

# The Power 100 2019

#disabilitypower100

Britain's most influential  
disabled people

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# Welcome



Welcome to the 2019 Shaw Trust Power List, a celebration of the 100 most influential disabled people in Britain.

Our sincere congratulations to our top 100 influential people who have been nominated and judged by their peers to be role models, advocates, campaigners, activists and social changers. Reading each person's story, it is clear that there is still a huge way to go to achieve equality and

inclusion, but that incredible progress is being made – in the public arena and in private spaces, digitally and in real life, to many lives and to individuals – and that these changes will benefit society as a whole.

Thank you to everyone who nominated someone who they felt was influential this year. Year on year the number of nominations we receive is astounding as the level of awareness and inclusion increases. But we still have much to do to create a fully inclusive and fairer society. As last year's winner, Alex Brooker says in his interview with us (page 128): "Soaps and comedies need more disabled people in roles where it's not all about their disability because we live normal lives too. You don't get a lot of that in programmes. But the more you get, the more normalising it is."

This year's nominees have come from a diverse range of sectors and have been nominated by members of the public, colleagues and those inspired by their stories. I am very grateful to the chair of our judging panel, Kate Nash and to our panel of excellent judges who volunteered their time to read and qualify every entry.

And while choosing the top 100 has been a huge task for our judges, I hope in the coming years this task becomes harder as more powerful, influential and everyday role models are nominated for the Shaw Trust Power List of Britain's most influential disabled people.

Our work with the Power List aims to change perceptions of and normalise disability, tackle social exclusion and, as importantly, provide role models for the young and talented leaders of tomorrow. Since 1982, Shaw Trust has been supporting disabled people, creating opportunities for employment, independence and social inclusion. We have now grown to be one of the top 25 charities in the UK supporting people from all backgrounds and abilities across the country and internationally. Our purpose is to help to deliver a fairer more inclusive world, in which accessibility is the norm and not the exception. We work closely with government, employers and local authorities to challenge the status quo, opinions and crucially close the disability employment gap by creating opportunities for all.

**Chris Luck**

Chief Executive, Shaw Trust

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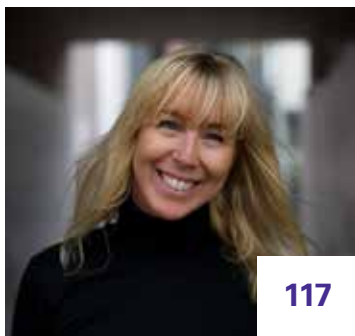
Judges Choice

**111**

The Top 10

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## Features



**Feature**  
Caroline Casey



**Hall of Fame**  
Alex Brooker



**In memory**  
Mike Oliver

# **Arts, Fashion and Design**



## Andrew Miller

Arts Consultant, Campaigner & Broadcaster

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For 30 years Andrew Miller has been blazing a trail across arts and broadcasting. He began in children's television presenting Channel 4's Boom! in 1989, a ground-breaking series that integrated disabled children with their non-disabled peers at a time when education was largely segregated. As one of the first generation of disabled presenters on mainstream British television, Andrew became known for pushing his limits parascending and crashing hot air balloons.

Later moving behind the camera, Andrew made BAFTA nominated documentaries on leading artists such as Antony Gormley and Gerry Rafferty. He then switched careers again and established a new arts centre at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, becoming the first wheelchair user to run a major entertainment venue.

Uniquely, Andrew is a member of the National Councils of both Arts Council England and The Arts Council of Wales. He is a trustee of Welsh National Opera and UK digital arts agency The Space, chairs the British Film Institute's Disability

Advisory Forum and is Disability Advisor to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Andrew is also the UK Government's first Disability Champion for Arts & Culture, establishing the role as a powerful platform to campaign for greater inclusion across the arts, museum and film sectors.

In all these roles, Andrew advocates for disabled people as artists, employees and audiences aiming to improve training and employment opportunities alongside promoting equality of experience.

Andrew says: "I want to use my influence to further democratise our national culture, to ensure it is accessible to everyone." He is currently developing a free national arts access card for disabled audiences and exploring how an Inclusive Cultural Strategy could make the UK's arts sector the most accessible in the world. In 2019 Andrew was shortlisted for Lifetime Achievement at the National Diversity Awards. ◆



## Kat Pemberton

### Activist model & vlogger

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Kat is a 22-year-old disability activist, model and vlogger from Yorkshire. She began vlogging on YouTube to share, and demystify, her day-to-day life as a young woman with Spinal Muscular Atrophy type two (SMA2). Aware that many people cannot get past the wheelchair, Kat uses online platforms to educate others. She shares her interests, experience and creativity along with what her life is like as a young disabled gay woman: including very ordinary things like shopping, going to college and spending time with friends.

She says: "Something that I try to live by is 'People will stare, give them something to look at!' Just as I've grown up with strangers staring or asking invasive questions. I feel strongly motivated to challenge people's perceptions, whilst having fun and embracing my individuality!"

Kat loves fashion and beauty, with a personal style she describes as: "80s Barbie and mermaid." She joined modelling agency Zebedee Management and has modelled for the BooHoo 'All Girls' campaign. Kat also took part in a BBC 5 Live discussion

about how disability can be represented better in the fashion and beauty industries.

In 2017 Kat made a short, snappy film with Fixers UK about disability stereotypes and the awkward comments she is fed up of hearing, and spoke on ITV news about it.

Kat adds her disability perspective to conversations in the LGBTQ+ community (such as about physical access at Pride parades) and adds her LGBTQ+ experience to conversations about disability. Kat took part in HSBC's Portraits of Pride campaign, as one of four LGBTQ+ campaigners who had their portraits painted and displayed throughout the UK during Pride month.

Recently Kat has been appointed as Yorkshire regional champion for national disability organisation AccessAble. She promotes AccessAble's accessibility information through videos and media appearances. She has also run workshops in schools and colleges (with students and tutors) and given talks at events including the Women of the World Festival. ◆



## Natasha Trotman

Inclusive designer, maker, researcher

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Natasha is an artist, inclusive designer, maker and researcher whose work focuses on mental difference and neurodiversity as a way to foster new conversations and new approaches to the world around us. Her work examines different ways of experiencing and processing the world - from people with hidden disabilities and neurodivergent communities such as people with dyspraxia and autism, through to people living with dementia; she also works with neurotypical people.

Natasha studied Information Experience Design (IED) at the Royal College of Art and has a Masters degree in IED, with a background in Graphic Design, Inclusive Design and Data and Systems analysis from Oxford. She is also a special educational needs/disability (SEN/D) practitioner working with children and young people with disabilities. Combining these various strands that she calls transcendence, Natasha is able to hover over her varying skill set; creating interactive, playful provocations, objects and creative dialogues which invite audiences to sense and explore the world

differently, building empathy, growing sensory repertoires and expanding sensory lexicons. She has exhibited widely, creating sensory workshops and exhibits at huge cultural institutions and organisations including The Victoria and Albert Museum, The London Design Biennale at Somerset House, the National Portrait Gallery and Tate Britain. This year Natasha has been working as a Research Associate at The Royal College of Art's Helen Hamlyn Centre for Inclusive Design as well as at The Wellcome Collection Hub on their Design and The Mind Research project. She recently co-authored a universal design and higher education in transformation (UDHEIT) paper on co-creating with neurodiverse communities.

Natasha is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts and a Member of the Chartered Society of Designers and has been honoured at 10 and 11 Downing Street. Natasha is currently an artist in residence at Somerset House's Studio 48 and has been selected as a 10x10 emerging Artist by the British Council and will be featured in this year's London Design Festival. ◆





## Samanta Bullock

Model, designer, athlete

Samanta began modelling aged 8. In 1992, aged 14, a bullet wound left her with life-changing injuries and she has been a wheelchair user since then. Samanta has always been very active and took up wheelchair tennis, going on to represent Brazil from 2003 - 2009 and winning the doubles silver in 2007 at the Para Pan Am Games.

Samanta is a Proud Paralympian Ambassador for the International Paralympic Committee, where she works on delivering a project to para athletes around the world. She also performed on sway pole in the opening ceremony of the 2012 Paralympic Games.

In addition, Samanta continues to be both a working model and an active campaigner for a better, more inclusive fashion industry. She is passionate about inclusion of disabled people throughout the industry - as models, designers, photographers and - of course - as customers.

Samanta has modelled in Portugal, Brazil, Spain, Turkey, Dubai, the UK, the US and

Northern Ireland. She participated in London Fashion Week and Fashion's Finest as both a model and a panellist. She works with numerous designers to make clothes design more inclusive and adaptable, for example considering the cut and comfort of clothes when people are seated as well as standing.

Samanta has a large social media following, speaks to school groups in the UK and Brazil, and is an ambassador for Fashion Inclusivo in Brazil and Parallel Global. Her work was instrumental to creating an inclusive fashion panel at Central St Martin's in London and she was a judge at Naidex in 2018, returning in 2019 as a judge and also a speaker.

This year Samanta has launched her own fashion brand and online store 'SB' with a focus on quality, sustainability and - of course - inclusivity.

She says: "Do what you can with what you have with your best every single day." ♦



## Shannon Murray

Actor, writer, broadcaster, solicitor, consultant

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Shannon Murray began acting aged eight with the Anna Scher drama school. When she was 14, as a result of a diving accident, she became paralysed from the chest down and has used a wheelchair since then. In 1994 Shannon's friends entered her into a UK-wide modelling competition, looking for a disabled model, which she won and from then signed with VisABLE People Agency. She has been modelling, acting and presenting since then.

Shannon trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama, and has appeared in a number of dramas and soaps including *Class*, *Silent Witness*, *Casualty*, *Holby City* and *Eastenders*. In 2010, following appearances on Gok Wan's *How to Look Good Naked*, Shannon modelled for department store Debenhams, becoming the first disabled model to feature in a high street advertising campaign.

As someone who acquired their disability as a teenager, Shannon is keenly aware of the specific issues around adjusting to disability while also growing into an adult. She speaks

at schools across the country and mentors young people with acquired disabilities covering everything from socialising to body image to sexuality and relationships.

Shannon is also a solicitor and disability consultant, and has been campaigning for better media representation for over 25 years. She has been an expert guest on numerous programmes including BBC News, Radio 4's *No Tragedy, No Triumph*, *60 Minutes*, *Pioneers* and *Newsnight*. She has also written articles about broader topics around disability for *The Independent*, *The Conversation*, *Company* magazine and others.

With highly sought-after expertise, Shannon has been a keynote speaker and moderator at events for huge household names including the BBC, Channel 4, *Raindance Film Festival*, and for organisations including the Metropolitan Police, Goldman Sachs, Network Rail and University College London Medical School. She currently divides her time between London, Dublin and Los Angeles. ♦



## Suzanne Bull MBE

Attitude is Everything

Suzanne Bull MBE is the Founder-Director of Attitude is Everything, growing a short-term pilot programme that began in 2000 to help remove barriers to Deaf and disabled people accessing the live music industry, into a fully-fledged charitable organisation, over 19 years. On 1st April 2008, Attitude is Everything became a charitable organisation and received its first set of regular funding from Arts Council England. It remains in the National Portfolio as a Sector Support Organisation. Attitude is Everything improves Deaf and disabled people's access to live music by working in partnership with audiences, artists and the music industry. Their Vision is that Deaf and Disabled People can be audience members, employees or artists at any live music event of their choice: music without barriers. They are a disability-led organisation.

Following Suzanne's ethos to be approachable and helpful, the organisation makes the business case for inclusion, while helping the

live music industry understand how to create change. It sets the industry standards for inclusivity with their Charter of Best Practice that music venues and festivals sign up to. In May 2017, UK Music's Live Music Group endorsed the Charter as the Best Practice Standards for all live music events to adhere to, and the UK-government's endorsement soon followed from Sarah Newton MP.

Over 195 UK venues and festivals are now signed to the Charter and last year, 170,000 Deaf and disabled people attended events there, and their households spent £8.3 million. Suzanne was awarded an MBE for services to music, arts and disabled people in 2013, while in 2017, she was named the DWP's Disability Sector Champion for the Live Music Industry, and in 2018 she was awarded Music Week's Women in Music 'Campaigner of the Year' Award, in recognition of her work to make live music more inclusive and accessible. ◆

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# **Business, Finance and IT**



## Christopher Catt

### The Enabled Entrepreneur

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Christopher Catt has spent most of his career helping other disabled people find and keep employment - working across the private, public and charity sectors.

Christopher was the first person in the UK with severe sight loss to gain qualifications in Computer Aided Engineering, but in the 1990s he moved tracks to work for the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) at their Rehabilitation Centre in Torquay. At the RNIB Christopher set up a service advising people about their welfare rights and providing training, supporting hundreds of the centre's clients to find work.

In 1995 Christopher left RNIB to study Politics at the University of Plymouth. While there he helped many other disabled students to navigate the benefits system and get the right support through the Disabled Student Allowance. After graduating, Christopher worked for the social enterprise Pluss, running their Employment Bureau. He created a 'one stop shop' for employment services and helped thousands of disabled people to secure paid work and - through that - greater independence.

In 2012 Christopher made his lifelong dream of running his own business a reality, setting up The Life Coach Station. With a focus on supporting disabled people around work, life and entrepreneurship, The Life Coach Station has now worked with over 500 people, informed by Christopher's years of experience. In 2015 he was winner of Coaching for a Cause at the International Coaching Awards.

Christopher has now set up Enabled Life and the Enabled Entrepreneur Elevator, supporting disabled people to get their business ideas off the ground. Christopher also trained at Andy Harrington's Professional Speakers Academy, achieving Elite Status. Meanwhile Enabled Life and the Enabled Entrepreneur Elevator are being rolled out to service providers in the public sector as a 'train the trainer' model to improve self-employment support and services for disabled people. He says: "Enabled Life: it's a mindset, you might already have it." ♦



## Dominic Lund-Conlon

### Mobility expert

Mobility expert Dominic Lund-Conlon is well-known in his field for making a huge impact on many people's ability to get around - both through his work with the Rail Delivery Group and as the founder of the website Review My Wheelchair.

Throughout his career Dominic has worked to make sure public transport is accessible in every sense of the word. He has worked on transport for Essex County Council, been Secretary for the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers, and a Non-Executive Director for ITSO Limited (Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation).

Dominic says: "I have been fortunate that through proactively working with partner organisations, I have been able to share in some great successes."

Now the Head of Accessibility and Inclusion Manager at Rail Delivery Group, Dominic works with local authorities, rail companies and disabled customers making sure there is joined up thinking on transport accessibility. He is able to directly influence key elements of policy at the Department for

Transport and in local authorities, improving mobility for countless people using public transport. One recent notable success was supporting work to make the new Greater Anglia fleet of trains fully accessible.

Outside of this, Dominic also set up ReviewMyWheelchair.co.uk - a website which provides unbiased reviews of wheelchairs and wheelchair accessories. Now a leading resource in the mobility sector, the website both helps people to find the right chair for their needs, and also informs a huge range of healthcare professionals and wheelchair manufacturers, who now actively seek advice and feedback from the website.

The knock-on impact of Dominic's work has improved accessibility for thousands of people, and he is well known and respected within the sector for his clear thinking, enthusiasm and support for others in the sector. In previous years Dominic's work has been recognised as a finalist for the Stelios Awards for Disabled Entrepreneurs 2017. ♦



## Faye Savory

Entrepreneur, BearHugs

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When Faye was in her early twenties she became ill with Lyme disease and was unable to keep working. At her most unwell Faye had to spend most of her time in a dark room, but as she regained some energy Faye began doing activities which made her feel purposeful - often as small as putting ten beads on a bracelet. As her health improved she scaled this up to selling the jewellery she was making online and blogging about her experiences.

While at her most ill Faye had been sent a very thoughtful care package by a friend. She contacted the Prince's Trust about creating a business which could work around her health. Faye enrolled on the Prince's Trust Enterprise Programme where she wrote a business plan and received a small grant to put together her first 'hug in a box' hampers.

BearHugs is now an award-winning business which provides accessible, flexible home-working jobs for other people with

disabilities and chronic illnesses, and gives back to charity with one basket in every 50 being donated through the charities Postpals and Project Parent. BearHugs is an accredited Living Wage Employer and a Disability Confident Employer.

It has been featured in national media, with some celebrities such as presenter Katie Piper and YouTuber Jo Sugg talking about the boxes .

In 2017 Faye won a Duke of York Young Entrepreneur Award, and last year BearHugs was nominated for the Gift of the Year Award. So far this year Faye has been nominated for two Timewise Power 50 Awards - one as an individual and one for BearHugs as an employer, has attended 10 Downing Street and was honoured at the University of Sheffield with a Robert Boucher Distinguished Alumni Award. Faye is an ambassador for the Prince's Trust. ◆





## Kate Headley

### The Clear Company

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Positive, disruptive and unafraid to ask the difficult questions, Kate has created impact and change through her ability to reach senior decision makers and influencers in government and businesses.

A qualified HR leader whose career began at Marks and Spencer, followed by senior roles at Manchester City Council and Capita; Kate is driven by her belief in the importance of breaking down barriers to employment and allowing unseen talent to shine.

Kate co-founded the Clear Company in 2003 and has successfully grown the business to one with a global reach, clients include Lloyd's of London, Skanska, Ofcom, The Civil Service, the Co-op and DWF. With her practical, empathetic and pragmatic approach, these organisations are leaders in their sectors around inclusive hiring and talent management.

Leading and influencing beyond her own business, Kate founded and continues to chair the UK's 'Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative' (RIDI) in 2011. A successful not

for profit movement to increase disability confidence in the UK recruitment industry, RIDI has changed the lives of more than 500,000 people with disabilities since 2011.

Kate is a government advisor on disability and diversity and serves on the external 'Panel of Experts' to the UK Cabinet Office. She is a founder partner of The Government's Disability Confident Campaign, which celebrated 10,000 employers becoming disability confident in the two years since launching.

Kate has Lupus, an auto immune condition requiring regular medication and extra care. The condition has caused significant sight loss during the last five years.

"The impact of major sight loss no longer has to be career ending, our world of technology, innovation and inspirational talented people makes the impossible, possible. I continue to grow the business with amazing colleagues, changing attitudes and global business culture so that all difference is valued and celebrated" ♦



## Liz Johnson

### Paralympian and founder of The Ability People

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Liz Johnson is gold-medal winning Paralympic swimmer and the Managing Director and Co-Founder of The Ability People; the UK's first disability-led employment consultancy.

Liz has enjoyed a professional swimming career spanning 20 years. Liz competed in the Women's SB6 100m breaststroke in three Paralympic Games, taking home medals in all of them – including Gold at Beijing 2008. At the London 2012 Paralympics she was selected to take the Paralympic Oath. She is also a gold medallist at the IPC World Championships three times over and has been a World and European champion on multiple occasions.

As Liz considered her career following retirement from professional sport, she was struck that the UK disability employment gap is 30%. To tackle this she set up recruitment firm The Ability People (TAP). This for-profit social enterprise is staffed exclusively by disabled people. The team work with corporates and businesses to

transform hiring practices and make them authentically inclusive, helping skilled disabled people find the right careers. Liz knows how resourceful and resilient disabled people are and understands the value they can bring to any business.

Liz created a team of people who have built careers defying expectations and can help others to do the same. Liz's work at TAP has been included on the prestigious BBC 100 Women list 2018. TAP has won contracts from huge organisations including Diageo, The AA, Heathrow Airport, and HSBC where they have worked to re-shape internal hiring practices, educated teams on disability, and secured roles for talented disabled candidates.

Liz uses her international platform to create change in business, media, and disability sport. She continues to work as a media commentator on sports and disability, including at the Sydney Invictus Games. She also mentors other athletes. ♦



## Mike Adams OBE

Purple

Mike is the CEO of Purple, a limited company which works to change the conversation about disability by bringing together disabled people and businesses: as customers, employees and entrepreneurs. Purple aims to change the narrative from focussing on inequality and disadvantage to focussing on potential and value. Purple aims to bridge the gap between disabled talent, disabled consumers, and the market, for the benefit of disabled people, business and wider society.

Mike was the CEO of the user-led disability charity Essex Coalition of Disabled People (ECDP). He has previously been part of the senior management team of the Disability Rights Commission and Co-Director of Coventry University's disability Research Centre. In 2013 Mike chaired the government's national Access to Work Expert Advisory Panel which produced over 20 recommendations for the government's disability employment programme. ECDP has evolved into Purple, and expanded geographically: working in Essex, Cambridgeshire, Leicester City, Oxfordshire, Thurrock, and Redcar and Cleveland.

Purple supports disabled people with direct payments, managing personal budgets, recruiting a personal assistant or carer, and looking for work. Mike's annual Purple Tuesday initiative emphasises the business case for inclusion to customer-facing companies. As there are around 13 million disabled people in the UK, the spending power of the 'purple pound' is around £249 billion. Purple Tuesday encourages businesses to make practical changes for accessibility, and has support from around 750 companies, including household names like Argos, Asda, Barclays, Sainsburys, and M&S.

Mike is highly visible as the CEO of Purple and has been on TV, radio, and online articles advocating for greater inclusion. In 2012, Mike was awarded an OBE for his services to disabled people. In 2014 he was listed on the Disability News Service's list of the UK's 100 most influential people. Until recently Mike was a Non-Executive Director of a UK-wide company which delivers social care. ♦



## Rob Smith

### Engineer and Director of Active Hands

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Rob is a keen sportsman who was studying engineering in 1996 when a high-level spinal cord injury left him with partial paralysis in all four limbs. Rob found he was no longer able to use the gym, compete in sports or do outdoor pursuits. His poor hand function caused huge frustration for him – particularly his limited grip, which prevented him from lifting weights to improve strength for playing wheelchair rugby.

He found there was no equipment suitable for his mobility needs, so Rob set about creating some. Using his own skills as an engineer, Rob began designing mobility aids to help people with poor hand function to grip and hold.

