levels of anxiety in social situations
- Have difficulties communicating and interacting with others



Any of these or a combination could lead to a meltdown or shutdown. However, every autistic person is different. By making a few simple changes to your corps/units, you can help autistic people to feel safe and calm. Examples of things you can do to make autistic people feel welcomed and feel at home in your corps/units may include;



Being mindful that too much noise, bright lights and strong smells can cause some people a lot of discomfort.



Using clear and simple language - written or verbal. Do not rely on body or facial expressions and avoid sarcasm and metaphors.



Keeping routines: This is important as they introduce order, structure and predictability and help to manage anxiety. It can be very distressing if a person's routine is disrupted.

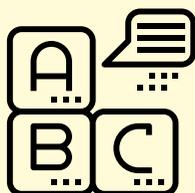
Being flexible: Everyone is different, what works with one person may not work for another. Ask the person what support they need or how best you can support them.



Autism is an "invisible disability". You may not be able to tell that someone is an autistic person from simply looking at them.



The NHS website: The language we use to talk about autism is important because it can affect what people think about autistic people. Getting it right will help people get the right kind of support and services. The NHS gives five tips to think about while talking about autism;



- Talk about autism positively. There are many positive things about being autistic. Many autistic people see autism as part of who they are, rather than something separate, and prefer to be described as 'autistic' or 'on the autism spectrum' rather than as 'someone with autism'.
- Do not use negative language like suffering from autism, symptoms and treatment. Instead talk about characteristics, support and reasonable adjustments.
- Every autistic person is different. Try to make sure people know this in all communications.
- Autism is not a learning disability or a mental illness. But some autistic people also have a learning disability and many people have a mental ill health.
- Some autistic people understand language very literally. Avoid phrases that don't say what they mean. Like "it's raining cats and dogs". Use clear, everyday language.

Read what people we spoke to think about the use of the terms "A person living with autism vs Autistic person" as well as the use of the puzzle symbol.

Peter Hobson - The Salvation Army- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

The term 'people with autism' is not the preferred and most used description particularly to autistic people because they believe that being autistic is part of their identity (Some examples: I am autistic, autistic people, Peter is autistic etc). I personally also prefer this term as being autistic to me is me - part of my identity and who I am.

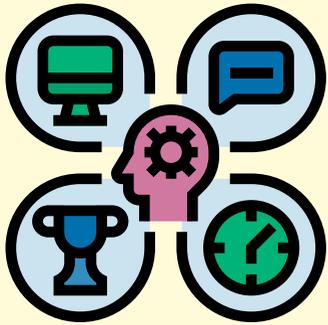
The term 'person with autism' is also used on occasion but not the most preferred term. It is used because some believe that it is person first (some examples: I have autism, person with autism, Peter has autism etc.).

Rachel Gotobed - enabled member and mother:

There is a real mixed bag of opinion on this... I don't have any objection to either but I know many adults who have a preference to be called autistic rather than with autism...

Christine Richardson - Salvation Army Soldier, enabled member and grandmother:

It is difficult in many ways. It's awful to say which term fits best as it is the person, with his/her own abilities. It's a spectrum with so many areas involved. To me, the term doesn't matter, but how we accept and love someone matters the most.



Paul Isaacs - Advocate:

No one human being can be defined by one thing, for human beings are patchwork quilts of three dimensions not one. Contextualise that to autism - autism isn't one thing either - for some it is visual perceptual disorders, others language processing, others sensory, immunity or metabolic challenges. It is a complex mix of **DISability** and **disABILITY** that is individual.

To see people with autism as people - with a healthy acknowledgement of their autism but not to the detriment of their whole being - gives a chance for the person to grow, have autonomy/independence, be self-owning and have a good life.

Lauren Rochelle Fernandez - Activist Advocate & Ambassador for Neurodiversity:

I do not resent the puzzle piece, I have no issue with it. I do not associate the puzzle with meanings of being puzzled, confusion or like a lost piece, more that there is a bigger picture and we are all different parts of that puzzle.

