

My Future Choices

For disabled young people, their families and people who support them



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Hello from TIN

Welcome to our latest edition of My Future Choices. We would love to hear your thoughts on the stories shared. Please let us know via Facebook and Twitter.



We start with the latest transition news, showcasing two new websites specifically designed with and for young people. Jack tells us about his work with involving young people in history and heritage. Jordanne and Chris introduce Amber Valley Youth Forum and their work in the local area. We move onto employment, hearing from Danielle about how she successfully gained her first paid internship.

The first of our 'in-focus' sections looks at the work of the Young Peoples Engagement Officers, helping to implement the Independent Support programme across 27 local authority areas in England.

We follow Kat and her work with Road Ahead and People First Merseyside on pages 14 and 15. In the second of our 'in-focus' sections from Changing our Lives we follow four young people's stories moving into employment.

Our cover story from Simon showcases starting university and his future plans. We finish this issue with Progression Sessions and the work that they have been doing to change society's attitudes towards disabled people.

We hope you enjoy these stories, if you would like to write for us for the next issue get in touch!

Best wishes, Rachel O'Brien



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www.twitter.com/tin_tweets



www.facebook.com/TransitionInformationNetwork

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What is the Transition Information Network?

The Transition Information Network (TIN) is an alliance of organisations and individuals with the common aim of improving the experience of disabled young people's transition to adulthood. TIN aims to be a source of information and good practice standards for disabled young people, their families and people who support them. TIN is based at the Council for Disabled Children, the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector in England. www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

TIN Membership

Membership to TIN is free. Register online at: transitionfonetwork.org.uk/membership





Latest news

Welcome to the latest news. We've got some great new resources and information to share with you this issue.

Get Your Rights



Do you need information on your rights when using the NHS?

The Council for Disabled Children and the National Children's Bureau have developed an exciting website that has a wide range of information and advice for young people on your rights when using health services.

It includes videos from young people telling their stories about how knowing their rights has made a difference to them. It gives information on being treated well, making decisions and caring for yourself when moving into adulthood.

As many young people transition from using children's to adult's health services, this website can be a useful tool for information and what to do if you are concerned that your rights haven't been respected.

www.getyourrights.org

Feedback from young people

"Young people deserve to know the services that they are entitled to through this website"

"It's all about young people's voices and letting other young people know where to get help from"

"I think the website is great because it was made in co-production with young people"



Information, Advice and Support Services Network

As part of the Children and Families Act 2014, each local authority is required to have a local Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS). These services are for disabled young people as well as their parents and carers to access impartial advice and information on issues relating to education, health and social care.

A new website has been developed specifically for children and young people to offer information on getting help, knowing your rights and how to get access from your local branch.

www.cyp.iassnetwork.org.uk



Since our last issue...

There are some congratulations in order for two of our writers!



A big congratulations to Lucy Watts who has been awarded an MBE for her charity work.

A further congratulations to Chanelle who graduated with a 2:1 in BA hons Advertising.





Heritage for a New Generation

By Jack Welch

While the words 'history' and 'fun' may not seem entirely compatible, young people including myself, have been working towards a new way of thinking. This approach not only makes it become more exciting, but inclusive for everyone.

As part of two lengthy projects for the last three years, we have come up with plenty of ideas in which local history can become a way to interact with the wider world.

Projects

In most museums, the typical exhibitions include paintings, skeletons and old artefacts. In 2012, we were lucky enough to introduce go-karts, boxing gloves and more surprising examples in a project that celebrated 70 years of youth clubs in Dorset. For the first time, young people were in charge of putting on an exhibition in a museum like no other! Interviewing children attending youth clubs today and gathering details about history that was more relevant to the present day made for something engaging for young volunteers and created opportunities

for learning where those who led on the project were outside of the classroom and textbook approach to studying.

Geocoaching

The impact of getting members of the public to interact with history in the present day could not have been possible without the magic of Geocaching - a treasure hunt using a Global Positioning System (GPS) device. Having been part of the creating and finding of the small boxes placed all over the world, it has been a great way to access history in a bitesize way and to understand more about where we come from.

Our most recent project, 'Walking in their Shoes', made this a crucial part of finding out more about World War One and Anglo-Saxon Dorset. There are many geocache boxes around (but hidden) and there is no better way to learn something new and be outdoors at the same time.

Inclusion

Having a learning disability myself, these projects made it a big priority to enable young people with different additional needs to take part. We were able to achieve this with the kind support of adult volunteers which resulted in a tremendous difference, giving those who may struggle the means to feel included. I was even on television this year to promote the cause of heritage-led projects, titled 'Generation History'.

It promotes how heritage can be shared through both digital and creative media outside of a school environment. I have been very fortunate to present this to professionals who work in museums and even to TV Historian Dan Snow, who was recording his new show on the history of Vikings.

I have also been given the opportunity to publish what I have enjoyed most in Dorset's local newspaper to show other readers not just how young people from diverse backgrounds were working together, but also those from older generations. It has been a boost to my own writing and journalism skills.

Being able to have access to heritage from a younger age can work for everyone and there's no better way than to get involved with something worthwhile that educates you at the same time.



For more updates from Jack you can follow him on Twitter @MrJW18

Amber Valley Youth Forum

By Jordanne Fisher and Chris Thompson

Hello, we are Jordanne and Chris. We are members of the Amber Valley Oyster Club and Amber Valley Youth Forum and we'd like to tell you about what we do.