Twenty-three years later Rob Smith's Active Hands Company designs and manufactures thousands of gripping aids every year and has won multiple awards. The equipment supplies the NHS and people around the world. Active Hands was a 2016 finalist in

Nesta's Inclusive Technology Prize. In 2018, Active Hands was one of the winners of the Department of Trade and Industry's Board of Trade award, recognising companies that champion innovation, diversity and inclusivity internationally, and which help to grow their local communities.

Rob's mission is to enable people with hand function disabilities to take part in activities in a more active and inclusive way, with as much independence as possible. He explains: "Life doesn't always go the way you expect it. That just means you might have to be awesome in a different way than you had planned."

Rob has been selected to represent Great Britain in wheelchair rugby and more recently ParaAthletics, winning a silver medal in the 2014 IPC Athletics European Championships and Gold in the men's T51/52 at the 2018 World Para Athletics Marathon World Cup. He's currently working to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. ♦



## Shani Dhanda

### Virgin Media & Diversability Card

Shani Dhanda is a social entrepreneur, disability rights advocate, and business and culture change agent. Passionate about representation and creating everyday equality, she is the founder of a discount card for disabled people, the Asian Woman Festival and the Asian Disability Network.

Shani created The Diversability Card, the UK's first discount card for disabled people aimed at reducing the financial pressures from the extra costs of living with a condition or impairment. She also founded the Asian Disability Network, an educational platform and support network for people who experience multiple types of stigma. The group breaks down stigma both inside and outside the South Asian community. For more than ten years Shani has worked as an events manager and recently founded the UK's first Asian Woman Festival, smashing stereotypes to empower and celebrate Asian women.

Working with Virgin Media as a Workplace Adjustment Specialist, Shani transforms the

experience for their disabled employees. She's also Leonard Cheshire Disability trustee and an Executive Committee member of the Asian Business Chamber of Commerce.

Furthermore, Shani is a member of the Greater London Regional Stakeholder Network bringing the voices of disabled people and their organisations to policy development for the Government's Office for Disability Issues. She is an ambassador at Valuable 500, Parallel London, a role model at Scope, advisory board member for UnLtd and a columnist at Able Magazine as well as being a speaker on disability and inclusion matters.

Shani said: "I'm driven by the undeniable impulse to make things better by the everyday lived experience of feeling excluded and underrepresented in society. Without inclusion and portrayal of disabled people, there are stories that are missing, so I chose to become the change I wanted to see. We all want to feel represented; we all want to feel seen, heard and valued." ♦



## Sophie Thomas

### BendyBlogs

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Sophie uses BendyBlogs to talk about her experiences of chronic illness, about invisible disability and becoming visibly disabled, as well as her normal everyday life, with thousands of readers.

Sophie began BendyBlogs in 2017 just two months after being officially diagnosed with the connective tissue disorder Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS). Sophie first became disabled at age 14 as a result of EDS which causes fatigue, joint pain and dislocations, as well as Post Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS). Though Sophie's chronic illnesses meant she needed a wheelchair to get about and made it difficult to finish her GCSEs, her EDS diagnosis only came years later, when she was 20 years old.

Sophie's blog works to dispel some of the myths around disability and offers advice and support for other people with chronic illnesses. Sophie has also blogged about her own experience of depression,

which was published by health community website 'The Mighty' leading to Sophie becoming a regular contributor.

Despite illness interrupting her education, Sophie has gained multiple qualifications. She has already become a qualified bookkeeper and has just finished her accountancy training all while completing a BA (Hons) in Business Studies. Sophie works as a finance assistant at Bridgend College and shares her experience of working for a disability confident employer, with tips. She has also launched a campaign with the charity Scope promoting accessibility in schools, to ensure using a wheelchair is not a barrier to education.

Sophie has also raised hundreds of pounds for an EDS charity. ♦



## Steven Mifsud

### Direct Access

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Steven founded disability accessibility consultancy Direct Access in 2004. Working with organisations to improve the accessibility of their buildings and services has taken him all over the world.

Steven says: "Born profoundly deaf and then a subsequent cochlear implant user, I have experienced the impact of social exclusion in society. I have built my career and personal mission towards increasing awareness and the ultimate objective is an inclusive world in which anyone can participate."

From creating the UK's first ever Quiet Room on the rail network for autistic people with Virgin Trains to advising on the introduction of Changing Places facilities across the country, millions of people daily use services or buildings that Steven and his team have audited. Over 900 schools, hundreds of GP and dental practices, UNESCO World Heritage sites and numerous local authorities are part of an extensive client base. In Steven's ongoing drive to promote inclusive sports, Direct Access are sponsors for Nantwich Town Wolves Vision Impaired Football Team.

Steven studied architecture at Brighton

University and his expertise is sought after as a speaker and writer, especially on the new 2018 accessibility guidelines: British Standards BS 8300. Last year Steven was named International Trader of the Year by South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, Nantwich Town Council awarded him the Salt of the Earth accolade for his work for the town and he was nominated for the Northern Powerhouse awards.

In 2018, Direct Access became the Universal Design Consultants for Expo 2020 Dubai with Steven being appointed as 'Project Director' for Universal Design. This international world fair will take up a site of two square miles, with pavilions from many different countries. Direct Access is embedding accessibility throughout, reviewing designs from architectural firms involved to make sure they adhere to the Dubai Universal Design Code and international best practice. To support this, Steven opened an office and established a team in Dubai. ◆

## Contact



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### Shani Dhanda

[shanidhanda.com](http://shanidhanda.com)  
 [diversabilitycard.co.uk](http://diversabilitycard.co.uk)  
 [asianwomanfestival.com](http://asianwomanfestival.com)  
 @ShaniDhanda  
 @ShaniDhanda



### Sophie Thomas

[bendyblogs.blogspot.com](http://bendyblogs.blogspot.com)  
 /bendyblogs  
 @bendyblogs  
 @Bendyblogs



### Stephen Misfud

[directaccessuk.com](http://directaccessuk.com)  
 /EqualityAct2010  
 /stephen-misfud-nrac-19a9042a  
 @EqualityAct2010



# Education, Public and Third Sector

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## Alan Benson

### Transport Campaigner

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Alan is a disability campaigner and activist with a particular interest in transport. He is Chair of Transport for All, a charity which champions the rights of disabled and older people to travel freely and independently in London. Transport for All have achieved many wins for accessible transport across the capital. In 2014 they secured guarantees that Crossrail will be fully accessible from the first day it opens, and Alan works with Crossrail project managers to ensure this will happen as promised.

Since 2017 Alan has been instrumental in the design and implementation of a new paradigm for Disability Equality Training. Delivered by specially formed teams of Disabled People, the training creates cultural change in the approach to accessibility across an organisation. The immediate and tangible benefits of this can be seen, for example, across Translink in Belfast and London Underground where

improvements in signage have greatly improved the travelling experience.

Alan is a skilled networker with a keen eye on innovation, who supports his community to create improvements for all. Being Chair of the charity is not a paid role, but he is incredibly generous with his time, attending protests organised by Transport for All's activist members, helping people secure Freedom Passes and win benefit appeals. He also Chairs the Pan London Mobility Forum, and two local Disabled Peoples forums.

Alan's work has created change at local and national levels and he has been invited to speak at various conferences, as well as on radio and television, about accessibility and public transport. He also sits on the Board of London TravelWatch and is a Trustee of the Richmond charity RUILS which supports Disabled and Older People to live independently. ♦



## Andrew Gibson

### Habinteg

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Andrew Gibson has combined personal experience as a wheelchair user and policy knowledge to campaign for accessible homes on a national scale.

Andrew is Vice-Chair of Habinteg, a housing association that champions inclusion by providing and promoting accessible homes. In this role, he has successfully influenced government work. In 2016, Andrew spoke to the Women and Equalities Committee when it launched an inquiry into disability and the built environment.

Andrew and Habinteg worked with Heidi Allen MP to amend the Neighbourhood Planning Act so the Secretary of State must now issue guidance to planning authorities on how they address the housing needs of older people and those with disabilities. This amendment was passed by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and written into the law.

Andrew has also been a key part of Habinteg's #ForAccessibleHomes campaign.

The campaign aims to raise awareness of the national shortage of accessible properties to rent or buy by lobbying the Government, councils and developers. Andrew was at the forefront, representing the organisation for two years in a row at Westminster. To reach as many MPs as possible, Andrew took part in face to face individual meetings in parliament, hosted two #ForAccessibleHomes parliamentary drop-ins and attended party conferences to meet key ministers. Many of the MPs got involved in the campaign on twitter, using the #ForAccessibleHomes hashtag to show their support and the campaign has won four awards in the last two years.

Andrew said: "In the 21st century, we are still building new homes where a disabled person may or may not be able to access or use the toilet facilities. This is not difficult to fix, politicians and developers must act to ensure that all homes are built to meet the needs of all, now and in the future." ♦



## Carrie-Ann Lightley

### AccessAble

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Carrie-Ann Lightley is an accessible travel blogger, sharing reviews, guides and expert tips about travel as a wheelchair user in the UK and overseas. Her blog aims to encourage others to travel to, explore and discover new places.

Carrie-Ann, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, has worked in the accessible tourism industry for more than 14 years. She started out running the information, membership and partnership services at national charity Tourism for All UK, providing advice to disabled travellers and accessible tourism businesses.

In 2018, Carrie-Ann joined the team at DisabledGo, a national disability organisation that promotes independence using technology. She played a key part in rebranding the organisation to AccessAble and supported the launch of the new brand and website. Carrie-Ann has led an initiative to launch a group of AccessAble Champions made up of bloggers and vloggers who are ambassadors for AccessAble.

Carrie-Ann has written for the Guardian, The Huffington Post and TripAdvisor, as well as other websites, magazines and industry publications. She has taken part in films for ITV News to highlight the importance of accessible train travel, and the BBC's Rip off Britain, to showcase accessible adventure holidays.

She's a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Young Disabled People, England's Inclusive Tourism Action Group and Manchester Airport's Accessibility Forum. In addition, Carrie-Ann is a Trailblazer Tourism Ambassador for Muscular Dystrophy UK and judge for the prestigious Catey Awards.

Carrie-Ann said: "'Inspirational' is an overused word in disability circles, but I do want to inspire. Not for living my life, not for working hard despite the barriers I face, but to inspire others to travel, no matter what their impairment. To know that although accessible travel can be challenging, stressful, and sometimes disastrous, it can also be freeing, empowering, and absolutely wonderful." ♦



## Chloe Tear

### Blogger and Educator

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Chloe is an award-winning blogger who started while doing her GCSEs. She explains: “What do you do when you look around and cannot seem to find someone who you can truly relate to? For myself, this was the initial driving force for starting a blog. It may sound simple, but I had the power to change how I felt about my disability and I still have the power to change how others view disability.”

Nearly six years on: Chloe’s blog is read by over 110,000 people. She writes about her day-to-day life with adaptations to work around cerebral palsy, amplified musculoskeletal pain disorder and a newly diagnosed visual impairment. She is supportive, open and practical about living with a disability, showing young people and families that it’s OK to be themselves, and sharing tips along the way. Her matter-of-fact, humorous writing style engages a wide audience. Chloe challenges negative attitudes and stereotypes, speaking about cerebral palsy at numerous conferences, school events, interviews and online.

In 2017, Chloe was named on the Princess Diana Award Roll of Honour, and last year she won Scope’s Disability GameChanger Volunteer Award. Chloe has worked with the BBC, Cosmopolitan and Able magazine and developed a partnership with RNIB to bring these issues to a wider audience. Her partnership with the Times Higher Education magazine has included social media takeovers, articles, and being a panellist at their events.

Chloe was elected Disabilities Officer at her university, where she held awareness stands and improved access for disabled students. This year she graduated with a First-Class honour’s degree in Psychology & Child Development and has worked with her MP to get questions asked in parliament about disability hate crime. She was awarded a Prime Minister’s Points of Light Award for her work and now works for Scope building, managing and supporting their online community. ♦



## Daniel Biddle

### Accessibility advocate

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Daniel Biddle's life changed in 2005 in the 7/7 London terrorist bombing: the blast catapulted him through train carriage doors onto the track. At the age of 26, he lost both legs, his left eye, his spleen and the hearing in his left ear. He spent eight weeks in a coma, and a year in a rehabilitation hospital.

Despite developing post-traumatic stress disorder and suffering a nervous breakdown, Daniel retrained as a qualified access consultant and set up Nationwide Access Consultants Ltd – a 'one-stop shop' for disability and physical access issues. Daniel works with the NHS, retailers and hotels.

He is determined to turn his harrowing experience into a positive by advocating for disabled people. He organised Monmouthshire's first Disability Confident networking day, and has worked with the Welsh Government, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the Police on disability issues. Daniel volunteers with Gwent Police, training their officers on disability issues and hate crime.

Daniel compiled and hosted the Leonard Cheshire disability employment summit in 2018 and has given numerous talks around the UK. He was awarded the Gwent Good Citizen Award in 2016 for campaigning against disability hate crime, and the Pride of Gwent Award in 2018 for his work to improve disability awareness.

Daniel has begun working for Leonard Cheshire as an area manager on a project across South Wales.

He says: "When I acquired my disability back in 2005 I just couldn't imagine the impact it would have on my life, I quickly realised that the person I am will forever be overshadowed by my disability and it is this that drives me forward to show that as a community our disabilities are part of who we are but not the entirety of who we are, and our abilities far outweigh our disabilities and it is this that drives me to push for greater inclusion and access to the work place, to society and to life in general." ♦



## David Constantine MBE

### Motivation

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David Constantine MBE has dedicated his professional life to empowering disabled people in developing countries. He's Founder Director of Motivation – a charity and social enterprise that designs and provides wheelchairs, services and training for disabled people in the developing world.

David uses a wheelchair to get around after breaking his neck aged 21. While studying product design at the Royal College of Art he entered a competition with course mate Simon Gue to design a wheelchair for use in developing countries that's robust enough to tackle rugged terrain but could be made from affordable local materials. Their design won and with the prize money they travelled to Bangladesh to test the wheelchair and set up production. Together, with third founder Richard Frost, they set up Motivation.

For nearly 30 years, Motivation has provided low cost wheelchairs to over 100 countries, changing the lives of tens of thousands of people, enabling them to attend school, work, and get around in their communities.

David is a hugely influential advocate for disabled people, speaking at events and advising on global health and political initiatives. He's been an International Disability and Development Consortium board member and a member of the International Society of Wheelchair Professionals' Advocacy Working Group. He currently sits on the Royal College of Art Alumni Board and the BBC's Charity Appeals Advisory Committee.

David was awarded an MBE in 2010 in recognition of his work. Appointed a Deputy Lieutenant for the County and City of Bristol in 2014, he's received numerous honorary degrees, academic accolades and awards. In 2016 Motivation's Rough Terrain wheelchair was honoured in the London Design Museum's permanent exhibition.

David said: "I'm glad I've been able to use the opportunities that've been put in front of me to help people in low-income countries to become more mobile and more included in society." ♦



## Dr Emma Tremaine

Psychiatrist and Founder of 'The Dyspraxic Doctor'

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Dr Emma Tremaine is a psychiatrist and didn't discover she had dyspraxia until she was in her late 20s. She is the author of the popular blog The Dyspraxic Doctor and her story of a career in medicine with undiagnosed dyspraxia has been read by thousands of people.

Emma writes about her experience as a medical student at Oxford University: "I was permanently on edge that I was going to be discovered. Someone might realise just how hopeless I was at organising myself and practical tasks, then tell me I had no place on this course after all. I managed to convince myself that I must, in fact, be stupid."

Despite battling depression and anxiety herself, Emma persevered with a career helping others with mental health problems and is a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Seeing that there was little support for people with dyspraxia, she independently set up a new service using

her personal and professional experience. She has helped people as far away as New Zealand and the United States. Passionate that dyspraxia is better recognised and understood, Emma has raised the profile of dyspraxia worldwide using social media. She has provided training to several organisations, including the Dyspraxia Foundation, the Riding for the Disabled Association, and she is due to speak at GCHQ. Her blog post "See One, Do One, Do a Runner" has been translated into Italian for the Associazione Italiana Dispraxia dell'età Evolutiva, and she is appearing to speak at their 2019 conference in Rome.

In only 18 months Emma has created a much-needed service and raised awareness of this hidden disability on a global stage.

Emma said: "Being happy with yourself, differences and all, enables you to start a new chapter of self-understanding." ♦





## Euan MacDonald MBE

### Euan's Guide

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When entrepreneur Euan's access requirements changed 15 years ago, he was frustrated by how hard it was to find disabled access information for the places he wanted to visit. This drove Euan and his sister Kiki to create Euan's Guide, a website which makes it easier for disabled people to find great places to go.

The website is one of the most popular accessibility guides about as it collates first-hand experiences from members of the public who submit their own access reviews of places they visit in the UK and beyond. Venues can also submit their own information. Euan's aim has always been to highlight and share the good experiences. This positive approach breaks down barriers, giving people the confidence to try somewhere new, while helping business and attractions to improve their accessibility for disabled people.

Before founding Euan's Guide, Euan helped set up the Euan MacDonald Centre for Motor Neurone Disease Research in 2007

with his father Donald. The centre works with MND researchers at the University of Edinburgh and is now an established and internationally recognised research centre.

Euan was awarded an MBE in 2009 from the Queen for his services to people with MND in Scotland. In 2016 he featured in the New Radicals list for his innovative approach to promoting accessible places. The same year, he and his sister both received a Points of Light award from the Prime Minister. Euan's Guide won a 2014 BT Infinity Lab People's Choice Award and has been recognised with a Charity and Social Enterprises Award at the Herald Digital Business Awards.

Euan says: "While I'm delighted to be featured on this list, it is really everyone who has reviewed on Euan's Guide or who is involved with the research into MND who deserves this award. It is only by working together that we are able to help others." ♦



## Eugene Grant

Activist and writer

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Eugene is an activist and writer. He spotlights the abuse faced by some people with dwarfism and highlights the harm of limited portrayals of dwarf people as ‘entertainers’ or ‘Others’. Eugene researches and writes about the representation, lives, and achievements of dwarf people – in fiction and film, throughout history, and in real life today.

Working in communications, Eugene eloquently challenges cultural assumptions about people with dwarfism. He contributed to the BBC4 documentary, *Dwarfs in Art*, and appeared on *Good Morning Britain* to explain how ‘dwarf wrestling’ negatively impacts other people with dwarfism.

Articulate, passionate and respectful, Eugene often collaborates with the Little People of America to bringing concerns from British and American dwarfism communities to the mainstream. Despite some resulting abuse, he remains a thoughtful, calm and assertive educator in broadcast media and on social media.

His social media presence provides a mix of education and campaigning – drawing

attention to both harassment of and achievements by dwarf and disabled people – and uses his platform to promote leading voices in the dwarfism community.

A former Trustee of the grassroots charity, the Restricted Growth Association (RGA) UK, Eugene has mentored young dwarf people, run youth activities, and given talks on dwarfism history. He leads a project interviewing key figures from the dwarfism community. Eugene is a contributor to the BBC, the Guardian, the Independent, and the New Statesman. He is currently writing a children’s book, among other projects, about Benjamin Lay, a dwarf person who was one of the first white radical abolitionists.

He says: “Dwarf and disabled bodies are beautiful. Anyone who tries to make you feel otherwise is simply desperate to use your difference to reassure themselves that they belong. Their insecurity cannot eclipse your inherent power and value.” ♦



## Gerri Bird

### Mayor, Councillor and Campaigner

Gerri Bird is mayor of Cambridge and a member of Cambridge Council. First elected in 2011, Gerri is a determined advocate for the rights of disabled people.

At just 10 months old, Gerri was living in Ireland when she contracted polio. She spent the next six years in hospital, losing contact with her mother. Once well, she spent some time in a children's home in Oakington until she was adopted in Cambridgeshire where she has lived and worked ever since.

Gerri has campaigned all her adult life for the rights of disabled people. She first worked at Cambridge's Addenbrooke's Hospital, but in the 1980s she joined the charity Disability Cambridgeshire. Gerri is a forum manager at the advice and information service for disabled people, older people, their families and carers. In this role she travels around the county, showing disabled people what is out there for them.

In the 1990s, after joining a community action group, Gerri began taking an interest in local politics. She was elected as a councillor for the East Chesterton Ward in 2011.

As a councillor, Gerri has driven many campaigns, particularly focused on issues of disability rights and access. She was central to a campaign to save a set of ground floor public toilets from relocation to a higher, less accessible floor. Her successful petition was signed by 11,000 people. The refurbished, ground floor the toilets opened just days after Gerri became Mayor and she was able to cut the ribbon herself.

Gerri is never afraid to take on a challenge and has swum competitively, jumped out of an aeroplane and even won trophies for banger-racing.

Gerri said: "I'm so honoured to receive and to be on the Shaw Trust Power list 2019." ♦



## Hannah Barham-Brown

Doctor, advocate, #RollModel

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Hannah is a doctor, writer, campaigner and a 'roll model' with experience from 'both sides of the stethoscope'. She writes about healthcare, disability, and equality and diversity – and all the ways they intersect. She has been published in The Guardian, The Times and the Independent.

Hannah was studying to become a doctor when she became disabled with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS). The NHS wheelchair she was offered was too heavy to work with her condition so she had to crowdfund for the right mobility equipment. In 2017 Hannah presented a motion at the British Medical Association (BMA) conference for patients to have "timely access to chairs suitable for their individual conditions". It passed unanimously. This year she has been working with the Eve Appeal for better access for hoist-dependent disabled people to access healthcare such as cervical smear tests.

Hannah is an advocate for better services and support for women. She is the youngest

member of the Gender Pay Gap in Medicine Review's Steering Group. She has also been a candidate for the Women's Equality Party for two elections - to be a member of the European Parliament and a Council member. She says: "Disabled people have a lot to shout about; inequalities, the terrible impact of austerity, but also how amazing our community is! So get out there, and get your voice heard, because our community relies on those voices."

Hannah is an ambassador for the disability charity myAFK and sits on numerous groups for the British Medical Association and the General Medical Council. She has given multiple TED talks and speaks at numerous conferences and events for national bodies such as NHS Employers and Health Education England. A prominent voice in the Brexit debate, Hannah spoke at a People's Vote Rally in October 2018 to an audience of 700,000, about the effects of Brexit on the NHS. ♦



## Dr Hazel McFarlane

### Disability researcher and activist

Hazel McFarlane has combined her tenacity with her own lived experience to consistently campaign for change in our society.