I would identify as an autistic person rather than "a person with autism" as Autism is not something that comes and goes, it is a part of my characteristic and identity. I wouldn't identify as a woman with black or colour, I am a black woman, just as I am an autistic woman.



Vanessa Bobb - National Autistic Society

I have personally been challenged by autistic people on the use of terms and symbols (the puzzles). It's a big thing to autistic people to see that the terms and symbol used do reflect a person positively. So never assume anything. I would recommend that you check the National Autistic Society Website, they have the latest research around autism.



Vanessa Bobb National Autistic Society



Vanessa leads the National Autistic Society-Lambeth branch and is also the founder of A2ndvoice and a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism Advisory Group. Vanessa works to support parents who have a child or young person with Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) and those who have experienced abuse.



Vanessa shares her experiences as a black mother of three children all with a neurological condition such as Autism Spectrum Condition, ADHD, Severe Expressive Reception Language Disorder, epilepsy and moderate language difficulties.

Monday 29 March to Sunday 4 April was World Autism Awareness week. Autism is a lifelong condition that can impact individuals in different ways that is unique to them.

For any parent raising a child or adult with a hidden disability, illness and condition it can be extremely lonely and depressing at times. My middle child (18) was diagnosed with Autism/ADHD in April 2008, my youngest (14) was diagnosed with Autism/ADHD and Benign Rolandic Epilepsy between January 2017 and March 2018. My oldest daughter (20) was diagnosed with Moderate Language Difficulties April 2017 and has a three-year-old son, I delivered him in September 2017. Despite my oldest daughter not having an official diagnosis of Autism, like her siblings, she struggles with social anxiety, sleeping problems and she is a fussy eater .

As a Black mother, raising teenagers with complex needs has been an ongoing journey. I have experienced discrimination, isolation and been denied services that would have helped my children in their early years. Their needs were blamed on my parenting skills. It was a real story of double discrimination.

No one wants to listen to autistic people, this challenge can be higher among Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities

At times I still felt lonely, misunderstood and would not share my experiences when attending some parenting workshops, which were not always Autism specific. I was signposted to the National Autistic Society in 2008 by the ADHD Nurse and did attend local Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Disability support groups. The information circulated lacked cultural perspective and I found when race was mentioned many families, even professionals, felt uncomfortable to discuss this and dismissed that any additional support was needed.

Due to COVID-19, the mental wellbeing of autistic families and the Black African/Caribbean, Asian and Dual Heritage communities has been ignored. A2ndvoice has seen an increase of local/national services seeking advice, support and information in supporting their diverse network. The question I ask myself. What were they doing before?

With the disproportionate amount of deaths within the minority ethnic community this has pushed race to the forefront. The impact of the lack of local services, voluntary groups, emergency services and failure of places of worships recognising Autism and/or Learning Disability has far reaching impacts on people's lives. More need to be done to address this in our society and its a collective responsibility.

My advice to anyone who is looking to work with autistic people and their families is to check the National Autistic Society website, local SEND offer with your local authority or connect with a local group or a family within your organisations. This way you can break down the walls of isolation and build a new supportive network.



I take my faith seriously. Faith, church and autism is one area that needs to improve to be more welcoming and non-judgemental. If you know that you do not understand autism or how to include autistic people in your services and other activities; why not ask for support or at least speak to the family and ask if there is anything you can do to make them feel supported. Not that you may have all the answers to their problems, but do not shut them down. The church should create a safe space for everyone.

My name is Paul Isaacs I have been an advocate for over eleven years. I was diagnosed with autism and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) at the age of 25 in 2010 and later diagnosed with visual perceptual disorders and learning difficulties in 2012.

I was born premature with foetal distress, placental abruption and brain injury. At 6 months old my mother noticed delays in my speech, language and motor development, she thought I was deaf and blind. I went through mainstream education and being a meaning deaf and meaning blind (little hearing and sight) child I could not internalise words. I saw people, places and objects in bits and pieces and would try to understand the world around me by licking, sniffing, tapping and rubbing to externalise and gain association using my body.