From an early age Hazel rejected the barriers placed on her as a partially sighted person. Aged five years old she refused to attend a school for blind children, joining her twin sister at the local primary school instead. At university she set up Student Vision Scotland, an organisation for vision impaired students to challenge attitudes and lobby for equal access to education.

Throughout Hazel's career she has worked to promote social inclusion of disabled people. She has trained numerous healthcare professionals, influenced how services from health to housing have been developed and has co-authored various publications with academics from around the world. Hazel has also worked with the Scottish Government to inform legislation affecting those with sensory impairment.

Hazel experienced total sight loss in 2007. She was shocked at the lack of support

services. Her own research found that suicide rates were high for many older people experiencing sight loss. Hazel wrote a proposal for a Vision Support Service, which immediately got the support of Scotland's Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). The Ayrshire Eye Clinic Support Service was launched in 2010, funded by RNIB Scotland, three local authorities and NHS Ayrshire & Arran. The model was adopted by RNIB and rolled out throughout the UK with Hazel as their poster girl, pictured running with her guide runner. This service has helped countless people adjusting to sight loss.

An avid runner, Hazel inspired members of her running club, the Troon Tortoises, to become guide runners. She has competed in numerous marathons and ultra marathons, raising over £9,000 for Blind Sports UK.

Hazel said: "If you believe in yourself, then you can do and achieve absolutely anything." ♦



## Dr James Cusack

Director of Science, Autistica

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At 12 years old James was diagnosed with autism and was told he would struggle to achieve anything academically. Dr James Cusack is now one of the most visible and influential autistic researchers in the world and is Director of Science at Autistica, the UK's leading autism research charity.

James's influence spans science, academia, the media and civil society. He is responsible for Autistica's scientific strategy, grant-making, science communications and relationships with scientific stakeholders. His pioneering approach to research includes advocacy for higher standards across the field, open data, sharing of assets, community-led work and authentic representation of autistic people throughout all projects. His work at Autistica has helped ensure autism is a clinical priority in the NHS for the first time.

James has a degree in psychology, a PhD and undertook post-doctorate before being recognised as an ACEVO rising star. In just three years he has become a global thought leader and has been invited to advise on autism initiatives internationally, putting issues

like early death in autism firmly on the map for researchers as large as the US Government.

This year James kickstarted a ground-breaking citizen science project and acted as a lead investigator on the world's largest autism research grant where he works to build a bridge between the autism communities and researchers.

James says: "Thinking about how Autistica can be as effective as possible as a charity is both a privilege and a fantastic challenge and responsibility. In our work with autistic people, families, policymakers and researchers I am hopeful that we are moving towards a better future for autistic people."

James is heavily involved in all aspects of the organisation, including media, digital, policy, HR and strategy. He regularly finds time to actively fundraise, as well as making media appearances to raise awareness of autism, campaigning for change, and pushing for more inclusivity and transparency. ♦



## Jen Blackwell

### DanceSyndrome

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Jen is a dancer, charity director and ambassador for people with learning disabilities. Jen left school knowing she wanted to be a community dance worker, but couldn't find the right role for 10 years, so she created it instead. In 2009 Jen set up DanceSyndrome with 14 other dancers – half professional dancers and half dancers with learning disabilities. DanceSyndrome became a charity in 2013, delivering inclusive workshops, performances, presentations and seminars. The learning-disabled dance leaders steer, direct and inform the charity at all levels - including the board - and manage the group's choreography, training, workshops, and marketing.

Jen leads two weekly workshops, and runs seminars with students from four universities, as well as outreach workshops and performances. In 2015 she won Inspirational Woman of the Year at the Enterprise Vision Awards for female entrepreneurs in the North West.

DanceSyndrome has gone from strength to strength and last year was named Charity

of the Year at the E3 business awards. Last year Jen won a Prime Minister's Points of Light Award, became Lead Ambassador of Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Team High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, and, as recipients of a National Lottery grant, Jen and DanceSyndrome went on prime time TV publicising their work.

Jen speaks about disability at events including at the House of Lords. This year DanceSyndrome were recognised by the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and won The People's Award at the National Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards. In recognition of her work Jen was invited to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party.

Jen says: "I'm a winner again! I'm the Founder of DanceSyndrome, recognised and accepted for who I am, being the best that I can be, creating opportunities and changing lives. My charity shows the world what we can do, but we need charitable giving and people like you to help us make better futures for everyone." ♦



## Jennie Williams

Enhance the UK

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Jennie Williams is the founder and CEO of Enhance the UK, a user-led charity which aims to help people with physical and sensory disabilities to live a full life.

Jennie and the team she leads campaign to change public perceptions of what disabled people can do, link people up with life-enhancing opportunities and useful products and services, and educate businesses and public institutions on disability awareness.

She set up the charity after working in the care sector and becoming frustrated with the lack of practical information and support available for people who wanted to know more about communicating with disabled people both professionally and personally.

Jennie, who has degenerative hearing loss, set out to create training that could be delivered by freelance disabled trainers, therefore tackling the issue head on whilst also offering working opportunities for disabled people around the country.

Enhance the UK has worked with organisations including the BBC, Premier League Football Clubs, Northern Rail and Members of Parliament.

Jennie also noticed there were no discussions about sex and relationships on the care plans of many clients she worked with, meaning their needs were being ignored. Determined to end the disability and intimacy taboo, Enhance the UK now runs an 'Undressing Disability' campaign focused on the sexual rights and responsibilities of disabled people, petitioning for inclusive sex education in schools. Jennie also set up the 'Love Lounge', an online forum for advice and answers regarding sex, dating and relationships for those with impairments, which has pride of place on the charity's website.

Jennie has given talks around the UK, at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and in Albania and Serbia about inclusivity.

She said: "I wish I could go back to my younger self and say academia doesn't equal intelligence. It's so important to know what you're passionate about and good at, and get help for other things. I would never be able to run Enhance the UK without my amazing team, I'm very grateful for all their hard work." ◆





## Kiera Roche

### LimbPower, The Limbless Association

Kiera is the creator and CEO of LimbPower and acting Chief Executive of the Limbless Association. She works to improve services and create groups, support centres and materials for people with limb loss or limb difference.

In 2001 Kiera became a Trustee of the Limbless Association, where she uses her lived experience and professional expertise to help people rebuild their lives through access to information, education and opportunities, as well as physical activity and sport. Kiera has created over 40 resources for people with limb difference, and in the past 17 years she has raised an incredible £1 million for charity through grants and fundraising challenges.

Kiera launched LimbPower in 2009 to support people with limb loss or limb difference to take part in sports, physical activity and the arts. In 2014 she became its Chief Executive and oversaw its qualification as a National Disability Sports Organisation. LimbPower runs activities to increase confidence and build a community to help people get back

to activity after trauma. LimbPower also provides expertise to people with limb difference as well as families, health workers, lawyers and more to ensure people have the information and adaptations they need.

Kiera developed the LimbPower Games and the LimbPower Junior Games. Now in their tenth year, the Games have started the Paralympic careers of over 20 people including Dave Henson, captain of the Invictus Games.

In 2003 Kiera created the Ali Fund for Ali Abbas, aged 12, whose home was bombed during the Iraq war, resulting in the deaths of 16 family members and the amputation of both his arms. He was treated in Kuwait and London and provided robotic prosthetic arms. Kiera has secured funding for the LimbFormation website and created the Children's Prosthetic Fund which has seen over 450 children and young people receive prosthesis for sports and physical activity from the NHS. ♦



## Maria Grazia Zedda

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

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Maria Grazia Zedda is an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Manager at High Speed Two Ltd (HS2) railway and founder of e-learning company called Wideaware Ltd. Severely deaf, Maria uses lip-reading, hearing aids and online captioning.

Maria, originally from Italy, moved to the UK aged 19. After completing a vocational course, she worked at the BBC's Disability Programmes Unit. She left the BBC to achieve a degree in sociology and work with disabled people as an employment manager, supporting candidates get jobs in corporate sectors in the UK, US and Italy.

Facing barriers in finding employment as a mother with a disability, Maria decided to retrain as an access auditor, setting up her company when she was nine months pregnant with her second child. Through Wideaware Ltd, she provided training and e-learning on disability equality to thousands of people, including 640 MPs and Lords at the Houses of Parliament. Other clients included Network Rail, RDG, OFCOM, Southwark, Fareham and Hounslow Councils, the London Eye and Aquarium,

Somerset House and South West Trains. Maria also worked with Serco Caledonian Sleeper, Shaw Trust, Westfield Stratford City, Office of Disability Issues (ODI), Edinburgh Airport, Ofcom, RDG, First Great Western, Olswang and The British Library.

Passionate about grassroots inclusion, Maria co-founded a cooperative of disabled women called Sisters of Frida and was Vice-Chair of the Disability Forum at London 2012. She became National Winner of the 'Ready To Start' Disabled Entrepreneur Award in 2009, three-times winner of UnLtd's Millennium Awards for Social Entrepreneurs and won a top 10 London Barclays' Trading Places Award 2010.

As EDI manager for HS2, Maria's ensures the programme recruits and retains people inclusively with policies that account for a diverse workforce.

Maria said: "Always question limitations that others put on you - help yourself and others understand and address these barriers." ◆



## Dr Mark Carew

### Social Psychologist and Disability Researcher

Dr Mark Carew works with governments and leaders in the disability rights movement globally to end disability inequality and create a more inclusive society. A social psychologist by training, he is currently a senior researcher at Leonard Cheshire. Mark was born with cerebral palsy.

Aged 30, Mark has published over 20 peer-reviewed research articles, book chapters and reports to date about understanding and addressing the inequality that people with disabilities experience globally. In addition, he regularly speaks about his research at national and international conferences. His work has informed a range of contexts, including international policy.

With Leonard Cheshire, Mark has played a key role in several UK government-funded projects designed to address inequality for people with disabilities, including two based in Africa. Bridging the Gap looks at addressing the link between disability and poverty in four African countries and the Girls Education Challenge project looks at providing 2,500

girls with disabilities in Kenya access to inclusive education. He has also mentored young professionals with disabilities who get internships as part of Leonard Cheshire's Change100 scheme.

Throughout his career so far, Mark has regularly lectured in psychology, disability studies and global health at several UK universities, as well as supervised research students in these areas. He is an honorary research associate at University College London.

Mark is a co-author of *Disability and Sexual Health: A Critical Exploration of Key Issues*, a book which analyses the evidence on the provision of sexual and reproductive healthcare and sexual rights for disabled people globally. He was also an expert contributor to the United Nations Flagship Report on Disability and Development. In 2018, he won funding to share his research findings at an event in Ethiopia designed to empower youth with disabilities. ♦



## Michael McGrath

Polar adventurer, motivational speaker, charity CEO

Michael firmly believes “It’s not what you own but what you’ve done that matters – experience is a powerful social currency.”

Michael is a motivational speaker, a record-breaking polar adventurer and founder of award-winning family charity the Muscle Help Foundation (MHF). In 2004 Michael became the first disabled person to lead expeditions to the North and South Poles. These expeditions helped establish MHF which delivers life-changing experiences in the UK called ‘Muscle Dreams’ designed to help fulfil potential, give purpose and restore hope, for children and young adults with muscular dystrophy. The goal is to deliver 657: one for every muscle in the human body.

From interviewing movie icon Al Pacino or learning bushcraft skills with Ray Mears, the impact of these shared interventions was academically validated by the University of Hertfordshire.

An early adopter in leveraging social media to share MHF’s impact, Michael has secured

funding from a variety of sources including the Big Lottery Fund to support several projects including its Inspiring Hearts, Engaging Minds (IHEM) programme that gave a voice to young vulnerable adults in exploring the world of work and its Ambassador Community Network. Lifelong Patrons of MHF include Sir Kenneth Branagh and Lorraine Kelly.

Michael was a Paralympic Torchbearer in 2012. In July 2019 he was appointed to represent the Crown as a Deputy Lieutenant (DL) in Hertfordshire, a voluntary role. He holds an Honorary Doctorate of Arts from the University of Hertfordshire in recognition of his motivational and inspirational work for persons with a disability.

Michael’s 2018 ‘Power of the Polar Hug’ TEDx talk continues to reach new audiences. A sought-after speaker, he connects with audiences emotionally and intellectually, and is engaged by public and private sector organisations in the UK and overseas.” ♦



## Neil Heslop OBE

Leonard Cheshire

In 2016 Neil became the first disabled CEO of Leonard Cheshire, whose 5,000 staff and 10,000 volunteers support 50,000 people with disabilities in 15 countries with an annual budget of more than £150 million. Neil has had a distinguished career in business and the third sector, advising the UK Government on the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in the 1990s.

Neil became blind age 20 at university due to a degenerative condition. Despite graduating with a law degree, he initially found it difficult to find work as employers were wary of his disability. Along with two visually impaired friends he founded the charity Blind in Business to support blind and partially sighted young people into work, serving as a trustee for 26 years.

In 1992 Neil gained an MBA at Cranfield School of Management, becoming the first blind graduate from a top business school, and went on to hold senior executive leadership roles in the US and UK telecoms industry. These included CEO of Cincinnati

Bell Wireless, with P&L responsibility as part of a \$1.6 billion telecoms group on the New York stock exchange, and Head of Strategy for O2. In 2002 he was awarded an OBE for services to British telecommunications and charity.

In 2013 Neil combined his knowledge of the business and disability sectors and joined RNIB as a managing director. He oversaw the quadrupling of business income to more than £8 million, and revitalised the charity's Talking Book service, making it free to visually impaired users and growing its customer base by more than 50%.

Neil is co-chair of the Disability Charities Consortium, a group of the ten largest UK disability charities which promotes the rights and interests of disabled people. He said: "At a time of unprecedented change we all must work tirelessly in all sectors to inspire the positive change required to achieve equality of opportunity for people with disability." ♦



## Rosemary Frazer

### Campaigner

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Rosemary has worked in campaigning, advocacy and public policy for over 20 years. She is a respected expert in her field who has worked with organisations ranging from the Premier League to Scope to the BBC. She currently works as an independent consultant, and as a Training and Development Coordinator for the user-led organisation Camden Disability Action.

Rosemary is involved in numerous projects and campaigns for disability rights, and has helped nurture and support countless initiatives, campaigns and small and medium enterprises in the disability sector. A polymath in her own right, Rosemary also passes on her skills: training, mentoring and advising others in the disability community to help people bring their ideas for new businesses, products and charities into existence.

Rosemary is a seasoned campaigner and advocate who has worked in campaigning

roles for Mencap and Scope - the latter as the Campaigns Manager, where she led on raising awareness of the employment gap, the inaccessibility of public transport and media representation of disability. She has been published in the Guardian, the Independent and the Huffington Post.

In addition, Rosemary sits on the board of the award-winning design enterprise Disrupt Disability which has created an innovative modular wheelchair design. She is also a Founding Advisor of the Global Disability Innovation Hub, a Paralympic Games legacy organisation made up of both an Academic Research Centre and a not-for-profit Community Interest Company, which works to accelerate disability innovation to build a fairer world. ♦



## Scott Watkin BEM

Advocate and campaigner

Scott started in advocacy when attending a day centre and he was invited to become Co-Chair of the Isle of Wight's Learning Disability Partnership Board. Scott held the role for six years, proving himself a determined advocate and successfully fighting planned cuts to services.

By 2009 Scott's lived experience as a campaigner with learning disabilities thrust him into the glare of the national press when he was appointed the Government's learning disabilities Co-Tsar. In this role he represented people with learning disabilities at the heart of policymaking and government. In 2011 he joined Mencap as an Inclusion Advisor.

Since 2013, Scott's been working for SeeAbility, first as an Eye Care and Vision Development Officer and now as the charity's Head of Engagement and part of their Leadership Team. He's also a visiting lecturer at the University of Hertfordshire. Scott Co-Chairs the Department of Health and Social Care's Transforming Care Stakeholder Group, is a Health Education England Ambassador

and a board member of Learning Disability England.

In 2017 Scott won the Making a Difference award from the National Learning Disability and Autism Awards, and in 2018 he was awarded a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours List. In 2019 Scott's campaigning work as part of the team at SeeAbility, contributed to an NHS policy change meaning a whole generation of children with learning disabilities will get the eye care they need.

Scott now leads an engagement programme at SeeAbility where he is supporting people with learning disabilities and autism to become future leaders. He works to ensure they're represented, respected and heard in healthcare, social care and education, as well as in government and the media.

Scott said: "I've worked my whole life to ensure people with learning disabilities have a voice and feel equally valued. I will not stop until I've achieved this." ♦



## Simon Stones

### Patient Advocate and Consultant

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Simon has lived with arthritis from the age of three and was diagnosed in his teens with Crohn's disease and fibromyalgia, among other conditions. In 2012, Simon's former paediatric rheumatologist introduced him to healthcare research, and Simon became one of the first young patients to be involved alongside healthcare professionals. He's advocated locally, nationally and internationally ever since for people living with chronic conditions and their carers to be involved in research about their conditions. The result is better quality research, as well as more favourable health outcomes.

Simon studied biomedical sciences at university, graduating with a first. Inspired by his own experiences, he's determined to make improvements for other young people with chronic conditions. He's been involved in over 20 research studies and has contributed to the development of six international research recommendations about rheumatology to date.

Through his website and social media Simon shares his academic work and personal experience, communicating with the wider

patient community. At just 26 years old, Simon has already won numerous awards. He's been recognised internationally and honoured with the inaugural WEGO Health Award in the 'Healthcare Collaborator: Patient' category. Simon was also appointed as an Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society, in recognition of his commitment to improving the lives of young people through research.

Determined to make sure patient voices are heard at all levels, Simon is a trustee of Fibromyalgia Action UK and RAIISE, a European Network for Children with Arthritis (ENCA) board member, and president of the European Network of Fibromyalgia Associations (ENFA).

Simon is currently finishing a PhD at the University of Leeds as an expert-by-experience researcher. He said: "Use your experience to create change. It took me some time to realise that my voice mattered – but once I did, there was no holding me back!" ♦





## Stuart Thompson

Life Coach, Hypnotist and Therapist

Stuart is a registered senior hypnotherapist, life coach and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) practitioner. Working as a life coach, hypnotist and therapist, he specialises in treating anxiety and addictions in adults and children. His youngest clients are around five years old.

Having trained as a social worker and campaigned with well-known disability charities such as SCOPE and Mencap, Stuart turned his hand to providing expert help for those living with chronic pain and anxiety. Stuart developed his own method of pain control which has been reported in the media recently.

Stuart has osteo-genesis-imperfecta (brittle bone disease) and is a full-time wheelchair user. He uses his own experience of growing up differently and challenges he faced to explain how children feel when anxious. He runs parent workshops and trains teachers of children with anxiety across the country, using a system he developed called the STILL Method. Stuart recruited a team of UK-wide

coaches to deliver after-school clubs for children with anxiety and is training coaches globally.

Shortlisted for The Diversity Awards in 2018 and nominated again in 2019, he has both a growing media profile and a growing number of parents of children with anxiety, or with disabled children, contacting him for advice.

As a campaigner Stuart was one of the organisers of The Hardest HIT marches in the East of England, as well as advocating for adults with a learning disability and their parents. His campaigning began at 16 when he began visiting train stations wrapped in brown paper to protest at being made to travel in guard vans.

With a reputation that precedes him, Stuart is a go-to expert for anxiety treatment, already having been on BBC 3 three times in 2019. He said: "Being, looking or feeling different doesn't have to be a bad thing. In fact, it can be your greatest asset." ♦



## Vidyamala Burch

### Founder of Breathworks CIC

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Vidyamala is the founder of Breathworks CIC, a social enterprise with nearly 500 accredited teachers working in 35 countries teaching meditation and mindfulness to people living with pain, illness and stress. Breathworks came about after Vidyamala experienced a spinal injury aged 17, which caused partial paraplegia with severe long-term pain.

Today, Vidyamala is an internationally renowned author with her books, *Living Well with Pain and Illness*, *Mindfulness for Health* and *Mindfulness for Women* published in over 14 languages. She is a regular speaker in the media and online.

With meditations and courses on online meditation app Insight Timer, Vidyamala is reaching over 250,000 users with her recordings alone. Vidyamala is an Honorary Member of the British Pain Society in recognition of her 'outstanding contribution to the alleviation of pain through personal endeavour and for her work for the Society'.

In 2019, Vidyamala was one of the keynote speakers at the Mindfulness in Schools 'A Million Minds Matter' conference. She shared the benefits of mindfulness practice with students and teachers. She's also been a guest lecturer at UCL offering Mindfulness-based Pain Management (MBPM) on an MSc.

She is a member of the Advisory Board of the Mindfulness Initiative, a project working with legislators around the world, helping them to make meditation and mindfulness serious considerations for public policy.

Vidyamala is also passionate about The Breathworks Foundation charity. This raises funds so mindfulness can be available to everyone regardless of ability to pay.

Vidyamala said: "Meditation and mindfulness have helped me manage my pain by learning to work with my body and mind rather than against them. It has given me my life back. I am passionate about sharing these simple, life-changing skills with others." ♦

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**Entertainment**



## Cherylee Houston

Actor and Advocate

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For the past nine years Cherylee has played Izzy Armstrong in Coronation Street. Cherylee also works to remove barriers for other disabled artists and advocates for disabled people, including speaking out about welfare cuts at the Houses of Parliament and on Channel 4 News.

Cherylee trained at The Arden School of Theatre and has run workshops for over 20 years. In 2008 she wrote the 'How to make your work accessible Youth Theatre Handbook' which was sent to every youth theatre in the UK. Cherylee is also a co-founder of TripleC (the Creative Confidence Collective), which increases inclusion access to the arts for disabled performers. For 12 years the organisation has changed lives by running drama workshops in schools and communities across North West England for young disabled people. TripleC also works with TV and theatre companies on

accessibility and provides practical career help for disabled artists through training, networking opportunities, auditions and acting work. Cherylee helped create TripleC's mental health choir in Manchester.

Since 2010 Cherylee has also been a cast member on Coronation Street. Along with strong plotlines, Izzy Armstrong brings mainstream representation of disability and wheelchair use to homes across the UK six times a week. The bold, outspoken character is the longest-standing disabled regular on the soap, and earned Cherylee a nomination for Best Newcomer at the Inside Soap Awards. The character and the actor both have Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, and Cherylee increases awareness about the condition and is a Patron of the charity Ehlers-Danlos Support UK. Her other TV credits include Holby City, Doctors, and Little Britain. ◆



## James Moore

Actor

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James Moore gained household recognition when he joined the cast of Emmerdale last year playing fan favourite Ryan Stocks, the long-lost son of Charity Dingle. A year later he won Best Newcomer at the National Television Awards.

Though James had always wanted to act the lack of parts for disabled actors made him hesitant about trying to make it a career. He joined the National Youth Theatre, starring in a production of Romeo and Juliet. Shortly after he signed with YAFTA agency and then came the Emmerdale part.

Though the character Ryan Stocks was written as having cerebral palsy, Emmerdale decided to script which type based on the actor cast. James worked closely with the scriptwriting team to create the character, and his experiences of ataxic cerebral palsy, authentically. Accepting the National Television Award James spoke about the significance of his casting in

a mainstream soap, let alone winning an award voted for by the public.

James is such a household name that even a haircut made it to some newspapers, but he approaches the public scrutiny with humour. When some people complained they couldn't understand his speech, James shared a screenshot on Twitter of how to turn on subtitles. Subtitles are something he also joked about in spoof documentary Spaghetti Legs which he co-directed and starred in. James is also a musician and an activist.

James says: "Growing up with a disability, I wish I had the self-confidence that I do now to know that if you push yourself, it is possible to get where you want to be in life. Be strong, know your worth and don't settle or compromise. Sometimes it can seem like an uphill battle, but really that's just part of the journey – nobody's travel through life is a straight line." ♦



## Jess Thom

### Comedian and Theatre-maker

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Jess Thom is a comedian and theatre-maker who co-founded the social enterprise Touretteshero. This project reclaims Tourette's Syndrome from the cliched jokes while celebrating the humour and creativity of the condition. The main symptom of Tourette's is involuntary sounds or movements called 'tics'. Jess's verbal tics are often funny and unlikely images - as well as her most frequent tic: the word 'biscuits'.

Jess began making inclusive art after her own experiences of being made to feel unwelcome in the theatre because of her tics. Jess works hard to embed accessibility throughout her work - from wheelchair accessibility to relaxed performances where audiences are welcome to make sounds or move around if they need to.

The website [Touretteshero.com](http://Touretteshero.com) shares Jess's tics and invites people to take them as creative prompts to make their own art. In 2014 Touretteshero's Edinburgh Fringe debut *Backstage in Biscuit Land* won the Total Theatre Award for Best Emerging Company. The show has since toured internationally.

Last year Jess and the Touretteshero company curated *Hacks for the Future*, working with the National Theatre of Scotland to create collaborative work with young disabled people from across Scotland. The inclusive project had discussions and workshops as well as installations and performances.

This year Jess has worked at London's Battersea Arts Centre, curating the *Rest and Resistance* festival of disability arts and culture. Jess also starred in a unique run of Samuel Beckett's *Not I*, a challenging monologue by a character Jess relates to as neurodiverse. British Sign Language performer Charmaine Wombwell interprets the play live - incorporating Jess's tics which are different every time.

Jess has given a TED Talk and appeared on television numerous times as an artist, a comedian and a spokesperson, including with her BBC 2 documentary *My Mouth and I*. ◆





## Justin Edgar

### Filmmaker

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Justin is an award-winning writer, director and producer who fights against the false assumption that disability is a niche topic.

As a teenager Justin was diagnosed as hard of hearing. Already in love with film, he often bunked school to go to the cinema. He gained a first class degree in Film and began writing and directing *Doctors* for BBC1. At 26 he became the youngest ever director of a major UK feature film: *Large* was produced by Film Four and topped the UK video charts.

In 2004 Justin set up 104 Films, a training and production company specialising in disability and film. It creates authentic portrayals of disability on screen while training talented new disabled filmmakers and actors.

Justin says: “When I was younger, I wish I knew that I was disabled. When most people think of disability they think of either cultural deafness, mobility or visual impairment, yet the vast majority of disabled people have a non-visible disability. To me the able-bodied’s

focus on visible disabilities medicalises disability and that is very damaging to the notion of the social model and can marginalise the experience of people like me”.

A BIFA and BAFTA jury member, he has helped create reasonable adjustment policy changes working with the BBC and British Film Institute. He directed the 2008 improvised comedy *Special People* about able-bodied misconceptions, which won an RTS award plus audience awards at film festivals in Berlin and Moscow.

Justin’s online campaign #MakeFilmEqual resulted in his documentary about disability representation *The Social Model*, which was released this year to resounding acclaim.

His latest film *The Marker*, starring John Hannah and Cathy Tyson, has been acquired by Netflix. He is currently writing a book about New Disability Film and planning an exhibition on the disability rights movement due to open next year. ◆



## Kim Tserkezie

Actor, Presenter, Writer and Producer

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Kim Tserkezie has worked in broadcast media for twenty-five years, with a career spanning comedy, drama and documentary. She has worked many roles within the industry from acting to production.

Kim got her first break as a presenter for BBC's Disability Today and From The Edge, often writing and producing her own items. From 2002-2005 Kim played Penny Pocket in BAFTA award winning, Balamory. This role won Kim an award from Whizz Kidz for representation.

Following Balamory, Kim found, frustratingly, she was rarely offered the chance to play characters, only those with medical problems and "stereotypical portrayals of disability". This led Kim to set up her own production company, Scattered Pictures. Since 2013, the company, based in Kim's home city of Newcastle Upon Tyne, has developed projects which share under-represented perspectives and promote emerging talent in the North East. Kim believes "real change will happen when fair representation exists throughout the whole process on and off

screen, from training and writing to directing right through to commissioning."

Kim is writing and producing screen projects with leading production companies including BBC Studios, Seven Seas Films, IMG Productions and Fremantle. Scattered Pictures recently received its second radio documentary commission for BBC World Service which Kim will present.

Kim plays the lead role in Obsession, a short drama film funded by BFI Network which will premiere in the Autumn. Other acting credits include Boy Meets Girl, Wolfblood, feature film, Bliss, and Lodger, a pilot she co-wrote and performed live at BBC Salford Sitcom Showcase.

Kim won a John Brabourne Award in 2016. She is a full member of BAFTA and a board member of the Royal Television Society North East and the Borders. She has chaired events on diversity at BFI's London Film Festival and wrote the semi-autobiographical children's book The Wheelie Wonderful Life of Millie Monroe. ♦



## Romina Puma

### Comedian and blogger

Romina is a stand-up comedian with muscular dystrophy (MD). She uses comedy as a tool to speak about disability in an upfront, unvarnished way while making people laugh. Romina also campaigns about accessible transport and attitudes towards disabled people - especially around sex, dating and love.

Romina was born in Germany but lived in Italy from age nine. She performed in a small theatre company in Italy before moving to comedy in 2009. She won the Blackout comedy competition and Funny Women 2016 listed her as 'One to Watch'. She has three solo shows under her belt, performed at multiple Fringe Festivals - including Edinburgh:

2015 'Not disabled...Enough!'

2016 'Cook it how you like, it's still a potato!'

2018 'It's all my mother's fault!'

She also blogs about accessibility issues at many comedy venues - especially smaller ones. As these venues are where most comedians learn their craft: this is a real

barrier to developing disabled talent. Romina says: "I have always been adventurous and that helped me a lot when I have become a wheelchair user. Sometimes it's scary and stressful just to go around in your own town, but I always loved travelling. When you do it as a wheelchair user the stress goes to another level, but it's worth it and if something goes wrong: you have something to talk about."

Perhaps the thing Romina is best-known for is her frank campaigning about sex and disability - including a comedy act about a 'disabled Karma Sutra'. She took part in Scope's #EndtheAwkward campaign about dating while disabled, appearing on a mocked up romance book with the title 'On the Prowl'.

Romina has written for the Huffington Post and Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) and is a campaigner for MDUK and the MDUK Trailblazers programme. She has performed internationally and appeared on television and radio. ♦



## Rosie Jones

Comedian

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Rosie is a researcher, writer and stand-up comedian who has written for, and appeared in, some of the biggest comedy panel shows on television.

Rosie attributes her humour to a lifetime of working around other people's awkwardness about disability: she evolved a sharp wit as jokes put people at ease. Ataxic cerebral palsy makes Rosie's speech slower than most people's. Working with this, she has developed a clinical precision for setting up punchlines - then subverting expectations for an even bigger laugh.

In 2015 Rosie took a screenwriting class and began performing stand-up. Within a year she reached the final of the Funny Women Awards and began writing for The Last Leg's Rio Paralympics coverage. In 2017 Rosie first began appearing on The Last Leg too, including as a roving reporter examining benefits assessments.

Rosie says: "Growing up, I didn't really see disability represented in the media often, and it got me down. I didn't feel valid. I love my job now because I can now go onstage and on TV and say, 'I'm Rosie, I may have slow speech, I may have a wobble to my walk, but I am here, I have a voice and I am valid'. It's so important to embrace all kinds of diversity in the media, and it's so great to be part of this change."

Rosie took comedy shows to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2017 and 2018. Last year she also made her acting debut in *Silent Witness*. Rosie has researched and written for Harry Hill's *Alien Fun Capsule*, *Would I Lie to You?* and *8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown*. This year she is appeared on *8 out of 10 Cats*, *Hypothetical* and *The Guilty Feminist Podcast*, and spoke at the *Women of the World Festival*. She is currently co-writing a sitcom.





## Samantha Renke

Actress and Campaigner

Samantha Renke is an actor, presenter, journalist and disability campaigner. While still studying at university she became a trustee for the Brittle Bone Society. Samantha trained to be a teacher and taught languages in secondary schools, before deciding to follow her dream and become an actress.

She says: "From a very young age I realised I had a gift of the gab - my innate confidence broke down barriers I experienced being disabled. I love people and making them smile, thus challenging their perceptions and stereotypes of disability. I feel truly blessed to now be a role model for the disabled community."

Samantha is known for funny, complex roles with tons of personality. Her first lead role was starring in the independent film *Little Devil*, a part she won Best Actress for at the LA Diversity Film Festival. In the UK she is perhaps best known for her role on a Malteasers advert and as resident disability columnist for the Metro.

Samantha is keenly aware that although around 20% of the UK's population identify as having a disability or additional needs, representation of disability in the media makes up only around 3%. She says: "I want to encourage more budding disabled actors to follow in my tyre prints and I also want the media industry to understand that disabled people deserve to be represented in an authentic way."

Samantha is a regular columnist and guest on panel shows including Jeremy Vine, Loose Women and on 5 Talk Radio DriveTime with Eamonn Holmes. She has presented *Rip Off Britain* and recently appeared in *Celebrity Antiques Road Trip*. Samantha has recently launched her podcast *LifeDownLow'Ed* with fellow actor Dan Edge.

She is a Patron of the Head2Head Theatre, an Ambassador for Parallel London, and the Non-Executive Director of Born This Way Media. ♦



## Warwick Davis

Actor

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Warwick Davis began his career at the age of 11 when film producer George Lucas put out a call for actors under four feet tall. Soon Warwick was battling Stormtroopers in a galaxy far, far away as Wicket the Ewok in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*. From there the actor went on to star in *Willow*, had several parts in the *Harry Potter* movies, and has made numerous appearances in the *Star Wars* movies since.

Warwick has been a household name for decades. A fact he played on when portraying a fictionalised version of himself in the Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant sitcom, *Life's Too Short*, which ran for two seasons.

In 2014 Warwick became the first disabled person to regularly present a primetime show when he hosted ITV's *Celebrity Squares*. For the last three years he's presented ITV's quiz show *Tenable*. Warwick has also appeared with survivalist Bear Grylls on *Bear's Mission* with Warwick Davis and starred in a season of the comedy travel show *An Idiot Abroad* with Karl Pilkington.

He says: "Instead of seeing disability as a disadvantage, I think it is important to embrace one's difference and see it in a positive light. Doing this will influence other people, enabling them to see past the disability, dissolving any prejudice they might have had."

Warwick has helped others build careers in show business. He co-founded the talent agency *Willow Management*, which specialises in representing actors under five foot tall, working for positive representation and more than niche roles. Warwick also founded the *Reduced Height Theatre Company* which casts theatrical productions entirely with actors who are little people, giving talented short actors a platform. Warwick also produced a musical, *Eugenius!*, which has had multiple theatre runs.

Warwick co-founded the charity *Little People UK*, which provides support to people with dwarfism and their families. ◆

## Keep in touch



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## Ade Adepitan

**Presenter, Journalist, Children's Author and Wheelchair Basketball Paralympian.**

Ade is a Television Presenter, Journalist, Children's Author and Wheelchair Basketball Paralympian.

At fifteen months old Ade contracted Polio, which left him with limited movement in his legs. Taught to walk with iron callipers, when he was 12 years old two physiotherapists intervened when they spotted Ade being pushed in a shopping trolley by his friends. They introduced Ade to wheelchair basketball, where he fell in love with the sport. Ade documents his story in his children's books, *Cyborg Cat- Rise of the Parsons Road Gang* and *Cyborg Cat and the Night Spider*. All proceeds go to Children in Need.

Ade's wheelchair basketball team took Bronze at the Athens 2004 Paralympics and Gold at the 2005 World Cup. He's hosted countless sporting events including the BAFTA award-winning coverage of the 2012, The 2014 Sochi Winter Games, The IPC Athletics, The Channel 4 Anniversary Games, The 2016 Invictus Games and the 2016 Rio Paralympics. Ade co-hosted The Superhumans Show with Alex Brooker. Ade's presenting career ranges from CBBC's Xchange to Channel 4's Unreported World

and the BBC's Travel Show. Earlier this year he released the four-part BBC documentary *Africa with Ade Adepitan*. He's a patron of the charity Go Kids Go, a supporter of the NSPCC and WheelPower Charity, and an Athlete Ambassador for Right to Play.

For Comic Relief Ade's travelled to Ghana and taken part in the Disabled Motoring UK Alps Challenge. He trekked through Nicaraguan rainforests, deserts, rivers and over mountains for ground-breaking documentary *Beyond Boundaries*, showcasing people with disabilities taking on major challenges. Ade's done various work with Rotary International and the Gates Foundation, supporting the End Polio campaign. He took part in a basketball match with MPs and GB wheelchair basketball at Trafalgar Square to help raise awareness and money to end polio. For the last three years he has co-presented Children in Need, helping raise more than £50 million for charity.

Ade said: "The most important thing I've learnt in life is to never lose your sense of wonderment, empathy, or adventure. Dream big and fight as hard as you can to make those dreams come true."



## Anne Hegerty

Quiz expert and Aspergers awareness campaigner

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Anne is best known as a Chaser on the quiz show *The Chase*, in the UK and Australia, which requires her to out-wit contestants as they try to amass winnings. So good is she that Anne has earned the moniker 'The Governess' from the host Bradley Walsh.

Initially a local reporter and ghostwriter, Anne has a phenomenal skill at quizzes which has led to two appearances on *Mastermind*, as well as appearances on the programmes *Fifteen to One*, *Today's the Day* and *Brain of Britain*. She also reached the semi-final of the second series of *Are You an Egghead?*.

In 2010 Anne landed a regular slot on *The Chase*, becoming a regular personality on our screens. In 2015 she went international, joining *The Chase Australia*. Anne also hosts *Britain's Brightest Family*.

In 2005 Anne was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, and she has spoken publicly about

how her neurodivergence fuels her desire to learn huge amounts of information - leading to her success. Anne was ranked 18th in the UK quiz rankings in January 2018, and 65th in the *World Quizzing Championships* in 2017. Her career has gone from strength to strength with appearances on well known television programmes such as *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here*, various pantomimes around the country and a guest spot on BBC Radio 4's *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue*.

Anne's success has led her to be featured regularly by *The National Autistic Society*, along with a number of television appearances, and interviews in national and international news about life with *Aspergers Syndrome*.

She also has over 126K followers on Twitter making her a widely respected and influential voice in the quizzing and autistic communities across the world. ♦



## David Proud

Actor and writer

David is an actor, writer, producer and a member of BAFTA. His film and TV credits include *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*, *No Offence*, *Siblings*, *Jack Ryan* and ITV's acclaimed *Marcella*. He became the first disabled regular character on *EastEnders*, going on to become the first disabled artist to perform on stage at the Old Vic theatre. He says: "Being disabled makes most things a marathon not a sprint, but we still cross that finish line in the end."

David also writes and produces for TV and the stage: his play, *Friendzone*, was featured at Theatre Royal Stratford East in 2012. He is currently developing film and TV projects, and this year was accepted onto the prestigious BBC Writers Room programme, to write for a variety of scripted BBC shows.

Aware of his role as an ambassador, David draws attention to the inaccessibility of the sector, the lack of roles for disabled people and the need for better representation. His

book, *The Art of Disability*, was published in 2016 and lays out the realities and impact of limited media representation through his experiences as an actor, writer and producer. He has written articles for the Guardian and this year spoke on disability representation at the Edinburgh Film Festival.

David has also contributed to policy, including speaking at the Westminster Media Forum last year about diverse talent in the UK screen sector. As a consultant for the BFI, David founded the BFI's roundtable discussion on disability representation and contributed to their *Disabled Britain on Film* season. Last year David was awarded a two year engagement fellowship by the Wellcome Trust. David is using this to explore disability and the morality of medical efforts to engineer disability out of existence. He is engaging both medical researchers and disabled people to examine the medical model of disability. ♦



## Emily White

Department of Ability

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Emily, 13, is an independent and vocal disability campaigner, passionate about seeing equality for her and others in the disabled community, and is the star of her own disability hero comic, 'The Department of Ability'. Emily has spina bifida, hydrocephalus, scoliosis, autism and chiari, and uses a wheelchair. She wanted to read things with characters like her, so - along with her cartoonist dad Dan - she is creating the things she would like to read.

This year Emily's short story was published in a Young Writers Anthology, helping change the narrative around childhood disability. She wants all children, whatever their abilities, to be seen for all they can contribute and achieve.

Emily has influenced a lot of social change, from overseeing access improvements to local play parks, to the opening of several Changing Places accessible toilets. She is an ambassador for Parallel London and is soon to become a Variety Club youth ambassador

too. As the face of Department of Ability, and through her ongoing work on access and inclusion, she is reaching out to children worldwide. With her family, Emily delivered a 40,000 signature petition to 10 Downing Street calling for a disabled children's minister to be appointed.

She has received celebrity support from Paralympian Hannah Cockcroft, and actor Sally Phillips amongst others, but it is through her own media appearances that she has become a figurehead for her friends, both disabled and not, by showing them the positive changes one person can affect.

Her TV appearances, including BBC News and the Apprentice, have led her to becoming one of the UK's most prominent young disabled people, her influence reaching hundreds of disabled people and celebrities across the country. This summer she has also been shortlisted for the ITV News Diversity Awards. ♦



## Dr Frances Ryan

Journalist, academic and activist

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Frances is an award-winning journalist, author, and political commentator. She writes a weekly Guardian column, *Hardworking Britain*, which has been at the forefront of social affairs coverage in recent years.

Frances uses her platform to speak out about the many forms of inequality in the UK, and to bring underreported issues to light. She was highly commended Specialist Journalist of the Year at the 2019 National Press Awards for her work on disability, as well as shortlisted for the Orwell Prize for Exposing Britain's Social Evils 2019.

Frances regularly contributes to television and radio, including BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* and *The World Tonight*, BBC Radio 2's *Jeremy Vine Show*, BBC Sunday Politics, Channel 4 News and more. She has a doctorate in politics from The University of Nottingham, and guest lectures at universities and events around the country.

Frances, who has generalised muscle weakness and is a wheelchair user, speaks openly about balancing her disability and a busy job, using the flexibility of freelancing to work around her own varying energy levels. "There's still a real lack of disabled people in the public eye, and it's easy to feel like the media isn't for people like us. I want young people with disabilities and health conditions to know it's absolutely possible, with the right support. Our voices are hugely important."

This summer, Frances' debut book, *Crippled: Austerity and the Demonization of Disabled People*, was released with Verso. The book calls for a more equal Britain for disabled people and has been praised by figures ranging from Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, I, Daniel Blake director Ken Loach, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, to Lee Ridley, the winner of Britain's Got Talent. ◆



## Frank Gardner OBE

### Journalist

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Following successful military and international banking sector careers, Frank joined the BBC World Service in 1995 as a producer and reporter, before becoming the BBC's full time Gulf Correspondent two years later.

In 2002, following world events and speaking fluent Arabic, Frank became the BBC's the Security Correspondent, reporting from the frontlines on major world events. Frank has covered stories from recruits learning to defuse bombs in Afghanistan, to embedding with merchant sailors investigating piracy off the Somali coast. He's also taken on two Arctic challenges.

In 2004, while on assignment in Saudi Arabia, Frank was shot six times at close range. His cameraman Simon Cumbers died in the attack, and the resulting spinal injuries mean Frank now uses a wheelchair to get around. After months of rehabilitation Frank returned to reporting. The same year he was awarded

an OBE by the Queen for his services to journalism.

As a BBC correspondent, Frank has an audience of millions. In 2018 he used this influence to highlight the difficulties many disabled travellers face, when he reported live from a plane he was stuck on because his wheelchair had been sent to the wrong place. When the same thing occurred within six months, Frank was able again to draw much-needed attention to the poor provision for disabled people navigating airports, in a bid to help others experiencing similar situations.