I didn't gain functional speech until between the age of 7/8 years old. My language was based around things I had watched on the television at home. I was Echolalic and had an idiosyncratic pattern, theme and feeling. These were ways of adopting my own "language" (non-interpretive but had an inner relevance reality) vs. the interpretive language or the world/environment around me.

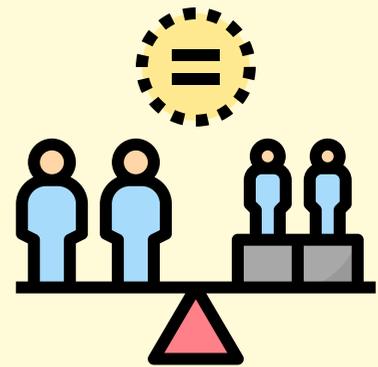
Exposure Anxiety (a form of anxiety termed by the late Donna Williams) has been a great battle throughout my infancy, teens and early adulthood. I would have compulsive retaliation and diversion responses. This would come out as echolalic litanies, mutism and dissociation. The switching between the unconscious world of "sensing" to merged and relate with people to a more interpretive framework was a great difficulty for me.



I was bullied both in my education and in employment. I was diagnosed in 2007 with personality disorders, psychosis and auditory hallucinations - this was no doubt a stress response and my nervous system trying to get a rest and cool down. It is a fact that up to 70 percent of people on the autism spectrum have mental health co-occurring conditions.



Now as an adult I have learnt to let go and rationalise the past as lessons to be learned, lessons to be shared and lessons to be reflected upon.



I strive for knowledge, equality, realness and independence. In my free time I enjoy connecting with friends, creating artwork, poetry and introspective writings.



All people on the Autism spectrum have strengths which just have to be tapped into. It doesn't matter where one is on the spectrum, everybody has strength and talents.

“

Do not fear people with Autism, embrace them, Do not spite people with Autism unite them, Do not deny people with Autism accept them for then their abilities will shine”





Peter Hobson is a senior soldier who has been attending The Salvation Army for his whole life. Peter's grandparents were officers and Peter was particularly close to his Grandfather.

Peter has been working for The Salvation Army for around five years. Before joining The Equality and Diversity team Peter worked within the Homelessness Services. Peter's roles have included concierge and facilities co-ordinator in Stoke, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

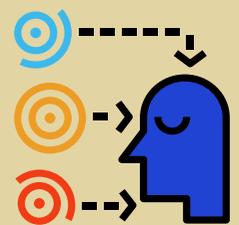
Peter is an Autistic person and explains that he has experienced some good things and not so good things as well as some supportive officers.

In his role with The Equality and Diversity, Peter's aim is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access church, and the services and programmes of The Salvation Army. Peter has some reasonable adjustments in place that allow him to carry out his role.

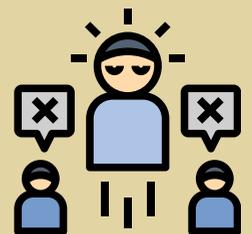
Peter explains that it is important to understand that everyone is different and can find it difficult to feel included. That everyone should receive compassion and understanding.



Some of the things that could assist an Autistic person include allowing people to sit where they feel comfortable and being aware of the sensory impact, particularly lighting, sudden loud noises and the content of PowerPoint slides. However, everyone is an individual with different things benefitting different people. The key thing to do is talk with the person and ask what might assist them.



Away from work Peter likes to travel which he finds helpful for his anxiety. Of course, due to the Coronavirus restrictions, Peter has not been able to travel. Peter likes to exercise by cycling in a nearby country park.



Peter also shared with us about the different aspects of his life as an autistic person from growing up as a young boy to now as an adult. For example, about his experiences with shopping, education, travelling, employment and anxiety management.



Education

I was told whilst at school that I wouldn't be able to go into further education because I was autistic. I was undeterred by this and knew that being autistic wouldn't stop me from studying.



Believe it or not there was a time when attending college, let alone a university, was all but a dream. School was incredibly challenging coping with daily challenges in particular bullying. As the consequence, I left school with grades all below the level of C.