In addition to his reporting, Frank is the author of a number of bestselling books, amongst them the memoir *Blood and Sand* describing his Middle East experiences, *Far Horizons* describing unusual journeys to unusual places, and his fiction debut *Crisis*, a spy thriller set in Colombia. ♦



## Heather Lacey

[nosuperhero.co.uk](http://nosuperhero.co.uk)

Heather is an activist, writer, researcher and public speaker, whose experience of cerebral palsy, Scheuermann's kyphosis and mental illness lead her to find solace in social media and eventually start her blog, [nosuperhero.co.uk](http://nosuperhero.co.uk). Her writing – though candid and often times hard-hitting – illuminates yet celebrates the disabled experience and her experiences of chronic pain, fatigue and mobility issues. She explains: "Navigating the world as a young disabled woman has its challenges: ultimately, I want to reassure others that they are not alone, and that their experiences are valid and important."

Heather also writes for Able Magazine and has been published in the Journal of Gender Studies and The British Society for Literature and Science. She is a frequent guest on panels and at conferences, and earlier this year chaired a panel including Ade Adepitan and Cerrie Burnell at The London Book Fair. During her time at law firm Eversheds Sutherland, Heather has promoted and contributed to the firm's D&I strategy, acting

as a Network Lead on Wellbeing and Ability, the disabled colleagues and carers network, as well as sitting on pro-manchester's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee and attending Business Disability Forum's Northern Network. Earlier this year, Heather was a judge for the Recruitment Industry Disability Awards on behalf of Eversheds Sutherland, adjudicating entries based on Disability Confident criteria and demonstrable recruitment and retainment of disabled talent.

She has worked with organisations including Scope, BBC Ouch and Huffington Post, and is an Ambassador for Inclusive Minds, a collective that aims to improve diversity and inclusion in young peoples' fiction. She is AccessAble's North West Champion, promoting accessibility guides in cities across the UK, and in 2019, the University of Hull – in partnership with Team GB – recognised her as one of their Extraordinary People for her work in disability advocacy. ♦



## Holly Tuke

### Life of a Blind Girl

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Holly is a writer, blogger and campaigner. She started her blog, Life of a Blind Girl, in 2015 to educate people about sight loss, tackle stereotypes, and share some life hacks. Holly covers topics including university, employment, fashion and concerts – through the lens of visual impairment – for audiences of both disabled and non-disabled people.

Popular posts include '10 things I want non-disabled people to know' and 'A positive message for people recently diagnosed with sight loss'. Life of a Blind Girl was shortlisted for Health Unlocked's Health Blogger of the Year Awards 2017 and the 2019 UK Blog Awards.

As well as her blog, Holly's YouTube channel, under the same name, is well respected in the disability community and reaches a wide audience of disabled and non-disabled people. Her compassion has made her a lifeline for people coming to terms with sight loss and other disabilities.

"Having a disability is not an obstacle for success. I want to prove that with the right

support, you can succeed just like everyone else."

Recently featured on RNIB Connect radio, BBC Radio York and BBC Radio Leeds, Holly has also contributed to Able Magazine, the Yorkshire Post, the Huffington Post and the Guardian. She has also written for Seeable, Ability Superstore and was involved in RNIB's #HowISee campaign and Scope's #EndTheAwkward campaign. Holly was recognised as a Young Changemaker by the Inspiring Women Changemakers organisation and this year has been nominated as a Positive Role Model at the National Diversity Awards.

Holly graduated York St John University with a BA Honours degree in Children, Young People and Families and now works at the University as an Assistive Technology Advisor, helping students find the right support for their needs and training them how to use a wide range of assistive technology. She is an Ambassador for the Wilberforce Trust. ♦





## Jordan Bone

Beauty blogger and motivational speaker

When she was 15 Jordan was involved in a car accident which left her paralysed from the chest down, and with limited movement in her hands. This life-changing injury led her to experience severe depression. Unable to open her hands Jordan taught herself how to apply makeup again - something she had been passionate about before the accident. Combined with meditation, makeup worked as a kind of therapy helping her to regain her confidence and spread positivity.

Creating videos on YouTube, Jordan shares makeup tips and tricks, and talks about living with a physical disability. On YouTube alone she has over 194K followers, with her video *My Beautiful Struggle* being viewed over 6 million times after being shared by the actor Ashton Kutcher. Jordan also has huge audiences on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, where hundreds of thousands of people from across the world follow her makeup tutorials and motivational guidance. She has worked with leading makeup brands including with L'Oreal, Urban Decay, Liz Earle, Mark Hill and Illamasqua.

One day, when Jordan's webcam wasn't working, she adapted by switching mediums and created her blog *Jordan's Beautiful Life* instead. In 2017, Jordan released her autobiography *My Beautiful Struggle*, published by Trapeze. The book detailed how she coped with the effects of the accident as a teenager and into adulthood, and how she found inner strength and creative outlets.

Jordan has raised money for the charity Spinal Research, and has spoken at schools and colleges, as well as for TV and radio campaigns, about both spinal injuries and road safety.

In 2019 Jordan announced that she had felt she had moved on from much of the beauty vlogging, but that she would do it now and then as passion dictates, as she has decided to spend more time on motivational speaking. ◆



## Kerry Thompson

Blogger and disability campaigner

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Kerry Thompson is a lifestyle and disability blogger living with Muscular Dystrophy, who uses her platform to promote awareness of the condition and a more accessible society. She says: "My dream is an equal world for all, that future me's have inclusion and can live an accessible life with no worries."

Kerry is a leading campaigner for the Changing Places campaign to increase the number of accessible toilet facilities available around the country. Through determined campaigning she has secured 35 Changing Places facilities at Tesco stores around the country. Kerry also appeared Muscular Dystrophy UK's campaign video, with the Department of Transport, about the need for more accessible toilet facilities along the country's motorways.

Working closely with the media team at Muscular Dystrophy UK's Trailblazers, Kerry campaigns for the muscular dystrophy community, especially for young people living with the condition and their families. She challenges negative stereotypes around disability, focuses on how to live her best life

and shares her wider health journey with tips she picks up along the way - such as learning to manage Type II diabetes.

Accessible housing is another topic Kerry works to improve. She has worked with Disabled Living on their campaigns about the importance of accessible housing and sits on the accessible housing advisory board of housing association Habinteg.

On Twitter you will find Kerry microblogging with the MDBloggersCrew where she spotlights the mental health factors of living with a life-limiting condition. Kerry also blogs about the 'dark side' of social media - that the platforms many people use as a lifeline for support are also the places where cyberbullying takes place. Kerry takes a pragmatic approach, balancing out the benefits and advising people to look after themselves.

Kerry is AccessAble's Champion for Milton Keynes and has been honoured this year with a BBC Three Counties People Awards for her work. ◆



## Lucy Edwards

Youtuber and reporter

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For the past five years Lucy has been running a YouTube channel where she talks about living with blindness and breaking the stereotypes about blindness - mixed in with beauty tips and tutorials. Lucy's YouTube video, Blind girl does her own make-up, went viral in 2015 making her a role model to thousands of viewers around the world. Lucy is a make-up expert with a unique perspective on how to use it, and the confidence it brings. Lucy says: "This is something that is visual, but there are techniques to really make us feel good. Even though I can't see a mirror anymore, I control the way I look because I have the strategies, and it's made me feel more empowered."

With 28K YouTube subscribers, her unique brand of beauty vlogging has led her to become the first blind brand partner of the US makeup giant CoverGirl and she is now an author to the first ever 'Blind Beauty Guide' recently launched on Amazon kindle.

Lucy has worked as a Broadcast Assistant for BBC Ouch!, and is a freelance reporter and journalist across many BBC

departments. Her features have focused on accessibility and transport issues such as navigating train stations with sight loss, or the additional difficulties snow creates: when sound is dampened down and her guide dog isn't certain where the kerb is.

Lucy often vlogs about her black Labrador Retriever guide dog Olga, and fundraises for the charity Guide Dogs UK. She has run both the Silverstone Half Marathon and the London Marathon with her running guide Steve, raising £3,000. In 2017, in recognition of her work, she was honoured with the Guide Dogs Young Person's Achievement award, and has continued to raise money ever since.

Lucy has also started to work with the charity LOOK UK, which helps young visually impaired people and their families, by holding workshops and talks in order to support blind people to be able to apply their makeup with confidence. ◆



## Martyn Sibley

### Disability Horizons

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Martyn is a travel writer, blogger and founder of the lifestyle magazine Disability Horizons. He writes about independent living, accessible travel and assistive technology. Martyn began his career in product development at Scope, and now advises disability charities as a consultant. He is also an international keynote speaker.

With co-founder Srin Madipalli, Martyn set up the start-up accessible travel business Accomable. Both founders have Spinal Muscular Atrophy and use wheelchairs to get about. Accomable was billed as 'Airbnb for people with disabilities' and clearly listed (and verified) the accessible features of accommodation around the world. In 2017, the company was bought by Airbnb in a deal which made national headlines.

In 2011 Martyn and Srin also set up Disability Horizons, an online magazine by and for disabled people which discusses technology, relationships, sports, employment and travel. Martyn is keen to enable new talent, saying: "One of the most important things

for inclusion is an optimistic and capable next generation. How better to nurture the next change makers than by showcasing disabled role models."

Martyn is a keen adventurer and has written about travel to Australia, Japan, Mexico and Europe; taking a road trip around the US; skiing, hot air ballooning, flying a plane, scuba diving and even taking on the 874-mile route from Land's End to John O'Groats.

Martyn has a strong media presence appearing on the BBC, ITV and Channel 5, and writing for The Independent, Huffington Post, BBC Ouch, Disability Now and The Guardian. He has produced materials for Visit England and Lonely Planet and dipped his toes in working as a TV presenter. His travel memoir Everything is Possible was published in 2016 and documents his metaphorical and literal journeys as a disabled traveller.

Martyn is also a coach for social change professionals and works as a consultant for governments, businesses and the media. ♦



## Matt Haig

Author

Matt is an award-winning author whose books have been translated into 29 languages. He writes fiction and non-fiction, for both children and adults, and is best known for his candid writings about mental health, often drawing on his own experiences.

His novels *The Radleys* and *The Humans* have both won awards. His children's book *A Boy Called Christmas* was called an 'instant classic' by the Guardian. It has been translated into over 25 languages and is currently being made into a film by Studio Canal, the creators of *Paddington*. The film will feature an all-star cast, including Jim Broadbent, Kristen Wiig, Maggie Smith, and Sally Hawkins.

Matt's memoir *Reasons to Stay Alive* looked at both his lowest times struggling with anxiety and depression in his 20s, but also zoomed out to the wider lens view of the happy, fulfilled present he lives in now - one he couldn't imagine at his most ill. The book broadens out further still, discussing how to make the most of our

time on this planet. The book resonated wildly - it was a number one bestseller, staying in the British top ten for 46 weeks.

Matt tweets regularly about mental health on social media to his audience of over 500K followers from across the world, generating an open discourse about mental health. Matt writes candidly about depression, anxiety and broader mental health and wellbeing to help both adults and children talk about, and manage, everything from day to day stress to serious mental health conditions.

This summer he toured with his critically acclaimed follow-up to *Reasons to Stay Alive*, called *Notes on a Nervous Planet* taking it to the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Meanwhile Matt's latest children's book *The Truth Pixie Goes to School* is generating lots of positive feedback from children and adults alike for the way the story addresses the stress that going to, or returning to, school can bring. ◆



## Mik Scarlet

Journalist and broadcaster

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Mik Scarlet is journalist, musician and broadcaster with over 30 years' experience. He was the first disabled actor in a UK soap on Brookside and has toured in a number of bands. When he broke into the broadcasting industry in the late 1980s, Mik was one of the first visibly disabled people on mainstream television. He was a lead reporter on the BBC's flagship disability programme From the Edge for ten years, while the Emmy Award-winning BAFTA-nominated children's show he presented, Beat That was shown around the world.

Mik has been voted one of the most trusted journalists working in the UK by the National Council for the Training of Journalists. He has been a reporter and presenter on numerous news programmes and panel shows and is a regular writer for The Huffington Post, The Independent, PosAbility magazine, Disability Now magazine, BBC Ouch and Unite magazine.

Mik has paved the way for new narratives around disability, and doesn't shy away from difficult or taboo topics. In 2006 he was part of a BBC 2 documentary called Can Walk, Won't Walk? which challenged the assumption that people who use wheelchairs can't live happy lives. Mik is also an 'agony uncle' giving advice on relationships, sex and love for Enhance the UK's Love Lounge.

As an expert in accessibility and inclusion, Mik follows the social model of disability. His current campaigns focus on PIP and benefits, inclusive design and accessible transport. Mik's disability training programme has been attended by key figures from Uber, Network Rail and London Underground. He is currently working on campaigns with Inclusion London, Enhance the UK, Alliance for Inclusive Education, Transport for All and Scope. ♦



## Molly Watt

### Accessibility consultant

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Molly is an innovator and accessibility consultant, specialising in assistive technology for people with sensory impairments. Molly has Usher Syndrome, a rare form of deaf blindness, and knows first-hand how transformative assistive technologies can be. She raises awareness of accessible design, accessibility standards and technology including computers and wearables. Molly explains: “My passion lies in inclusion and the many possibilities assistive tech can provide in breaking down barriers because nobody knows inclusion like those who’ve been excluded.”

Molly’s influence stretches across the UK and beyond. She has been invited to speak at technology events such as UX Copenhagen and QCon in San Francisco as well as at the Houses of Parliament, JustGiving, the Apple Campus, Harvard Medical School and even for video game developer, ustwo. Molly has given several BBC radio interviews and taken part in podcasts including Tech for Good Live and Happy Porch Radio.

Molly provides consultation services to organisations such as NHS Digital and

numerous NHS CCGs, specialising in the fields of sensory impairments and helping to raise awareness of the condition. Her contributions to setting high standards for workplace and service-users’ accessibility are significant. On top of this, Molly has also set up her own accessibility and usability workshops to communicate the opportunities and support technology and digital tools can provide for other disabled people.

Over the years Molly has raised funds for charities including South East Berkshire Deaf Children’s Society, Sense, RP Fighting Blindness and Guide Dogs for the Blind. Recently she set up her own charity, the Molly Watt Trust, which aims to support people living with Usher Syndrome by raising both awareness and funds for accessible equipment like e-readers, tactile watches and software. The Trust also plans to set up events to combat some of the isolation and faced by people with the syndrome. Molly is an official Ambassador for Sense. ◆



## Natasha Lipman

Chronic illness blogger and BBC journalist

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Through her work as a BBC journalist and her social media presence, Natasha highlights the realities of being a young adult living at the intersection of invisible and visible disability.

Her writing offers support, education and encouragement to her 23.7k Instagram followers, mostly young women under 35, starting conversations about many topics, like the use of preventative mobility aids, unsolicited advice on social media, and the challenges people face when they 'don't look sick' and live with fluctuating pain and energy levels. Her work has helped people with invisible illnesses gain the confidence to use a mobility aid for the first time and stand up for their access needs.

Natasha says: "I create the content that would have helped me when I was first diagnosed. I read so much that made me believe that my life was over, that it overwhelmed me. I try to be a positive influence and share a realistic, honest portrayal of life with chronic illness."

Natasha is in the process of working with experts to create educational content for her blog, and also highlights the work of inclusive fashion brands.

As the first person with a chronic illness to be part of the BBC Extend in News Programme for disabled journalists, she has helped ensure that it is accessible for future participants with similar health issues. She encourages talented people living with chronic illnesses to apply, while supporting them to make sure their needs are understood and catered for. In her role for BBC Stories, she specialises in writing about disability and women's health, and consults with multiple teams for their chronic illness stories.

By being seen on Instagram and at the BBC, she has made herself visible to others facing similar challenges, even when her health can make it hard to leave her room. ♦





## Tanya Motie

Diversity champion, mentor and former BBC exec producer

“We need disabled people to be decision makers, influencers in our media. Only then will we see ourselves reflected and represented authentically.”

Tanya is a determined and passionate advocate for disabled people in the media. In her 25 years in the industry she has pushed relentlessly for increased visibility of talent both in front of the camera and behind the scenes. She is a firm believer in career mentoring as she feels there won't be sustainable change until disabled people are in positions of power and influence.

Tanya began her career with the BBC World Service before working for Radio 4 and BBC News. She then took a change of direction and moved to CBBC, producing flagship programmes such as Blue Peter and Xchange. She spent her last four years before retiring as the Channel Executive for BBC One and BBC Three.

Since then, Tanya has focused her energies on breaking down barriers. Her influence stretches far across the sector – not just at the BBC. She has been instrumental in

encouraging greater diversity and inclusion in many areas of broadcasting, from drama to journalism – quietly guiding and advising policy makers at the highest levels to ensure disabled people are included, recognised and given a fair shot. Her work has changed the lives and fortunes of some household names.

Tanya remains generous in sharing her experience and connections. Known for her reliability and discretion, she actively mentors around 18 disabled, BAME or socially disadvantaged people in the industry. She sits on the BBC Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group which challenges and monitors the BBC's work. Tanya is a Diversity Advisor for Gilbey Films, a disability-focused production company founded by her husband, the Paralympian Andy Gilbert.

In 2017, Tanya joined JK Rowling's charity Lumos as a Trustee and is now Deputy Chair. The charity works to end the global institutionalisation of children and support families instead. Unfortunately, disabled children are over-represented in institutions – marginalised and left behind. ♦



## Tom Jamison

Editor of Able Magazine

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Tom was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis just before joining the commercial team at Able Magazine. A few self-authored articles later, he was taken on as a staff writer, rising in 2011 to become the editor.

Thanks to his professional reputation, and being a visible disability ambassador at events, the magazine's team is often one of the first calls for media outlets looking for input or advice concerning disability issues. Tom has become a regular media commentator, doing interviews for BBC radio programmes such as You and Yours, local radio and television broadcasts, and independent and hospital radio programmes. He has contributed to the Scottish Sunday Express, the Metro website and Travel Weekly, and was the focus of a fundraising video for the Journalists' Charity.

Able Magazine is also the only disability lifestyle publication in the UK with a dedicated education and employment section, essential reading for disabled people looking for learning and career opportunities.

Having trained as a schoolteacher, Tom has a passion for education, which is evident in the way he supports and coaches young contributors to the magazine. He believes firmly in inclusion and advocates for the disabled community to be recognised as a valuable market sector. His work with the German National Tourist Board in helping the organisation connect with the disabled travel market, lead to Able Magazine's Goethe Media Award triumph in 2013.

Tom is widely known and trusted in disability circles, with friends involved in every aspect of the disability community. This means he's in demand by the organisers of events like the National Diversity Awards, Creative Diversity Network Awards, Naidex Awards, Remap Awards and organisations such as Special Olympics GB.

He says: "It's my privilege to continue to promote and celebrate the incredible achievements of disabled people; in fact: it's my pleasure and my duty!" ♦

## Keep in touch



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## Keep in touch



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### Tanya Motie

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# Politics and Law



## Helen Dolphin MBE

Motoring advocate, entrepreneur, presenter

Helen is an expert on accessible parking and Blue Badges. She is the founder of People's Parking and runs a consultancy working with mobility businesses to make it easier for disabled people to get around in public spaces.

Helen became disabled aged 22 when she became a quadruple amputee due to meningitis. She found driving a huge part of her recovery process. She says: "When I lost my limbs, I never thought I'd be able to drive again. However, with a few adaptations it was a reasonably simple process and I wish I had investigated getting back to driving a lot sooner. I'm now passionate at ensuring young disabled people know about all the driving options available to them."

Helen worked as a news reporter for ITV for over seven years, before moving to a charity for disabled people. She is a widely-recognised sector expert on accessible driving and public transport, who has contributed articles to numerous disability and transport organisations. She was Scope's motoring correspondent with a monthly column which ran for 14 years. To increase her impact even further, Helen

studied law part-time while working, gaining a first-class degree, and has worked as a Consultant Paralegal, representing people who have faced discrimination.

In 2015 Helen was awarded an MBE for her services to disabled motorists. The same year she set up Helen Dolphin Consultancy which helps businesses to understand the disability market. Since 2016 Helen has also been the Director of People's Parking Ltd, an accreditation scheme for car parks aimed at improving accessibility, ensuring disabled motorists and passengers' needs are met.

Helen is also a member of the Consumer Panel of the Civil Aviation Authority, a Member of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) which advises the government, Chair of East Anglian Driveability and Chair of the Joint Committee for the mobility of disabled people (JCMD). She is also a member of the British Science Association's Equality and Diversity Advisory Group. ♦



## John Horan

### Barrister

John Horan is an award-winning barrister who supports people in cases of discrimination, especially around disability. He is the only barrister with a disability who also specialises in discrimination law – which surprises even him!

John was already a successful barrister when he suffered a stroke on the last day of 1999. When he returned to work in 2001 he was shocked to discover that disability discrimination applied to him as employer clients wouldn't pay his usual fees.

John became a passionate advocate, specialising in claimant claims of discrimination in employment law goods and services and public functions.

He has taken cases against the State, the Army and the Church, as well as numerous companies and universities. He has also worked internationally, successfully challenging the state honour system in Trinidad on the grounds of religious discrimination. John's expertise has led to him lecturing at the Academy of European Rights in Trier, Germany and he hosted the European

Commission's Monitoring Conference on the Rights of People with Disabilities in Brussels in 2015.

One of John's specialist subjects is judges' discrimination and the need to modify the rules of the court to accommodate disabled people. He also now advises shadow ministers on what effective changes are needed in the legislation to help disabled people sue in court.

John appears regularly in both the national and legal press and on television as an advocate and expert. He has featured in the Guardian, the Independent and on the BBC. In 2003 John was recognised by the Bar Council with the Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year award. His work formed a significant part of his Chamber winning the same award in 2015.

This year John was nominated for the award for Chambers and Partners Magazine's award for Outstanding Contribution to Equality and Diversity. He was an expert speaker at an event, organised by Shaw Trust and Unison at the House of Commons, about the impact of Brexit on disabled people. ♦



## Jonathan Andrews

Reed Smith, Ambitious about Autism and Mind

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Jonathan Andrews is a solicitor who is changing the way disabled employees are recruited, represented and managed. Throughout his own recruitment and employment he has been completely open about his autism: introducing neurodiversity as a strength. He works towards a future where this openness is routine. He explains: “Emphasising the areas where my experiences have made me stronger have allowed me, and others, to aim high and demonstrate why disabled people, just like everyone else, should have a level playing-field and the chance to achieve on our own merit.”