I applied to many colleges and received a lot of rejections but was given one chance two weeks before the start of the new academic term. This opened many more doors and has led to me studying for many academic qualifications at many different educational institutions.



My first college was Keighley College. I remember sitting on the train feeling a sense of acceptance that someone had given me a chance. I was incredibly happy but also pretty anxious too.

I worked so hard and graduated from Huddersfield University. On my graduation day, I kept thinking if it was even real! I remember standing there waiting for my name to be called and thinking 'Wow... is this actually happening?' I still didn't believe it.



I get quite emotional when I think back to that day, being sat there in my cap and gown in Huddersfield's St Paul's Hall. It was an incredibly special moment of many powerful emotions for me!

Communication

I had delayed speech when I was younger. Since then, I have been determined to improve my speech. One of my biggest fears was speaking on camera. I was very conscious about how I looked and the way I sounded.



I have presented a lot of radio programmes since then, interviewed many people and even appeared on camera. I had never thought I would do any of these things due to my speech.

Relationship

There are times when people have said because I am autistic, I won't want to be friends or go somewhere. This just isn't correct. I like spending time with people but sometimes I just need my own space.



Having relationships with friends and colleagues is really important to me and I will do anything to try and support this. It is also important to me that my friends and colleagues respect that me being autistic is part of who I am and try to understand that I sometimes do things differently but achieve the same, similar or acceptable results.



Life can sometimes be challenging but it is important that people are there for each other and that communicating with each other including those who are autistic may be different because of one positive thing and that we are all different.

I have friendships and working relationships with colleagues - being autistic doesn't mean that relationships cannot happen.



Shopping

Supermarkets can be very difficult places for autistic people. There are a lot of different brands and products to choose from, a lot of people around and sometimes a lot of noise. Despite this, with a few strategies this is an area that can be made a lot easier and less anxiety provoking.



Some strategies are things developed or supported by retailers such as; the hidden lanyard scheme, online shopping, scanning items as you go around the shop and paying for shopping by phone. This certainly helps in making the checkout process easier.



I have also created my own strategies such as; creating lists of items I will buy, drawing and creating the store layout and placing this into my phone in case I get lost or can't find something.

Being autistic doesn't mean that we are incapable of making choices. We can shop with things to help us.

Train travels

Travelling can be very challenging to an autistic person. Honestly at one point I thought I would never be able to do it, but it is one of the things I really enjoy now. I have developed strategies to help me manage some of the challenges of travelling by train;

- Route plan: With the journey layout, train type, station names and expected times of arrival.
- Pre-planned events: Wide range of event based strategies for any delays or train cancellations. These are planned in advance to help me, should I need them when the situation occurs.
- I use a simulation to familiarise myself with what stations and trains look like before travelling on an unfamiliar train or visiting an unfamiliar station.



Employment



Finding employment has been very difficult for me over the years and it can be for many autistic people. The tests, applications, interviews, presentations and the list goes on and on. This is all before you even get through the door.

I was told several times that it wouldn't be possible for me to work because I was autistic, but my determination was stronger and I have proved it was possible.

I like working. I want to work despite the misconceptions. I am proud to be employed. I have always tried my best in every job I have ever had and will go on doing so in the future.



I have taken part in various work placements for experiences and other different purposes. On the whole I have found it to be an incredibly positive process. One of them was at a radio station when I was studying at Huddersfield.

Over the years people have spoken to me about my skills and abilities that I have brought to employment including; attention to detail, being a very visual person and the retention of facts and information. I am also told I make a very good cuppa which I think is a pretty good skill to have in the mix.

Anxiety



Anxiety impacts me every single day and in different ways depending on the situation and event. These are some of the things I do to help me manage my anxiety:



- Strategies for many planned situations that could happen.
- Use technology called Brain in Hand to help manage my anxiety.
- Use other systems in place related to sensory processing to try and manage my anxiety.

The traffic light reminder



I'm finding things difficult



Things are difficult but am coping



Everything is okay

Every single day I continue to develop strategies to manage my anxiety. I also use the traffic light reminder to manage anxiety and find this very helpful at times.

You can create your own traffic light strategy.

Meltdown/ shutdown

Sometimes I have shutdowns for different reasons; the most common for me are things regarding sensory inputs and the amount of social interactions taking place.

In the case of a shutdown for me, I start withdrawing from my surroundings, stop communicating in part and sometimes go completely quiet. This can often be for minutes but sometimes can be for hours.

When I am getting a shutdown, it feels like my brain needs to rest. It is similar to charging a mobile phone. If the battery is running low and you don't charge it then it will gradually stop working and switch off until you charge it.

I use noise cancelling headphones and have a number of other strategies which have really helped me to manage them but they still happen sometimes.





Christine & Jack Richardson Enabled Members



Christine is a Salvation Army Soldier at Stockton Citadel and a member of enabled. Christine has been married to Allan for nearly 49 years and they have two grown up children, Susan and Thomas, and three grandchildren, Liam (20), Jack (19) and Scarlett (11). Below Christine shares her experience of Autism, how it has been for the family and their grandson Jack who was diagnosed with autism.

Jack was diagnosed with Autism and other learning difficulties which affects his speech, learning and understanding from a young age. It took 17 years to get a full diagnosis and get a result. As you can imagine, it was such a frustrating time for him and his family.



Despite the difficulties that Jack faces daily, for example feeling agitated which is sometimes mistaken as being demanding, Jack is very kind and caring, loves to go to college, visit his grandparents or go out shopping and sightseeing.

When Jack was three years old, his parents asked to see a specialist because we were so concerned. Jack didn't speak, never played with toys, he just lined everything up and then sat there looking at what he had done. He couldn't feed himself and didn't seem to understand instructions. There were no cuddles from him or smiles.



After a year, the specialists said that Jack was just a slow learner and wouldn't entertain any concerns from us. This went on until Jack was five and a half, and a friend, referred us to the head of special needs Children's services. Jack started at a specialised school for children with all kinds of disabilities, and it was such a relief to finally get Jack the help he needed.

In the first year, Jack started to say the odd word, and learned how to feed himself and started to learn with the help of flash cards, which we had to use at home. Jack went on to senior school and is now at college. He loves to play football but doesn't understand the rules of the game - he loves that you just score goals.

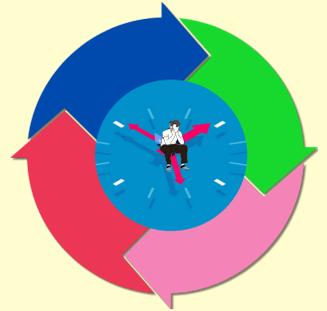
During the three years at his school, Jack has taken part in pantomimes, made videos and represented his school in Sweden as an ambassador. Jack had his Prom at school and took me as his date! A very proud and emotional time for me.



Christine & Jack Richardson Enabled Members



Jack doesn't like changes and finds it hard to understand why things change. On one occasion, I took him out for a bus ride as we usually did on a Saturday morning. There was a road diversion, and the bus took a different route. It was absolute chaos. Jack started getting agitated, shouting wrong way wrong way, and everyone was complaining on the bus, which made him worse. We were asked to leave the bus and had to walk home because the noise was distracting the driver.



People just don't understand, they think because you look like everyone else, you should behave like everyone else. Unseen disabilities are sometimes seen as bad behaviours. You can imagine what it was like being asked to leave the bus with my grandson and made to walk!

Jack's memory is like a computer. He is so good with dates and specific details. I remember a time I filled in a form which asked the date we moved into our bungalow. We'd forgotten the exact date, but Jack heard and he told us the day, time and date! As well as what we'd done on that day, what we had to eat and where we moved to. It amazes me to think how can he remember all this, and then be told he's got learning difficulties! A real puzzle. It should be understood by people that our brains work differently.

Jack joined Enabled so he could meet new people to socialise and fellowship with. He enjoys the fun we all have together when we meet up. He's still a bit apprehensive when he meets new people, but after a while, he's just Jack, a lovely boy. He still has his moments of agitation but has learned a **de-stressing code**. He counts down and comes out of it.