Aged just 25, Jonathan has created national campaigns to promote more inclusive business practices and ensure other autistic young people have a fair chance. Jonathan is a committee member of Reed Smith’s international disability network LEADRS. As well as helping found the first-ever alumni initiatives at his old comprehensive, Jonathan speaks to thousands of school students about social mobility. He advocates for young disabled people, particularly around education, employment and mental health.

Jonathan also challenges better representation and visibility for LGBT+ people in the business and disabled communities. He was responsible for the Law Society’s first recognition of Bi Visibility Day in 2017 and founded the London Bisexual Network in 2015, now serving as co-chair. With Mind and Stonewall, Jonathan launched ‘Stand Bi Me’ - a mental health services toolkit educating services on bi-specific issues. As Mind’s first ever Equality Improvement Champion, he co-drafted their 2018 Disability Equality Toolkit, and works with a team of Equality Improvement Leaders.

Last year Jonathan won the UK Social Mobility Awards; this year he was recognised by the King’s College London ‘Distinguished Alumni Awards’, won the ‘Diversity & Inclusion’ Award at the LexisNexis Awards (the first individual to win what is usually a firm-wide category), and was elected Chair of the Commonwealth Children and Youth Disability Network. ◆





## Philip Connolly

### Campaigner and advocate

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Philip is senior advisor on employment and social protection policy at international pan-disability charity Leonard Cheshire.

Philip has approached empowerment and equality for disabled people from many angles: public procurement, policy change, community organisation, cultural expression and digital fabrication. He initiated and co-authored the All Party Parliamentary Group on Disability's report *Ahead of the Arc*, which was supported by all UK political parties. He's contributed to numerous government policies and written publications such as *Livable London*, and the *Reskilling Guide*.

Whilst at Disability Rights UK he supported the Department of Education with policy aimed at equal participation in skills acquisition and the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on industrial policy. Philip, who is partially sighted, has worked for RNIB, focusing on independent living and employment. He is qualified in construction, environmental management and teaching, and worked for the charity *Living Streets* for five years creating more accessible, walkable cities and neighbourhoods.

Philip, who also has Parkinson's disease, was previously the policy and development manager for Disability Rights UK and his work was recognised and honoured in parliament with an early day motion which praised his "strong and passionate example for current and future activists to follow." He was praised as one of the disability community's "most competent and forthright advocates."

He said: "When I was 16, my life was disrupted by sight loss and punk rock. These days the Government itself funds disruption, in technology and business models. I seek to use its power and apply it to disability policy. *Ahead of the Arc* disrupts the over focus on supply side measures and finds answers on the demand side. The purple pounds and purple culture challenge the low status of disabled people. Above all community disrupts powerlessness and replaces it with the leverage and wisdom of the crowd. Disruption is key!" ♦



## Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson

### Paralympic Champion and Peer

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Baroness Grey-Thompson of Eaglescliffe is a paralympian, lifetime peer and broadcaster who has broken 30 world records across an incredible 16 year Paralympic career.

Tanni is a wheelchair-racer like no other. She has won the London Wheelchair Marathon a staggering six times between 1992 and 2002 and competed at five Paralympic Games from 1988 - 2004, taking home 11 gold medals, four silver and one bronze. At the 1992 Barcelona Paralympics, she became the first woman to complete 400m in under 60 seconds. At World Championships she added a further five gold, four silver and three bronze medals to her haul.

Tanni has written two books: *My Autobiography* and *Aim High*, and does motivational speaking. She was voted BBC Wales' Sports Personality of the year three times and named BBC Sports Personality of the Year and Sunday Times Sports Woman of the Year. Tanni has been recognised by numerous institutions and holds a staggering 28 honorary

degrees. Since 2015 she has served as Chancellor of Northumbria University.

In 2005 Tanni was made a Dame for her services to sport, and in 2010 created a life peer, becoming Baroness Grey-Thompson of Eaglescliffe, in the County of Durham. As a working cross-bench peer she sits on numerous All Parliamentary Party (APPG) groups, and is especially active on issues of equality, disability rights, welfare reform and sports.

Tanni is Chair of ukactive and a board member at the BBC, the London Legacy Development Corporation, Sportsaid Foundation, and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. She is married to fellow wheelchair athlete Dr Ian Thompson.

Tanni said: "Attitudes toward disabled people have come a long way but there's still much to do. The Power List shows the huge variance of disabled people in a wide variety of roles and shows the different pathways you can take." ♦

## Keep in touch



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### Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson

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# Sport



## Aaron Kerr

### Assisted Runner

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Aaron is an assisted runner and ambassador for the sport in the UK and Ireland. Along with his mum and dad, Team Kerr has broken down barriers in the running community, proving that with the right support you can achieve great things. Aaron often takes on courses never attempted before by anyone using a running chair, and has completed over 140 running events, including almost 40 marathons, in his custom built running chair pushed by his mum and dad.

Aaron has complex needs, is a full-time wheelchair user and had a kidney transplant in 2010, but this hasn't held him back from pursuing his love of running. Aaron is non-verbal and is affectionately known throughout the running community for his hugs and headlocks. At the 2016 Dublin Marathon he was awarded the Lord Mayor's Medal, voted for by his fellow runners: the first person with complex needs to receive this award.

Team Kerr say: "Aaron faces daily challenges, but always makes time for others. His loving

and infectious personality is well known throughout the running community and a warm welcome is always guaranteed. He continues to inspire and encourage his fellow runners at every event he attends."

In April 2019 Aaron participated in the Greater Manchester Marathon, leading to other assisted runners entering the event for the first time. This year Aaron and Team Kerr were also in the headlines for unhappier reasons: the London Marathon refused to let Aaron participate. His family spoke out against this discrimination. Together they campaign for inclusion in sport for people with complex needs.

Aaron and his family set up Aaron's Army, a charity that raises funds to purchase and donate running chairs to help other assisted runners meet their goals. Aaron's Army has raised over £10k and was nominated for the 2019 Running Awards. ♦



## Andy Barrow

Paralympian and professional speaker

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Andy Barrow is best known as a wheelchair rugby athlete and inspirational speaker. At the age of 17, he sustained life-changing injuries in a rugby game and became paralysed from the chest down with limited use of his hands. Following his rehabilitation, Andy discovered (murderball) in 1998 and made his international debut in 2002.

Andy, a triple Paralympian, competed at 11 major championships and won three European gold medals. He captained the Great Britain wheelchair rugby team from 2005 to 2010. Among his proudest moments was leading the team out in Beijing 2008 and finishing his career on a high at the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

After retiring from competitive sport, Andy worked as an athlete mentor for the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, before pursuing his own projects as a speaker and mentor. He now speaks to audiences worldwide on themes of performance and diversity.

Closer to home, Andy trains UK Sport funded athletes to deliver maximum impact during their public appearances and is a trustee of Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby, the NGB of the game that changed his life over 20 years ago.

Throughout his career, Andy has worked towards promoting a positive image of disability and particularly enjoys speaking about the strength of diversity and celebrating your points of difference.

Outside of speaking, Andy works as a consultant in the aviation and rail industries, where he uses his extensive travel experience to improve the accessibility of public transport and assisted travel services.

On hearing of his nomination, Andy said, "I'm honoured to be included in this year's Power 100 and want to use this platform to further influence attitudes towards disability in all walks of life." ♦



## Anoushé Husain

Paraclimber and public speaker

Anoushé has always been interested in both charity work and sports. She works as a civil servant, but also fits in paraclimbing, public speaking and blogging as she works to enable others to participate in sports. Anoushé approaches parasport from multiple angles: she was born without a lower right arm and also lives with multiple health conditions. In 2017 Anoushé became an ambassador for Ehlers-Danlos Support UK, and through this and her work as an ambassador for Limb Power, has helped to normalise the topic of chronic illness and inspired people to take part in sporting activity.

After her cancer diagnosis in 2013 Anoushé took up paraclimbing to help with her rehabilitation and went on to achieve a ranking of second in her category in the UK in 2016. As her interest in the sport grew she wanted to correct the lack of opportunities for people with disabilities. This led her to co-found Paraclimbing London in 2018: an initiative to make climbing more accessible for anyone with a disability or long term health condition.

Away from work and sport Anoushé blogs and also speaks publicly about the challenges facing disabled people and how disability and invisible illness are perceived. She also about facing fears and talking about the things that we, as a society, aren't great at discussing, such as mental health. She deliberately writes in a way that it can speak to a variety of audiences regardless of people's gender, disability or background.

In 2017 Anoushé won the Asian Woman of Achievement for Sport Award and, as part of the Sunday Times Sportswoman of the Year Awards, received the accolade of a Helen Rollason Award. Last year Anoushé was recognised in the Sunday Times Alternative Rich List. Anoushé also supports deprived teenage girls to climb and develop self-confidence through the Grit&Rock Foundation.◆



## Colin Duthie

Racing driver and mentor

Colin has worked across disability sports for over 25 years - from handcycling to horse riding to motor racing - participating himself and helping others to. His motto is "Dare to be different, determined to succeed."

At the age of 20 Colin Duthie sustained a number of severe injuries in a motorcycle accident, including an above knee amputation.

After a long recovery period, his wife encouraged him to try volunteering and disability sports. He began at Prestwick Disabled Persons Swimming Club in 1987. Since 1994 he's been involved in the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA). Colin has represented the UK as part of the British Para-dressage team and is currently Chair of his local RDA group.

Colin became a sports development officer with South Ayrshire Council, encouraging other disabled people to become more active. He has established and helped run

numerous organisations and sport clubs, such as Ayrshire Sportsability and South Ayrshire Powerchair Football Club. Colin also actively fundraises for these many organisations, and over his decades of work he has also had the pleasure of watching young disabled athletes he has supported going on to compete internationally, including at the Paralympics.

In 2016 Colin helped to set up establish Disability Motorsport Scotland and now combines being a trustee and coach for the charity with competing as a disabled racing driver. He became the first disabled driver to race in Super Lap Scotland in 2017 and in his first ever race season he finished fourth. He is also the first disabled person in the UK to have qualified as a Motorsport UK Level 2 Coach and now uses his skills to give others the opportunity to learn more about and take part in the sport. He says: "your hardest times often lead to the greatest moments of your life, never give up!" ♦





## Ellie Robinson MBE

Gold medal swimmer

Ellie Robinson MBE shot to international fame in 2016 when millions watched her swagger on stage in a giant coat at the Rio de Janeiro Paralympics, taking home the gold medal for the s6 50m butterfly. She has gone on to win seven gold, seven bronze and four silver medals before the age of 18.

Swimming since age four, Ellie was at Northampton Swimming Club when watching her now-teammate Ellie Simmonds at the London 2012 Paralympics inspired her. Ellie debuted for Great Britain at the 2016 IPC Swimming European Championships, where she won three bronze and one silver medal in her first international meet.

Ellie has a rare type of dwarfism, Cartilage Hair Hypoplasia, which can come with health complications. In November 2012 she was diagnosed with Perthes hip disease which requires her to undergo daily physiotherapy.

In 2016, after the Rio Paralympics, she was named the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year. Ellie was made a Member of the

Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2017 New Year Honours list.

Just days after starting her GCSE exams, Ellie took gold and silver at the 2017 British Para-Swimming International Meet and continued to go for gold in 2018, winning the women's butterfly 50m at the World Para Swimming European Championships in Dublin and at the Australian Commonwealth Games. She continues to balance swimming training with her education and regularly visits schools to talk about her career and overcoming adversity to achieve your dreams.

Ellie says: "I'll keep this brief and try to make it worthwhile, Take your biggest passion and make it your style, Billions in the world, who's attention we think we need, However, it's our character we feed off and our soul's energy, Be known for your aura, whichever one you choose, When in a world so fast paced it's simple faces we lose, So in a time so focused on impacting the world, Differentiate yourself and soon you'll be heard." ♦



## Haseeb Ahmad

### GBR Blind World Record Ironman

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Haseeb Ahmad is a triathlon gold medallist who set a Blind world record in the Ironman Triathlon. He has also worked in equality and diversity for 25 years. At the age of 10, Haseeb lost his sight due to the incurable condition Retinitis Pigmentosa. However this was only diagnosed at age 17.

Haseeb has dedicated his working life to developing equality and diversity programmes, making services and buildings more accessible. As Head of Equality and Diversity at Nottingham City Council he took the Council to the highest level of the Equality Framework for Local Government. In his current role as Head of EDI at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Haseeb establishes community and staff engagement networks, involving disabled people in key decisions and improving access to career opportunities.

Haseeb joined the Great Britain para-triathlon team, in 2009, at 38 years old. His accolades include two World Championship

and three European medals. He ran the 2014 London Triathlon in under three hours and went on to compete in Ironman challenges. In 2016 he broke the Guinness World Record for the fastest Blind Ironman.

In 2017 Haseeb wrote his autobiography 'From Blindman to Ironman'. He gives motivational talks, mentors other disabled athletes, helps blind athletes find sighted guides and also trains guides.

He says: "When I first was registered Blind at the age of 17 in 1987 I wondered what opportunities lay ahead of me. The future was extremely uncertain. If I knew then what I know now I might have entered the world of sport sooner. However, my lived experience has shaped the individual I am now. This is the very reason why I wrote my book and shared my powerful story; in order to inspire and motivate others. The depths of our potential as people with disabilities is limitless. I am proof of this fact." ♦



## Jamie Weller

Accountant, athlete, actor, achiever

Jamie joined the Royal Navy aged 17, following a life-long dream to work with naval jets and aircraft carriers. He trained as an aeronautical engineer and was posted to a sea harrier squadron. However, at 19, Jamie lost sight in both eyes bringing his naval career to an end.

Jamie was told his life was over, but took this as a challenge to break down perceptions of what blind people can achieve. He retrained, studying mathematics at Warwick, and became a qualified tax consultant. Jamie was the first registered blind member of the Chartered Institute of Taxation and worked in the high-pressure world of Deloitte for many years, both for clients and teaching tax to graduates. In 2012 he carried the Olympic torch during the London Olympics relay.

In 2014 Jamie joined the Armed Forces Para-Snowsport Team and represented GB as an alpine ski racer. After a bad crash Jamie decided to ski uphill and helped found the GB para cross country and biathlon team,

shooting with an audio weapon. He has taken part in the Invictus Games winning four bronze medals in cycling and track running.

Jamie has been supported by Blind Veterans UK who he fundraises for and has served as a Trustee. He also supports Help for Heroes, including a fundraising trek to Mount Everest's Base Camp and Big Battle bike Ride. Jamie is also a speaker and ambassador for Guide Dogs UK, Blesma, and resilience initiative Making Generation R. Jamie is currently training to become a life coach and has taken up acting appearing in a theatre production with his guide dog, Freddie.

Jamie says "Being blind is a daily challenge. I manage my blindness; it does not define or manage me. It's a real frustration but I solve the problems and then get on with my life. Hope, determination and resilience can surpass all else." ♦



## John Churcher

Deafblind adventurer

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John has been a member of the GB paraclimbing team for six years and is former world number three in his climbing category. John has Ushers Syndrome which affects both his sight and his hearing. He is deafblind with around 3% vision and 50% hearing.

John loves taking on challenges in the great outdoors. He says: "Being blind or having a disability doesn't mean you can't have adventures." In 2015, as part of the Eiger Paraclimb team, he became the first blind person to successfully summit the Eiger - one of the most notoriously difficult and dangerous mountain climbs.

In 2017 John was recognised as Birmingham Amateur Sportsperson of the year and was the overall winner of the International Federation of Sports Climbing (IFSC) paraclimbing in the B2 category (less than 5% vision). By 2018 John was the highest ranked British male in the B2 category and was recognised as one of survivalist Bear Grylls' heroes.

John uses his experience to challenge perceptions about what is possible and encourage participation in paraclimbing. He has visited dozens of schools and helped run climbing sessions with a mobile climbing wall. John is a qualified Climbing Wall Instructor - the first blind person to achieve this.

John uses social media to share his adventures and encourage other visually impaired people to know it's possible and take on their own. Along with his best friend and guide Lauren, John is one of the T-Shirt Twins - taking on a huge variety of outdoor activities - often along with John's guide dog Daisy. Their website shares write-ups and videos of their glider flights, dry ski slopes, ice skating, tree climbing, kayaking, tandem bike riding and 84 mile coastal walks - as well as, of course, climbing.

John is a Trustee of the charity Deafblind UK. ♦



## Matt Hampson

### Matt Hampson Foundation

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Matt Hampson (known as Hambro) is known and respected throughout the rugby community for his dedication to helping others. Matt was a player for Leicester Tigers and England Under-21 rugby teams when a 2005 training accident resulted in life-changing injuries. He is now paralysed from the shoulders down and breathes through a ventilator.

In 2011, Matt set up the Matt Hampson Foundation - a charity which helps young people with disabilities acquired through sports injuries. The Foundation holds a bi-annual ball and fundraising dinners with rugby professionals, including patron Mike Tindall.

In 2018, after years of hard work, Matt's Foundation opened the Get Busy Living Centre in Leicestershire. The facility cost around £2 million to build and offers physiotherapy, hydrotherapy and help with specialist equipment. The centre is open five days a week to support people with both the mental and physical recovery from injury - including peer support and mentoring.

Matt says: "We're busier than ever. We've got massive aspiration for what we do, like building accommodation so beneficiaries and families can stay with us. 2020 should be an even bigger and better year."

Matt's memoir *Engage: The Fall and Rise of Matt Hampson* was published by Simon & Schuster in 2012. The book, co-written with Paul Kimmage, featured in the national press and sports bestseller lists. The book details his journey following the accident in unflinching detail, but also with humour and lots of personality.

Matt is a mentor and gives motivational talks to businesses and young people around the country. He's an ambassador for the Rugby Football Union's Injured Players Fund and Restart Rugby (the Professional Rugby Association's charity), and a Patron of Special Effect - a charity which helps disabled children use technology for communication and fun. Through the Foundation Matt supports a number of Paralympians and potential Paralympians, as well as the Leicester Tigers Wheelchair Rugby Team. ♦



## Stefan Hoggan

Retired para athlete and LGBTQI+ activist

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Stefan Hoggan is a retired para athlete, activist, swimming and triathlon coach and mentor who represented Scotland and Great Britain at five World Triathlon events. He is an ambassador for Disability Sport Fife and Scottish Disability Sport, encouraging young disabled people to get and stay physically active.

Stefan began swimming at age three. He was born without a lower right arm and took up para-triathlon in 2015 after missing out on competing at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in swimming. He finished sixth at the WTE triathlon in Detroit.

At 24, having represented Scotland for over 10 years, Stefan retired from professional sport. He now coaches the next generation of competitive swimmers at Carnegie Swimming Club.

Stefan was part of STV's award-winning Live at Five programme and in 2017 starred in a Scottish Government campaign to encourage more business owners to recognise the benefits of employing disabled people.

Stefan is prominent in the campaign for Scottish independence and also campaigns passionately against bullying. He shares his own experiences, on social media and in schools, of overcoming stigma and building resilience. He says: "I believe that everyone, no matter their age, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity has the right to live their lives free from bullying, discrimination and hate, and that's what I'll always continue to fight for."

In 2018 Stefan championed the Scottish Time for Inclusive Education campaign which saw Scotland become the first country in the world to introduce LGBTQI+ inclusive sex education lessons. He is the patron of Pop'n'Olly, an LGBTQI+ educational resource whose videos and books are used in UK primary schools to teach about equality and diversity. Stefan sits on Scottish Disability Sport's Young Person's Sport Panel and is an ambassador of LEAP Sports Scotland, challenging discrimination about sexual orientation and gender identity within sport. ◆



## Tony Taylor

### Level Playing Field

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Tony is the Chair of Level Playing Field, a campaigning and advisory organisation for disabled sports supporters. The charity began with a focus on physical access to football stadiums and has grown to include a variety of sports.

Tony says: “I know from personal experience as a disabled person just what a difference attending sporting events really makes. At Level Playing Field we hear so many positive stories from people whose lives have been changed for the good through being able to follow their team.”

Tony runs an independent management consultancy and is an expert in sales, marketing, operational management, leadership and corporate governance. In his role as Chair of Level Playing Field Tony leverages these same skills to create significant improvements for disabled sports fans.

Under Tony’s leadership Level Playing Field has achieved huge milestones including a

commitment from the Premier League that all Premier League football clubs will comply with guidelines produced by UEFA and the Centre for Accessible Football in Europe (CAFE) where Tony is also a director.




This year Tony was in the news for less happy reasons. Returning from a CAFE conference with his wife, Tony was left standing in an unheated Heathrow Airport corridor waiting for the wheelchair he had booked. After over 30 minutes Tony collapsed and required hospital treatment. These incidents are far too common, so Tony and his family went to the press to increase pressure on airports and airlines to improve their services to disabled customers.

To create change Tony works with media, government departments, and NGOs like the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Tony works to make football clubs accept that they have responsibilities to disabled fans to remove barriers. As Tony says “Access for all is not aspirational - it’s a fundamental right and our work continues.” ♦

## Keep in touch



### Aaron Kerr

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### Matt Hampson

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### Stefan Hoggan

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# Judge's Choice



## Corie Brown

### Continuity Announcer and Voiceover Artist

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As a Channel 4 Announcer Corie Brown writes and voices insightful, distinctive continuity across the broadcaster's portfolio. She is also co-Chair of 4Purple – the disability staff network.

Working in transmission since 1998, Corie is expert in the technical, editorial and operational aspects of, what can be, a very high-pressure environment. Before Channel 4, she worked for the BBC after starting out in radio.

With a severe sight impairment, Corie uses assistive software. "It's now widely recognised that effective workplace adjustments help organisations find and retain great people" she explains "but when I started working attitudes were very different. No-one was really talking about disability, so neither was I. I put my own adjustments in place, because I didn't want to be perceived negatively. Thankfully, experience has since taught me that being open and asking for what I need can be hugely empowering."