It may take Jack a while to learn something new but, as he always says, '**Never give up Nan, try again**'. Jack has achieved so much and we are very proud of the young man he has become.

Everyone should understand that there are **people who have unseen disabilities and need help**. Even in schools, while they're still learning, so they grow up with that knowledge and understanding. **Include disabled people in everything. It's their human right**. Try to put in place those little changes that can make one feel welcomed. I remember a time when a family with an autistic child came to our corps and the son was getting agitated. I went and spoke to the mother since my grandson is also autistic. She was happy for that. Those little actions without patronising someone can really make a difference for them.

Elaine and Samuel are enabled members and attend the Hoyland Common Corps. Samuel is the youngest member there. Samuel has Down's Syndrome and he is also autistic. However, these two things do not define who Samuel is and they should not.

Samuel is a son, brother, nephew, cousin, friend. He is an employee, working for a large company. He is a swimmer, walker, singer, chef. He has an eclectic choice in music - Abba, Pogues, Madness, Adele to name a few. His favourite films/TV shows include Dad's Army, Fawlty Towers, Mr. Bean, James Bond and musicals. He is an expert at using technology, using one set of controls to flick through the TV whilst getting on to YouTube to find favourite clips or music quizzes on his laptop. He has a phenomenal sense of direction and travels independently on local trains and buses. He is caring, thoughtful, considerate, sensitive, funny, loving and fiercely independent.



Samuel's qualities are seldom seen, that is, until someone takes time and effort to get to know the real him. What people generally see is a young man perhaps flapping, humming or making facial grimaces. From that, people make assumptions about Samuel's capabilities and expect little. Indeed, as parents, we have pushed to give Samuel the same opportunities that his sisters have had.

At the age of 8, Samuel competed at the Special Olympics held in Glasgow. At 9, he attended a week's residential with his class in Norfolk. On returning to school, the Headteacher came and told me they had learned more about Samuel in that week than they had the whole time he had been in school. A very honest but sad observation.

Unfortunately, Samuel's limited verbal communication and social skills are also a barrier to people engaging with him. A successful inclusive activity/organisation is dependent on willingness to be flexible, creative and accepting of differences. The Beaver leader was great but the transition to Cubs and Scouts was less smooth due to the leaders being less comfortable and confident. I could list many times Samuel has met with resistance, however, there have been positives: attendance at a mainstream cooking course, the tutor putting together a simplified recipe card, attending Explorer Scouts camp in Guernsey and, of course, The enabled Summer School and subsequent events.

At our first Summer School, one of the delegates was surprised when told that Samuel had a job. The delegate said, 'He has a job?' Later, they apologised recognising that like everyone, Samuel is entitled to earn his own money. The delegate admitted that they made an assumption on his capabilities based on first impressions.

The enabled Summer School has been brilliant for Samuel and for me. Unfortunately, the pandemic has meant that we couldn't have it. Things have been very different having to connect via the internet. Unfortunately, the online Sunday service at our corps has not been engaging for Samuel. We then looked for an alternative option.

The Salvation Army Yorkshire, Tees and Humber Division run a Youth service on Sunday 6pm. One week is a Trivia night with music/picture quizzes, re-enact the image challenges as well as prayer and song. The following week is Worship Night. This approach is more engaging and meaningful for Samuel and, as a family, we all get involved. It is energising, lots of laughter and fun. A wonderful way to worship.



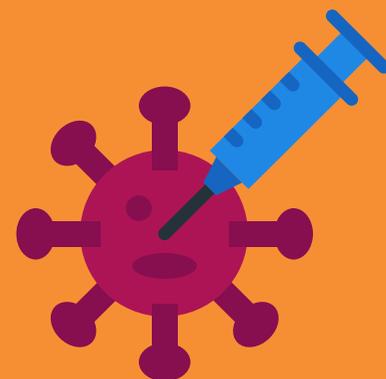


COVID-19 Vaccination

The COVID-19 vaccine has been received with much relief by many. In the UK, over five million people have received their second round of the vaccine. When the vaccine was first announced, people living with a learning disabilities were not included in the priority list, however, this was changed in February through a petition. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has since advised the government that everyone on the GP learning disability register should be prioritised for COVID-19 vaccine.

By now, your GP should have already contacted you directly about your vaccination. You can contact your GP if you have not yet heard from them and believe that you should have been on the learning disability register.

Some enabled members have shared with us their stories and experiences of their vaccinations. Most of the members said it was quick and not painful. Others experience slight side effects but that didn't last for more than a day and wasn't serious.



Have you had your vaccination yet?
Would you like to share your experience and photo with us?
Send photos to enabled@salvationarmy.org.uk.



The very first enabled Easter Event was held this year from 19 -21 March 2021. With the continuing restrictions due to the Coronavirus pandemic the event was held online. The purpose was to give enabled members the opportunity to join with others across the territory and celebrate Easter together.

In total, there were 18 sessions which included an Easter scavenger hunt for six Easter related items, Friday Night Fun, Art and Music, Godly Play, Fit In 15, family and worship sessions, and an Easter Extravaganza all streamed on Facebook or YouTube. More than 170 Enabled members took part in the weekend and members shared photos and comments about their experiences during the sessions.

Chris Stringer opened the session with a scavenger hunt for six Easter related items. It was amazing to see the imagination of members as they sought alternative items when they did not have the required item in their house. You have never seen so many substitutes for Hot Cross Buns!

James Hartley, Amanda-Jayne and Tristan Lanceley shared their life stories, testimonies and the challenges they have to overcome as people living with disabilities. Rueben Dykes (Skegness) led a session on songs and monologues which gave us an insight into his life and words of encouragement.

To watch "This is me" by James Hartley go to:
<https://www.facebook.com/696212123/videos/10157862580347124/>

To watch "This is us" by Amanda-Jayne and Tristan Lanceley:
<https://www.facebook.com/521909723/videos/10158577193504724/>

To watch the songs and monologues session by Rueben Dykes:
<https://youtu.be/G998YWkPsy0>





The Sunday worship was led by Colonels Jenine and Paul Main. The topic was "Using the five senses to experience Easter". We shared the senses of Easter by watching a video clips, singing songs, feeling a silver coin, smelling and eating bread, eating a grape or drinking fruit juice, smelling and touching a wooden cross or piece of wood. This was a very powerful way to experience the Easter story.

Following many of the sessions members posted on Facebook and WhatsApp photos and clips of them joining in, the results of their artwork, items that they had gathered and also wearing odd socks for Down Syndrome Day.

Some of the feedback from participants



"Thank you everyone for a great weekend. Caroline loved joining with you all. A lot of planning and organising goes into it and we very much appreciate it." Laura Ferguson
George Steven Community Hub.

"A huge thank you to Chris Stringer, the planning team and all that were involved in this great weekend. God bless you all. Wendy Hooper- enabled member: Lincolnshire.



"Fantastic way to celebrate Easter this year, We have had fun & laughter & Christian fellowship throughout the weekend" Rachael Rhodes,
Nottingham

"I have loved everything about the whole weekend events."- Christine Richardson-
enabled member: Stockton

"A great big thank you to everyone who has made this weekend possible. I've really had a great time with so many happy blessings." Janet Dear- enabled member: South Shields

"A wonderful weekend. Thank you to everyone who made it such a success. Stay safe. Keep positive. God Bless." Elaine Doran
enabled member- Hoyland Common

"It feels so wonderful to belong to such a wonderful group. Although I haven't met a lot of you yet, I class you all as friends/family. Thank you all for making me and my husband feel loved." Helen Birchall- enabled member: Sunderland Millfield





Before the enabled Easter Event members had the opportunity to submit photos for a photo competition on the theme of "In a Garden". 44 entries were received and each was allocated a number and compiled into a video by Stuart Muskin and Andrea Darlington who are both enabled members. Enabled members had three opportunities to see the video and voted for their favourites. Congratulations to the winners!



First: Jak Darlington



Second: Sam Doran
(Hoyland Common)



Third: Helen Birchall
(Sunderland Millfield)

More pictures from enabled Easter Event





Every year World Down Syndrome day is celebrated on 21 March. This year the global theme was “we decide”.