Corie sees the build-up to London 2012 as a pivotal moment - with Channel 4 becoming the Paralympic broadcaster

there was suddenly focus on disability issues. As one of few staff with lived experience, she became more vocal.

"It's been an organic journey" she says "and as Channel 4 has grown in disability confidence, I have too."

Highlights include: spear-heading an internal This is Me campaign; challenging senior leaders; encouraging work on accessible platforms and content; and helping to shape inclusive culture through 4Purple.

Last year Corie featured in the Disability Confident campaign and was invited to 10 Downing Street to talk about overcoming barriers to inclusion in the workplace. This year she helped the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and spoke at Microsoft on Global Accessibility Awareness Day.

Corie is also a mentor, alumni of the National Youth Theatre and a Trustee of Living Paintings – a charity producing 'touch to see' books for blind and partially sighted children and adults. ♦



## Deborah Williams

### Creative Diversity Network

Deborah Williams has over 30 years' experience in the arts and has created and run equality and diversity programmes for Arts Council England and the British Film Institute. She works to challenge stereotypes and inaction about diversity and creates tangible systemic change to increase representation in the arts and creative and cultural industries. She explains: "Being the ultimate other, enables me to practice what I preach about diversity being core to creative success in business or pleasure."

In the year 2000 Deborah founded the production company, Reality Productions, as the lead artist she produced and toured works internationally.

Deborah has been formally recognised in the House of Commons for her work at the BFI by the Minister for Culture, Ed Vaziey. This year Deborah has given evidence at the House of Lords communications select committee on public service broadcasting in the age of video on demand.

Since 2016 Deborah has been the Executive Director of the Creative Diversity Network (CDN), which works to improve diversity across UK broadcasting in front of the camera and behind it, and has membership from all UK broadcasters. Under Deborah's leadership CDN developed Diamond, a world-leading monitoring system that allows media companies to collect diversity data on their programmes. Diamond is already used by most UK broadcasters and has prompted CDN's 'Doubling Disability' project which aims to double the percentage of disabled people off screen in the industry by 2020.

Deborah is a world-renowned keynote speaker. Over the past year she has spoken internationally in Berlin at the Berlinale and in Australia at the Fair Play symposium. She has also worked on the Ubumuntu Arts Festival, which showcases the work of disabled artists in Rwanda. ♦



## Gavin Harding MBE

Politician and advocate

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In 2011 Gavin made history as the first person in the UK with a learning disability to be elected a local councillor. Four years later he made national news as the first UK mayor with a learning disability. He also works for NHS England as a Learning Disability Advisor.

Since the 1990s Gavin's been advocating for the rights of people with learning disabilities and autism, driven by his own experience of Assessment and Treatment Units (ATUs). He joined advocacy group People First and works to ensure ATU patients are not over-medicated and receive high-quality, respectful care. He's also on the committee investigating private hospital Winterbourne View, which was on a 2011 Panorama programme for the shocking physical and psychological abuse of residents.

Gavin is a councillor for the 14,000 residents of Selby Northward, currently serving his third term. He was Deputy Mayor in 2014 and elected Mayor the year after. His priorities including better policing, more facilities for disabilities and young people,

and attracting a wider range of local shops. Gavin said: "I campaigned for a pelican crossing on a busy road, along with 60 people protesting and blocking the road."

Gavin strives to embed reasonable adjustment policies. In NHS England he has made huge differences in how people with autism or learning difficulties are recruited and supported, including creating accessible or easy read job application forms. Gavin co- leads on quality assurance, runs focus groups for in-patients' secure units and sits on Yorkshire & Humber transforming care executive board.

Gavin was honoured with an MBE in 2014 and won a Learning Disability & Autism Award in 2018. He Co-Chaired the Transforming Care Assurance Board with the Health Minister and published guidance for the Ministry of Justice. Gavin has also created a local self-advocacy group - Voices for People. ♦



## Jackie Downer MBE

### The Quality Company

Jackie has been working on behalf of other adults with learning disabilities since the 1990s, when she decided she wanted to do more than attend the day centre.

Jackie went to college and was helped to become a self-advocate by her support worker Linnett and Lambeth Accord (now 336, the disability hub for Lambeth). For seven years Jackie worked for Lambeth Accord as a project worker, supporting people with learning disabilities throughout the borough. She then worked at a People First group, helping people with little verbal communication.

With support Jackie has written a number of picture books to help people with learning difficulties, or limited speech, to advocate for themselves. The books, co-written with Sheila Hollins, are part of the Beyond Words series. One of Jackie's books, *Speaking Up For Myself* addresses the 'double whammy' of discrimination experienced by people with learning disabilities who are also ethnic minorities.

Jackie has advised numerous organisations on disability issues as a consultant, and is a known expert in her field. With her carer taking dictation, Jackie creates training materials and meeting agendas, and gives talks.

Jackie is now the Managing Director of the Quality Company, which makes sure people have the support they need and want to live the lives they choose. The Quality Company is part of Thera Group and a member of the Association of Quality Checkers. It employs people with learning disabilities throughout the organisation, including as assessors: using their lived experience receiving support to know what good support looks like.

In 2002, Jackie was awarded an MBE for services to people with learning disabilities in London. She continues to advocate for disabled people, including being a vocal critic of the cuts to independent living budgets. ♦



## Dr Mark Brooks

Hate Crime Campaigner, Dimensions

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Dr Mark Brooks has worked in the disability field for decades, campaigning for the rights of people with a learning disability.

Mark was a project worker for Values into Action for over ten years where he campaigned for people to live ordinary lives in ordinary communities and provided training that promoted the rights of people with learning disabilities. Mark joined the charity in the late 90s, leaving in 2009 to become a Quality Auditor for Dimensions.

Mark is now a campaigns advisor at Dimensions. Most recently he is involved in campaigns aiming to raise awareness of hate crime directed towards people with learning disabilities and autism. As part of Dimensions #ImWithSam campaign, Mark has shared his own experiences of experiencing hate crime and spoken on BBC TV and radio about the need for more to be done to stop it.

A shocking 73% of people with learning disabilities and autism have experience of hate crime, which can range from cyber

bullying and manipulation to physical attacks. The #ImWithSam campaign is a long-term plan to make sure there is greater awareness, better support for victims and specific changes in law to further recognise and combat hate crime against people with learning disabilities. Mark said: "We must get the message out there that people with learning disabilities are being targeted by hate. This must stop. People must be brought to justice and hate crime towards people with learning disabilities enshrined in law."

Mark has spoken at the Government's All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Hate Crime, contributing his expertise.

Most recently Mark has taken his work to India as an Ambassador for IPCAI (Institute for Person Centred Approaches in India) and, to reward his life-long efforts on hate crime, received an honorary doctorate in law from the University of Kent. ♦



## Sophie Morgan

Journalist, presenter, artist and activist

Sophie first appeared on our TV screens in 2005, as part of Ade Adepitan's Beyond Boundaries TV show, where 11 disabled people trekked across Nicaragua. Sophie at that point had only been using a wheelchair for two years: she was in a traffic accident the day after her A-level results, sustaining a T6 spinal cord injury.

Sophie studied art at Brighton and Goldsmiths, before appearing on Britain's Missing Top Model in 2008. The reality TV show looked to crown a winner from a group of eight disabled models. The experience led Sophie to design the mannequal - a wheelchair-based chair for shop mannequins. The product was created to fit seamlessly into shop displays, both improving visibility and signalling to disabled customers - and their friends and families - that retailers accessible and welcoming to disabled customers.

The mannequal was used in a number of central London stores, particularly around the Paralympics, but Sophie was frustrated at the lack of traction from retailers on an

ongoing basis. Ten years on, and Sophie is still working on the mannequal, and has some promising projects in the works with some major retailers.

Sophie has also modelled for a number of designers including for Stella McCartney's Adidas capsule collection My 2012.

In 2012 Sophie had a small role in presenting the London 2012 Paralympics, leading to more presenting work, including the BBC documentary The World's Worst Place to be Disabled? In 2015. By 2016 Sophie was co-presenting the Rio Paralympic games live every day in the primetime 4:00-7:00pm slot. She will be presenting the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics next year.

Sophie is a member of Ofcom's content board. She is also a patron of Scope and an ambassador for Leonard Cheshire Disability. She also supports the charities Human Rights Watch and Lumos. ◆

## Keep in touch



**Corie Brown**

 [coriebrown.co.uk](http://coriebrown.co.uk)

 [@CorieB](https://twitter.com/CorieB)



**Deborah Williams**

 [creativitydiversitynetwork.com](http://creativitydiversitynetwork.com)

 [@cdnrebs](https://twitter.com/cdnrebs)

 [@tweetcdn](https://twitter.com/tweetcdn)



**Gavin Harding MBE**


 <http://www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk/the-council/councillors/>

 [@gavhardingmbe](https://twitter.com/gavhardingmbe)

 [/gavin-nigel-xavier-harding-mbe-587247113](https://www.linkedin.com/in/gavin-nigel-xavier-harding-mbe-587247113)



**Jackie Downer MBE**

 <https://www.thera.co.uk/about/companies/the-quality-company>



**Dr Mark Brooks**

 [dimensions-uk.org](http://dimensions-uk.org)



**Sophie Morgan**

 [sophiemorgan.com](http://sophiemorgan.com)

 [mannequal.co.uk](http://mannequal.co.uk)

 [/SophMorg](https://www.facebook.com/SophMorg)

 [@sophlmorg](https://www.instagram.com/sophlmorg)

 [@sophmorgtv](https://twitter.com/sophmorgtv)



# The Top 10



## Paul Smyth

### Barclays' Head of Digital Accessibility

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Paul began working at Barclays as a visually impaired accountant and has grown through the company to become an international expert and thought-leader on accessibility.

Paul helped create their disability staff network, which embedded accessibility into the organisation, including disabled people in user testing everything from online banking to building refurbishments. In 2012 Paul became Barclays' Head of Digital Accessibility where he founded the Accessibility team, addressing technological barriers faced by older and disabled staff and customers, creating products which are more than just compliant but actively accessible.

In 2013, with RNIB and British Dyslexia Association, Paul's team created personalised high visibility debit cards with bright colours, clear arrows and tactile notches to make it easier to read or insert into cash machines for the 20,000+ customers using them. Barclays' website and mobile app now undergo disabled user testing to ensure a better experience for a greater number of customers.

Paul explains: "Many organisations are waking up to the multitude of benefits that accessibility brings – reducing legal risks, bolstering brand, improving customer experience and colleague productivity. It's an exciting time for the next wave of disabled talent to not just be consulted but to lead the charge."

Harnessing Barclays' ambition to become the most accessible FTSE 100 company, Paul leverages their influence to create change far beyond their own customer base. Barclays became a founding member of the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP) and sponsors several accessibility conferences including TechSharePro and weekly Twitter AXSChat – democratising know-how.

Paul sits on several boards and advisory panels for disability charities and this year was appointed the Web Accessibility disability sector champion by the UK Government's Disability Minister. He's an active member of the Business Disability Forum's Technology Taskforce, collaborating to create and share best practices between organisations wishing to be disability confident. ◆



## Lucy Watts MBE

### Health Advocate and Activist

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Lucy Watts is a 25 year old with international reach. She founded the Palliative Care Voices network and set up the charity YACCA (Young Adults Complex Condition Alliance). Lucy is determined that all young people with complex medical needs and life-limiting illnesses have the tools and support to live rich and fulfilling lives.

Lucy has a rare form of mitochondrial disease and has been disabled since age 14. When creating her end of life plan she knew she wanted to make a difference with the time she has left. She found her calling when she was invited to speak at a reception in Parliament. She has become a sought after speaker and consultant, praised for her ability to translate complex policy and legislation topics - like transition to adulthood and disability and sexuality - into direct lived experience examples.

Lucy says: "Life is what you make of it, so make it amazing. My work gives me the chance to make constructive use

of my experiences to benefit others; I have found my purpose in life, and I am contributing to society in my own way."

Lucy requires round the clock care from an intensive care nurse, needs intravenous nutrition and has an assistance dog named Molly - who she trained herself with help from Dog A.I.D. Sometimes working via videolink, Lucy co-leads research projects and sits on a huge number of committees and healthcare groups. She is an ambassador for five organisations and a member of the NHS Assembly and forum groups for Hospice UK and the British Medical Journal.

Lucy works to ensure palliative care is recognised as a human right and included in health coverage internationally. Last year the Director-General of the World Health Organisation met her personally. Lucy has an Honourary Masters degree from the Open University and an MBE. ♦



## Justin Levene

Activist and wheelchair athlete

Justin Levene is an international wheelchair athlete who hit global headlines when footage emerged of him dragging himself along the airport floor. His campaign for independence and accessibility at Luton Airport was described as a 'watershed moment for disability'.

In August 2017 Justin was returning from Croatia when his wheelchair was lost. Staff at Luton Airport had no replacement wheelchairs and the only option was an assisted chair. Most airports have self-propelled wheelchairs or motorised buggies, so Justin was surprised and angered the only option was a chair he would have to be strapped into with someone else pushing – an option he found degrading.

Justin chose to drag himself along the floor rather than be pushed and spent the next year campaigning for the airport to improve its mobility services. They refused to change their policies, so Justin began a lawsuit.

Justin released footage of how he'd had to make his way across the airport on his

hands. The images made headlines around the world and gained support from high-profile wheelchair users including BBC security correspondent Frank Gardner and paralympians Anne Wafula Strike and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson. The airport rapidly changed its policy – including self-propelled wheelchairs and a loan scheme.

Justin is also a motivational speaker and trains and mentors other disabled people. For the last year, he's been doing charity work providing wheelchairs and mobility equipment in Moldova and mentoring the country's young children and orphans.

Justin said: "I feel incredibly humbled to be included on a list with so many deeply passionate and tireless campaigners for equality and inclusion. The changes for which we all advocate for are slowly happening, but we are still a long way off. It is only through enhanced awareness and education that we will begin to see a more inclusive society for everyone." ♦



## Jane Hatton

Evenbreak

Jane is an award-winning social entrepreneur who has worked in diversity and inclusion for over 25 years. Her expertise cuts three ways: as a diversity consultant, as an employer, and as a disabled person. Jane founded the recruitment company Evenbreak which connects inclusive employers with talented disabled people.

Jane says: “Disabled people form a pool of amazing, and largely untapped, talent, who still face a wide range of barriers to entering and thriving within the workplace. If we can remove those barriers, everyone will benefit – employers and disabled candidates alike.”

Jane’s career has focused on creating that change and working with employers to embrace the benefits that disabled employees can bring. Jane has an MSc in Human Resource Development and is an executive member of the Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative (RIDl). She is also a Fellow of both the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and the Royal Society of Arts.

In 2011 Jane set up Evenbreak to connect inclusive employers with talented disabled candidates. The company employs ten people who are all disabled, and their job board is developed to the highest possible level of accessibility (AAA).

Jane has written four books on diversity and inclusion in work. Her most recent title *A Dozen Brilliant Reasons to Employ Disabled People: Why successful businesses see inclusion as an asset rather than a problem* was published in 2017. Her next book will be published shortly.

Jane has won numerous awards including Diversity Champion at the Excellence in Diversity Awards, Newcomer of the Year in the OnRec Awards, Disability Best Practice in APSCo Awards for Excellence and was a finalist in the Stelios Disabled Entrepreneurs Award in both 2008 and 2017. She is the Patron of the Inclusive Skills Competitions run by Natspec and appeared in the BBC documentary *Employable Me*. ♦



## Dr Gregory Burke

AccessAble

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While studying at University of Cambridge, Gregory became increasingly frustrated by poor access and people's attitudes. When he looked for accessibility information about places he wanted, or needed, to go the best-case scenario was a few unhelpful words that only resulted in more uncertainty. This led Gregory to co-ordinate a national consultation. This unprecedented project recorded disabled people's experiences accessing towns, cities and destinations.

The feedback received from over 100 different disability groups led Gregory to launch DisabledGo.com in 2002. The website gave disabled people and carers accurate, detailed accessibility information to assess for themselves whether a place would be accessible for them.

By 2009, after a decade hearing other people's stories of disability discrimination, Gregory decided to retrain as a lawyer so he could leverage an even bigger impact. He studied law while still serving as the full-time CEO of DisabledGo.com and was called to the Bar in 2012. Within five years he was Head of

Employment Law at 7 Bedford Row, leading a team of 28 barristers. He works across disability, equality and employment law cases and has trained other lawyers on disability compensation.

Gregory has also mentored other disabled people and featured on radio and TV numerous times including BBC Breakfast, Radio 4 Today, BBC Business and Wake Up to Money.

By 2018 DisabledGo was being used by over 1.5 million people each year to plan a visit or trip out. Gregory, and his team, took the opportunity to take the organisation to the next level launching a new website, App and brand – AccessAble.

AccessAble is now helping over two million people and working with 350 clients including NHS trusts, universities, local authorities and companies including Marks and Spencer, Odeon and the Premier League. The App is transforming how people find and use accessibility information, enabling people to find places accessible to them on the move. ◆



5

**Caroline Casey**

Level Playing Field

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Caroline Casey wants 500 national and multinational, private sector corporations to put disability on their business leadership agendas, and she's moving mountains to make it happen. Caroline has spoken about disability on huge international stages like Davos, the Clinton Global Initiative and TED. Her latest initiative, The Valuable 500, is a global movement.

"I'm mid-campaign right now: I've got to get 500 CEOs to sign up before Davos 2020. I live, eat and sleep this."

"Valuable 500 is about leadership accountability and elevating disability to board level. Leaders' choices create cultures but, according to EY research 56% of boards have never discussed the word 'disability'. The reason we're not seeing accelerated change is because we've not seen CEO engagement. They're not aware of the absolute value of the disability community."

Caroline is going beyond the business case and appealing to the personal side of leadership using EY research that cites "7% of CEOs have lived experience of disability, 4 out of 5 are hiding it." This is something Caroline relates to.

Caroline only learned she was legally blind aged 17, though her parents had known since she was a baby. They hid her disability from her, to avoid the stigma and perceived limited horizons.

"I think there's a difference between acquired and congenital disability and that's about life expectations. If you're born with a disability people often limit your potential or choices from the outset."

When she 'acquired' her disability, Caroline chose to continue to hide it. She studied at University College Dublin and tried numerous

careers before going to business school and landing a management consultant job in the high-pressured world of Accenture. Two years in Caroline temporarily lost more of her vision and had to 'come out' to her employers as visually impaired.

"I've had an odd journey which has allowed me many perspectives. I was born with it, acquired it at 17, only consciously owned it at 28, and learning to accept it and myself is an ongoing process."

She was told to take time off, so Caroline decided she needed a dramatic change. Based on a childhood love of the Jungle Book she decided to travel across India on an elephant. Her personal quest became a fundraising initiative and took nine months to organise. This unusual story drummed up plenty of media attention and raised enough funds for 6,000 cataract operations with SightSavers International. During this time, she became aware of the extraordinary disability inequality crisis.

From the outset she believed business was an essential part of the solution, but her initial attempts fell flat. "I wrote to over 100 corporations and all of them said 'I'm sorry, we don't do disability'."

Caroline came back from her trip with an international profile and a new mission: to ensure disability was integrated meaningfully into business and not as corporate social responsibility or charity.

"We are 1.3 billion consumers, suppliers, employees and members of the community. We are valuable. We are a market. A source of innovation. An under-recognised resource." Over the years she created several initiatives to engage leadership influence, working with over 450 companies and CEOs and half a million business leaders globally.



Seventeen years on, now armed with honorary doctorates, ample awards, and her own research, she launched #valuable, the precursor to The Valuable 500. Frustrated at the slow rate of change, Caroline approached 53 companies to make it happen. Three got on board and 50 said it wasn't a priority.

"90% of companies claim to be committed to inclusion but only 4% considered disability – that's not diversity and inclusion. Inclusion is inclusion of everyone. And leaders are accountable" explains Caroline.

At Davos this year Caroline launched The Valuable 500 with her Chairman Paul Polman, Virgin Media and Omnicom. It was a historic moment putting disability centre stage of one of the greatest business platforms on the planet.

She set a global challenge to return in 2020 with the signatures of CEOs who had put disability on their board agendas and made a commitment to action.

Aware that it's the combination of stories and statistics that compel people to action, The Valuable 500 created the #diversish film with AMV which won a Cannes Lion.

"This film is about holding a mirror to corporate inclusion without shaming anyone. We need to be aware of what we're doing or not doing, before we can change it.

"Whenever I get in front of a CEO and explain what this is all about, they say: "why wouldn't I?" The big issue - is getting to them."

"It was October 1999 when I came out of the disability closet – that's 20 years ago. At times I've felt so broken because I've not done more. But it's the people I've met along the way that have kept me doing this. The Valuable 500 has an incredible group of allies, partners

and a tribe of collaborators. Collectively we are after one goal - full human inclusion. This collective power is contagiousness, it cannot be ignored."

"Improving disability and accessibility performance is about designing a world that's fit for all, with a benefit for business, society and people with disabilities. It's often forgotten that text messaging was developed for the hearing impaired and the remote control designed for the visually impaired. The untapped creativity and resourcefulness of people with different lived experience is simply crazy."

Caroline has spoken in recent years about the cost of trying to be perfect and not asking for help. "It's not healthy. I used to be proud of being a 'trucker', but I'm realising that it's powerful to be vulnerable. I guess that's what self-acceptance is."

And though she says: "My heart is roaring for it now more than ever," she believes her role now is to step to the side.

"Having witnessed the next generation in action, I believe they'll take this to the next level in ways I cannot. I built on the phenomenal work done before me and I hope I'll have added something to this space that can be carried forward."

With this in mind, The Valuable 500 is setting up a young leaders' programme. Her tips for the next generation of leaders are: "You're defined by nothing. What's important tomorrow will not be what's important today.

"Always listen to your gut instinct. Own your stuff. And don't waste your time being somebody else. It's your life and the only thing you can be truly magnificent at is you." ♦



## Andrew Bright

Head of Development, Thera Trust

When Andrew left school his head teacher told him he would never have a job; or if he did it would be unskilled. Andrew has fought against these assumptions and championed the rights of other people with a learning disability. He is an advocate, spokesperson and a role model working across the public sector, education and charities.