Down Syndrome is the most genetic variations condition across the world. Just like everyone else, people with down syndrome have their own unique personalities, preferences and things that make them who they are as individuals.

enabled members celebrated the World Down Syndrome Day by wearing different coloured odd socks and sharing the photos on social media platforms.



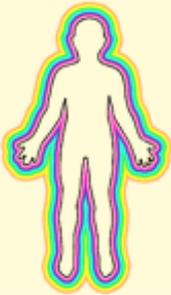


Time for Reflection:

"Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. **1 Corinthians Chapter 12 Verses 14 - 20**



When writing this letter to the church in Corinth, one of the things that Paul wanted them to understand was how much they needed each other.



Paul uses the description of a body to make his point. What Paul is explaining is that God has arranged a body to have many parts. Each part of the body has its function and is necessary.

You might consider yourself to be lesser than other people and think that your contribution is insignificant. As we know not all body parts function in the same way and all bodies are not the same. Psalm 139 verses 13 - 14 reminds us "for you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."





Time for Reflection:

Every Christian is like a part of the body. Whilst we are all different each one is necessary. What this means is that each Christian does something important for the benefit of other Christians. That we need each other.

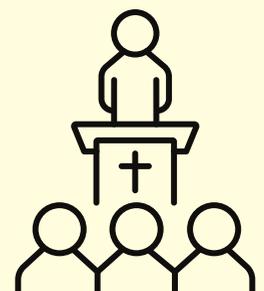


Every part of the body has its function and part to play. Every Christian also has their function and part to play. We should consider the gifts, talents, skills and qualities of people and how they help us to function as a compassionate and effective group. Sadly, all too often, the focus is on what people cannot do rather than what they can.



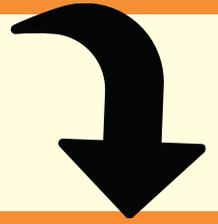
Someone in the church may seem important, liked and respected. Other people may feel that they are unimportant and that they do not belong to the church. However to God every person who has trusted in Him to save them belongs in the church. Every Christian is important and necessary.

Whoever you are, whatever you may feel that your limitations are, you are a vital person in the body of the church, with a key part to play. Remember that our work in the church does not depend on education, class or status, it depends on the the gifts from God. And these gifts can be different in each and everyone of us. Paul said in Romans 12 verse 6 "In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you."





Get Involved



Enabled Summer School of Arts, 2021 Logo Competition

The Enabled Summer School of Arts for this year will be from:
Saturday 24 July - Saturday 31 July, 2021.

The theme for this year is: **"In his hands"**.

The Bible verse for the Summer School is: **Isaiah 49:16:**

"See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands,..."

If you would like to design the logo for the week please send your logo to:
Chris Stringer by Friday 21 May, 2021.



Prayer Network

The enabled prayer network roll is being shared weekly with members who have signed up. If you are interested, please get in touch with Chris Stringer or Paska Moore.

**"Therefore encourage one another and
build one another up, just as you are doing"**

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Are you an unpaid Carer?

The African Caribbean Care Group (ACCG) is leading a new project in partnership with Carers Manchester Contact Point and associated partners to identify unpaid carers in Central Manchester.

Do you care for a partner, friend, neighbour or extended relative? Please contact ACCG on **0161 226 6334** or **Carers-Mcr-Central@ACCG.org.uk** and ask how we can help you. Our friendly team are here to help with any situation or issue you may have.

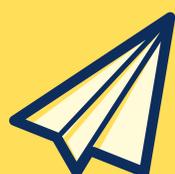


Contact us



Your comments and feedback is very important, so please talk to us. We also love to hear your stories and receive articles about what you do in your corps and community to promote inclusion of people living with a disability and encourage others especially during this difficult time.

We look forward to hearing from you!



LETTER

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FACEBOOK

Salvation Army Fellowship of Endeavour



Founder: William Booth

General: Brian Peddle

Territorial Commander: Anthony Cotterill



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