Andrew says: "What I have endeavoured to achieve in the work that I have done is to make a difference for people with a learning disability like me; so that the sorts of opportunities that I have been given in my life, that others can do the same. I would say to young people with a disability that you can achieve anything with the right support and achieve the impossible like I have."

Andrew trained in Business Studies and in 1991 joined national self-advocacy organisation People First, where he found his calling creating opportunities for people in the UK and abroad. In 1996 Andrew set up Bright Enterprises,

running training promoting the rights and independence of adults with a learning disability. Around this time, while establishing a specialised employment service in Greenwich, Andrew met his wife, Jane.

Andrew was Director of Participation for National Development Team (now NDTI), for five years before moving becoming a Service Quality Director in 2007 at Thera Trust; a charitable group of companies which support people with a learning disability.

In 2017 Andrew became Thera Trust's joint Head of Development, leading four teams. He oversees initiatives including advocacy groups, Path to Jobs, and Dolphin's Den - Dragon's Den-inspired workshops and mentoring to help people launch their own businesses. Andrew was recognised in the 2018 Dimensions Awards. ◆



## Lee Ridley

### Comedian

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Lee Ridley (also known as 'Lost Voice Guy') is a stand-up comedian who uses a communication aid. Lee shot to fame last year on Britain's Got Talent where he became the first comedian to win the competition. He has since performed at The Royal Variety Performance, Live At The Apollo and America's Got Talent: The Champions.

Many of Lee's jokes focus on disability, such as his communication aid sounding "like a posh Robocop" - so that while he's from Newcastle, he says he has "never picked up the accent!" Lee's brand of comedy makes people think and gives them a deeper perspective on disability. By riffing on people's attitudes and thoughtless comments he fights overt and covert ableism, while also landing every joke.

Lee says: "I'm really glad I won Britain's Got Talent because success breeds success. It would be nice for every disabled child to realise they have the opportunity to do

whatever they like when they grow up. But they'll only believe this if they see other people in a similar situation achieving their goals. This is why this list is so important."

Lee has been performing stand-up comedy for seven years. His first solo Edinburgh Fringe show was in 2013 and he won the BBC New Comedy Award in 2014. Lee has been nominated for numerous writing awards with Katherine Jakeways who he co-writes the Radio 4 sitcom Ability with.

This year Lee completed his first UK tour, published his debut book, I'm Only In It for the Parking: Life and Laughter from the Priority Seats (Penguin), performed at the Edinburgh Fringe, and is touring again in the Autumn.

Lee is a patron of The Sequel Trust, (SEQUAL: Special Equipment and Aids for Living), Smile For Life, Find a Voice and Communication Matters, and an ambassador for Scope. ♦



## Kush Kanodia

Social Entrepreneur

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Kush Kanodia is a social entrepreneur creating systemic change to increase inclusion. A strong believer in the social model of disability, Kush leverages practical innovations on a huge scale to empower people around the world. He works with organisations ranging from NHS trusts to Parliament to FIFA – focusing on the intersections between disability, technology, sports, health and entrepreneurship.

Originally an investment banker, in 2009 Kush co-founded global diversity NGO Choice International. He also co-founded international tech start-up HeartsMap which connects and empowers local communities and enterprises. For the past ten years he has advocated for best practice to reduce barriers and increase opportunities.

As a Level Playing Field Trustee, Kush achieved a commitment from all Premier League football clubs to comply with accessibility guidelines from UEFA and the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE). Since 2016, Kush has been CAFE Director and Trustee working for accessible match-day experiences for fans around the world.

Kush's advice to others wanting to create change is: "Confidence is contagious, so believe in yourself. If you don't, you can't really expect anyone else to."

Kush has recently been appointed as an Ambassador for Disability Rights UK (DRUK) and is a Governor of the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. He is leading DRUK's new campaign to abolish all disabled car parking charges for NHS hospitals in England.

Kush is also Director of Kaleidoscope Investments, Trustee of AbilityNet, Strategic Advisor to the Museum of Happiness, Public Board member for Health Data Research UK and an Advisory Board member to the Global Disability Innovation Hub.

In recognition of his dedication to disability rights work, Kush was selected as a 2012 Paralympic torch bearer and as a role model for government. Last year Parliament recognised him as one of the 10 most influential BAME leaders in technology. ♦



**Baroness Jane Campbell**

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Baroness Jane Campbell has fought for equal rights for disabled people for as long as she can remember - from challenging special school segregation as a child, to public demonstrating and arrests, and now advocates for disabled people in the House of Lords. She's been a leading voice of the disability community since the 1980s, driven by a fierce passion for equality and human rights, but most importantly a love of her community and a hatred of injustice.

Jane was born in 1959, into a world which didn't have a place for disabled people. She was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy and given a life expectancy of two years. She survived due to the determination of her family that she'd live and prove the professionals wrong. No mainstream school would accept Jane and she was sent to a segregated special school where the academic curriculum wasn't deemed necessary. She left at 16 with basic primary school capabilities. "I was an angry rebel when I was ten" Jane says. "I was very aware of my exclusion and educational deprivation, even at that age. All we did was weave baskets and endless, needless physiotherapy. I was bored out of my mind repeating 'why aren't I doing the same as my sister?'"

"My education didn't really start until I was 16 when I went to Hereward College." This further education college was originally built for disabled students who'd been failed by the education system. In the 1970s the college was a breeding ground for significant disability activists who later became prominent figures in the disability civil rights movement - activists like Bert Massey, Nabil Shabang and Simon Brisington. "It was a hotbed for young, angry disabled people who refused to play by the oppressive medical model traditions. We were rebelling against our discrimination and social exclusion. We were articulate, we

were bold, and most importantly, we had nothing to lose because we had no rights."

Determined to prove herself, Jane graduated from university with a high degree and first-class master's in political history. Despite this she couldn't get a job. With over 100 job applications rejected, she realised it was down to her being a disabled person. Jane finally got an administrative job at a disability charity - only to be sacked because she couldn't physically operate a manual typewriter. "That" Jane recalls dryly, "was my wake-up call."

Luckily, Jane was introduced to a group of other like-minded disabled people who were coming together across the UK to rebel against their social and economic exclusion. She heard Michael Oliver talking about the Social Model of Disability at a movement rally. "Suddenly all the lightbulbs came on in my head; the penny dropped, and I innately knew what I needed to do. The rest is history. I became an apprentice in the disability movement where I soon learned how to organise a pressure group and most importantly to be proud of who I was. I no longer felt ashamed of my history. Disability wasn't my problem; it was the problem of how society was organised - for able-bodied people only. I was out and proud."

The movement began with sharing personal experiences with one another. "By talking to each other we soon understood the complex reasons why we were treated differently. Once disabled people understand the true nature of their oppression, they become emancipated. Very similar to the way women began to understand sexism in the 50s. The disability movement enabled us to break free from our second-class social status and fight back."

It was a thrilling movement to be part of: "We had to fight our way into society - breaking down barriers as we went, which was very



empowering, but also frustrating at how long it took for the public to understand and join our mission. The disability movement has always tried hard to accommodate each other's differences and we made lifelong friendships. However, like every political movement, we had internal fights, but always worked them out between ourselves. Externally we were solid as rock. That was part of our success."

The movement had liberated, charismatic leaders with vision, including Mike Oliver, Vic Finkelstein and Rachel Hurst. "Like women in the '60s burning the bra, we were demanding 'Nothing about us without us' and 'Rights Not Charity', which brought us to blows with some old traditional charities who were used to speaking on our behalf.

"Independent Living, was central to our empowerment. Transferring power and money from social services, in the form of direct payments, to the disabled person was

a fundamental part of our revolution. We knew making our own decisions needed to be written into law and that's how the Direct Payments Act came to be. The Disability Discrimination Act underpinned by the DPA was essential for a rights-based solution to our exclusion instead of a medical/charitable one.

"Historically disabled people have been patronised and paternalised and it was hard to throw off the shackles of organisations there to 'help' but who weren't listening. We had to take control of our own lives and we did this by preventing those without direct experience of disability joining as full members until we worked out who we were and what we wanted to achieve. Once through that phase we welcomed non-disabled allies. We followed a similar path to the women's movement."

What does making allies and building consensus look like in a growing civil rights movement? "You start by listening

to each other – and I mean really listening – and valuing what each person can bring to the table. There is no hierarchy of rights. Through that comes a rich, diverse tapestry which makes for harmony and creativity - like a quilt of many colours.”

As the movement grew, and started gaining wins and recognition, Jane began working for the Greater London Council. She was busy developing a system which would create equality for everyone whatever their characteristics. In the mid-80s she formed the first register of Disability Equality Trainers, all of which were disabled people trained in the Social Model and how to embed it in the public and private sector.

In 2006, with the establishment of the Equality Act, the Government founded the Equality and Human Rights Commission and appointed Jane as Disability Committee Chair. “When legislation passes, it’s not going to change things overnight, but you gain certain rights, which disabled people can focus on developing and implementing.”

In 2007, Jane was awarded a life peerage and became an Independent Crossbencher in the House of Lords as Baroness Campbell of Surbiton.

“It was like walking into a Harry Potter version of Eton. No one other than Lords, Baronesses and doorkeepers may enter the debating Chamber during business hours. I had to challenge this 1730 rule, allowing me to bring my PA in with me to assist. It took two years for this reasonable adjustment to be agreed.

“I’m immensely privileged and thankful to be amongst the best minds in the country on a whole range of topics, scrutinising and amending legislation, which was spellbinding, though daunting. I realised how little they knew about life for the UK’s

12.5 million disabled people. Many had never had a decent conversation with a disabled person. I could really contribute and they were largely thankful to learn.

“I needed to utilise the skills I used in disability equality training. The exchange was very useful in creating an equal relationship of mutual exchange – we had something of great worth to give to one another, creating a more equal working environment.”

Despite her high-status, Jane makes sure she stays in touch with grassroots disabled people and current campaigns. “I love disabled people of all shapes and sizes, they’re my family and I make sure I spend as much time as possible, involving my community in what I do. I couldn’t do my job without the many voices of disabled people to guide me.”

Jane’s focus now is reclaiming independent living. “This is at the heart of the rights we fought for in the ‘80s. Anti-discrimination legislation along with the DPA are fundamental to our liberation. I have been living and breathing this stuff since university and I don’t see a reason to stop.”



Jane offers advice for the next generation of disabled change-makers: “You have a right to be a full member of society. You have a right to be included in everything. If you find you’re not wanted or invited in, you must fight to enter. Unfortunately, there’ll always be those who don’t want us included because we remind them of their own mortality and fear of disempowerment or they simply cannot be bothered to change their ways. It’s not fair, but just get over it. We must never go back into the closet. If you want to feel comfortable in the world you’re in, you’ve got to be prepared to fight for your equal slice of cake. It’s not easy and no one is going to do it for you. But that’s life for most people – it’s just a bit harder for us.” ♦



## Keep in touch



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**Baroness Jane Campbell**

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**Alex Brooker**

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**Welcome back to the Power List's Hall of Fame! We loved the mayoral medal they gave you on The Last Leg last year for being named number one. What have you been up to since we last spoke?**

Thank you! The medal was good fun. To be honest, Sink or Swim has taken over my life all summer. It's been a huge job and I've had the biggest public reaction I've ever had to something I've done on television. I've never had so many messages from people before about any show I've done in one hit. It's been an amazing.

**You've been made an Honourary Fellow of Liverpool John Moores University in recognition of your personal commitment and dedication to redefining the presence of disability. Can you tell us a bit about what that was like?**

It was quite surreal because I wasn't expecting anything like that and it's such a huge accolade from the university. It's the highest honour you can get as an alumni. When I got the letter through I was so proud, it was a massive deal for me. The ceremony I attended to collect it was the one where student journalists got their degrees and where I'd been sat 13 years ago. I had to do a speech and hadn't really planned it, wish I'd said a bit more to them now about enjoying their day and their time together.

My uni friends and I all have kids and jobs now so it's hard to get together, you take it for granted when you're there. The chancellor Lord Levison from the Levison enquiry was at the ceremony and it was incredible to be there talking to him and he knew who I was! It really was wonderful being back. I love Liverpool as a city, it gave me so much.

**Tell us what Sink or Swim has been like.**

On the last episode, when we ended up swimming The English Channel, there was really good weather when we went out and we got nearly 20 miles across. Then a storm came in and the whole thing had to be abandoned. After all the training that was devastating for all of us. But the legacy of that show is just phenomenal. I thought I'd just do my best, I never thought I'd be strong enough to swim The Channel no matter how much training I had. The show proved me wrong and to be completely honest, it's redefined how I view my disability. I had less faith in myself than the coaches had, especially the head coach. I've never known anyone have such belief in my ability. He taught me that I underestimate myself and have done pretty much all my adult life. There was a clip that went viral from the first show where we did a swim in Lake Windemere. I got very upset, I was crying in the water saying I can't do it. People had never seen me on television before like that. My disability has never beaten me, but it was beating me then. I struggled, but I carried on and I got there in the end because something in my head said I don't want to quit. After a while I ended up being one of the stronger swimmers. I never believed I'd be able to achieve that. As a disabled person, people often assume you can't do things and I don't particularly get offended by that, it's just from a lack of knowledge. With the swimming, I think I assumed I couldn't do it. I have more belief in myself now. I realised how much I'd underestimated myself. There were so many messages from people who saw the show. I had a lovely message from a lady who said her son had seen the show and it had given him the confidence to go and ride his bike. To have made that much of a difference to people is huge. I just thought I was struggling to swim, going home thinking I was crap and actually it had this huge impact.

Alongside Last Leg it's the biggest thing I've done in my career so far. I'm still absolutely devastated that we didn't finish it, more than I thought, but I'm so proud of the show.

### **You often take on big physical challenges - the Luge, and now Sink or Swim - is that purely for the love of sports, or do you also find something important in showing what physical things disabled people can do?**

I wanted to prove that your first impression of someone may not always be true. I wanted to show you shouldn't underestimate people, but actually, I've ended up teaching that to myself.

My mum was going out of her mind, she was so worried about the Luge and I had to text her as soon as I finished my swims even when I was just training. She's said: "no more big physical challenges now please." To be honest, I didn't set out to do them, but at the same time when the opportunity has come along, I like to challenge myself. It's also shown me the benefit of support and aids. Before I'd been a bit like 'no, I don't need any help thanks', but in the past 12 months I've embraced it. Without the fin, I'd never have swum the channel, and at the Power List event last year I was chatting with Rob from Active Hands who do gripping aids which I now use in the gym. That one chance meeting has completely changed how I workout. The aids have enabled me to do so much more. My view of what I'm physically capable of with or without aids has changed so much. I don't know what's next, but I have got a bit of a taste for it. Sorry, Mum.

### **You've seen the Power List now as a member of the judging panel in 2015, as a winner, and now the hall of fame. What do you think the importance is of initiatives like this?**

It's an amazing accolade. There are so many incredible disabled people out there doing inspirational work in a variety of industries. So much of that goes unseen and what I love about the Power List is it highlights this and shows how hugely deserving people are. There was a time in my life when I was in the GB development rifle shooting team in 2010 when being around disabled people actually made me feel quite self-conscious and very disabled myself. Now it's so far the opposite, I embrace it. I'm very passionate about the Power List and it gives me the chance to meet all these amazing people.

### **Lack of visibility means also lack of people to look up to - who would you say are some of your disabled icons/disabled people you admire?**

Alex Zanardi the Italian paracyclist made a huge impact on me at the last Paralympics. He lost both his legs in a motor racing crash and has really pushed himself to reach the top of his sport as a cyclist. He's gone back to motorsport as well. His attitude toward disability is almost like a gift. And I've got to say Adam Hills as well. Hills was the first person I met with a leg like mine and who I had an open conversation with and that had a big impact on me, too.

### **The Last Leg has done a huge amount of work in normalising disability in media, but there's obviously a long way to go before representation is anywhere near where it should be in mainstream media. What do you think are the biggest changes which need to happen in media?**

You've just got to get more of us on screen. It's not tokenism because there are so many talented disabled actors and comedians out there. We had Rosie Jones on the Last Leg. People like her deserve more screen time because they're hugely talented. Soaps and

comedies need more disabled people in roles where it's not all about their disability because we live normal lives too. We still have relationships, nights out and holidays. You don't get a lot of that in programmes. But the more you get, the more normalising it is.

**And what do you think are the biggest changes which need to happen generally in the world to increase inclusion?**

Make places more accessible. It breaks my heart that there are still stories every week about trains without support or disabled toilets that are used as storerooms or not open. These are absolute basics. Paralympian Sophie Christiansen tweeted the other day because she got left on the train when no guard was there as expected and she relied on the general public to help her get off at her stop. We regard ourselves in the UK as forward-thinking in how we approach disability, and in many ways we are, but there is still such a long way to go. Disabled people need to feel confident we'll have the same opportunities as anyone else.

**If you had one bit of advice for a young disabled person today, what would it be? Or what's the bit of advice you wish you'd had when you were a kid?**

Don't underestimate yourself. That's something I've learnt for myself, to believe in yourself and your worth more. It's easy to doubt yourself in any walk of life, but when you're disabled it can be all-consuming. Just because someone says you can't do something doesn't mean it's true. My parents told me that, but I didn't listen to it. So my advice to my younger self would be to listen to what those people who are supportive are telling you. ♦

## In memory



Photograph: Matt Wilson

## Professor Mike Oliver

The Social Model of Disability

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This year the disability world mourned the passing of an intellectual giant: Professor Mike Oliver, the first Professor of Disability Studies, died in March following a short illness. Mike Oliver is best known as the person who named and popularised the concept of the 'social model' of disability.

The social model of disability states that it is the way society is organised which is disabling, not a person's impairments or medical diagnosis. In his work he comprehensively explained that society is the (disability) not the individual and goes on to demonstrate that by changing society by removing disabling barriers, (disability) could be minimised to the point of eradication. As Mike once described it, this different approach to disability: "changed it from being a medical issue to being a human rights issue."

Countless change-makers who have shaped the legislation, policies, and world which exists today credit Mike Oliver and the social model as being their 'lightbulb moment'.

The initial concept was not Mike Oliver's own creation: the principles were laid out in a 1976 pamphlet produced by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Discrimination. However, Mike Oliver developed the term and popularised it with his 1983 book *Social Work With Disabled People*. The book was originally written as course materials for healthcare professionals Mike was training, but it came out at a fortuitous time for the growing disability rights movement. The social model gave campaigners the framework to address disability discrimination, and the concept became a tool to address underlying assumptions.

"I did want to provide an alternative, more optimistic picture that wasn't about simply seeing disability as purely tragic, disabled people as unemployable and so on" he said, in an interview not long before his death. "It was about having an optimistic view of what disabled people could achieve if many of the barriers they faced were removed."

Mike Oliver was born in 1945 in Chatham, Kent. He became disabled in 1962 due to a spinal injury. After a year of rehabilitation at Stoke Mandeville hospital he found work as a teacher in Borstal Young Offenders Institution. He enrolled at university only when the legislation changed, making a degree a requirement to continue teaching. Mike began studying sociology at the University of Reading and fell in love with the topic but had to drop out within weeks as the support provision was so inadequate. He instead studied at the University of Kent where he continued to take a master's degree and then a doctorate.

Throughout his career Mike bridged the two worlds of activism and academia. He became Professor Emeritus of Disability Studies at the University of Greenwich and continued to speak, write and publish with books including *Understanding Disability*, *The Politics of Disablement* and *The New Politics of Disablement*.

Mike is remembered as the father of the social model, the person who founded disability studies as an academic discipline, and the man who ignited a movement and changed the lives of millions of disabled people around the globe. ◆

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## Thank you

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A huge thank you to our judging panel:

Kate Nash – CEO and creator of PurpleSpace  
Diane Lightfoot – CEO, Business Disability Forum  
Stephanie Cutler – Making Lemonade  
Gary Bourlet – Learning Disability England  
Baroness – Thomas of Winchester Peer  
Clare Gray – Disability Advocacy Adviser, Shaw Trust

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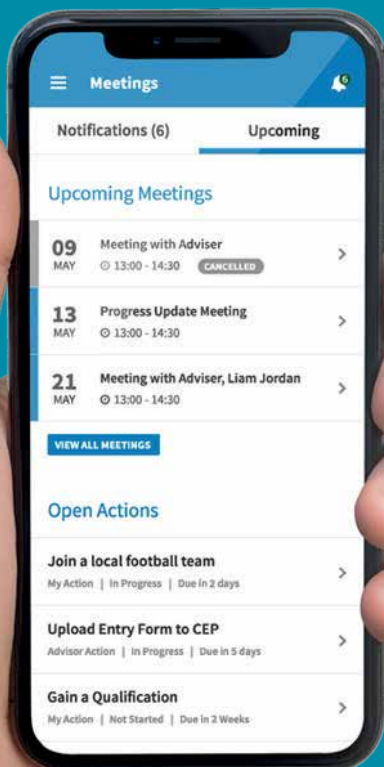
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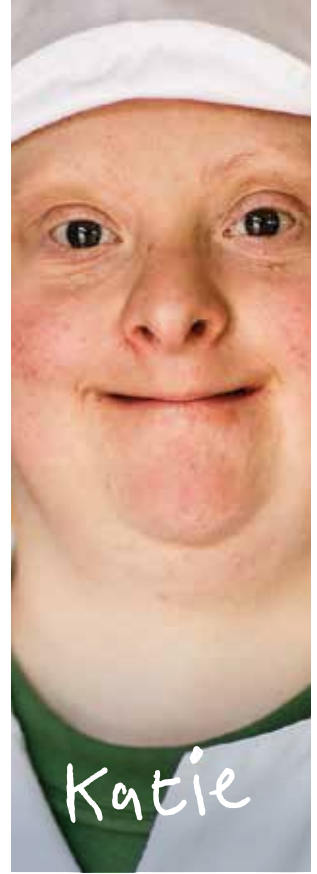
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