The Oyster Youth Club

Every week we attend the Oyster Youth Club: a place where we can meet new people and have fun at the same time. At the club we have weekly activities such as:

- Tai Chi
- Football and Basketball
- Pizza baguette making



We also go on trips for example:

- Last Christmas we went to see a production of Cinderella at Chesterfield theatre.
- We went to York for the weekend where we went to the dungeons.
- We travelled to Wales for 2 days where we visited the slate mines and Conwy Castle.

We enjoy the Oyster Club because it gives us the chance to meet new people and it gives us the opportunity to have experiences we wouldn't normally get.

Youth Forum

From the Oyster Club we have had the opportunity to join the Amber Valley Youth Forum. We enjoy the youth forum because the work we do is important and recognised by the council on a local and county level.



The work we do includes PAYP (positive activities for young people) bids, for this we have local groups come to us for funding, a process that involves them writing an application which we review and also them having to do a presentation to us. This process is important to us as it helps us with money and budget management skills which will help in our everyday life.

Schools Council Conference

Recently the youth forum invited the 3 special schools and 8 secondary schools of Amber Valley to a one-day conference. We had 6 workshops to attend, each having a theme to do with safety. Our role in the day was to:

- direct people to where they needed to be
- help people sign up for workshops
- set up the food for everyone
- talk to councillors about the day

We really enjoyed the day because it gave us the chance to meet people from schools all over the region. We were also involved in the organisation of the day where we decided what food we'd like, who was invited and what activities we'd like. Our favourite thing about the conference was how much everybody else enjoyed it.



Starting my first paid internship

By Danielle Garratt

Hello my name is Danielle Garratt, and I am 22 years old. I am visually impaired and I also have special educational needs. I am going to tell you my story about how I got a paid internship job at Amaze. Amaze is a charity that offers information, advice and support to families of disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEND).

I volunteer with an art group called Mymarc, a project for disabled young people aged 16-25 in Brighton. I was asked by someone who works for Amaze, and who also runs Mymarc, if I would like to help her with her work at Amaze. Amaze only used to give information, advice and support to parents and carers of disabled children and those with special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 20. But now they are extending the support they offer up to the age of 25 and providing information advice and support to young people themselves. She also said it would be good to have a young person to help develop this work and that Amaze would be the first information, advice and support service that has a young person doing a paid internship.

When I got asked to do this I was really excited and nervous at the same time because I didn't know what I was going to do for the job. The 1st April was the first day of my job I was excited to be working as part of a team in the office and also I was a little bit nervous at the same time. On the first day of starting I met everyone that works in the office. I also had a tour around the office to see where all the equipment was if I needed it.

The first thing I did was to get an introduction to the job and what I would be doing. I had my very first meeting with someone from the council about some stuff for a website called the Local Offer.

I felt that there was a lot of stuff to be done but I was up for the challenge. When we got back to the office I looked at the website and started to read about all the different things on the website and suggesting what they need to update and add to it. Every area in the country has to have information about the support for families, children and young people with SEND.

One of my jobs that has made me more confident is speaking to groups of people, telling them about the information, advice and support that Amaze has to offer. The first time I spoke in front of a group of students and teachers that I know, and the college that I went to, I was a bit nervous but also excited to see the teachers. I started to do more of these and I have become more confident speaking in public.

About a week into my job we talked about getting the help of Access to Work. This is an organisation that can give a company a grant or can pay for practical support if someone has a disability, health or mental health condition. We contacted them about getting me some computer equipment so that it would help with my visual impairment and disability needs. I have a bigger computer screen that has a programme called ZoomText. This can enlarge the screen and make the text look bigger so I can read it easier. I also have an acrobat monitor with a screen attached to it and this magnifies bits of paper and books so I can read them more easily. I have a small magnifying glass that I can take to meetings to see what the paper work says that we have been given. They were a great help and it has given me the opportunity to read things easier.

My six month contract has just been extended to a year and I'll be helping organise Amaze's information fair that will also be aimed at young people this year.



If you think you might be eligible for an Access to Work grant you can visit [Preparing for Adulthood](https://preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/supported-internships/access-to-work-fund) dedicated page: preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/supported-internships/access-to-work-fund

Find your local Information Advice and Support Service at: www.iassnetwork.org.uk/

Young Peoples Engagement Officers



Hello everyone, we are Young People's Engagement Officers and we work for Core Assets Children's Services which delivers Independent Support in 27 Local Authority areas in England!

Our names are Eve, Emma and Grace and we are all under the age of 25. It is our job to make sure the Independent Support Service is accessible and appealing to young people.

What is Independent Support?

In 2014 changes were made to the law, the changes were designed to give young people a greater say over what support and services they receive. The changes came in the form of The Children and Families Act 2014 which introduced measures on special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Since September 2014, these have been used to change the SEND system; this includes the introduction of Education, Health Care Plans. The Independent Support Service helps young people and families to understand the changes and support them through the Education, Health and Care planning and transfer process.

What is changing?

If you had a Statement of Special Educational Needs or a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) at school or college, you could be moving onto an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan).

What is an EHC Plan?

An EHC Plan is a legal document which describes your special educational needs and your aims for the future. It also describes what needs to be done to meet those needs by education, health and social care professionals.

What we do

1 We have created some activities that help young people think about their goals, aspirations, hopes and wishes for the future, as well as what makes them happy and realising their personal strengths and qualities. These activities relate to the EHC Plan as it allows young people to plan for the future, so that the organisations involved in the plan can work together to help young people achieve their goals.



2 As Young Person's Engagement Officers we believe it is very important to ask young people what they think and find out how we can make the service better. We like to make sure the voice of young people is heard.

To contact a Young Person's Engagement Officer please email us:
 East Midlands- eve.blakely@coreassets.com
 West Midlands- emma.hughes@coreassets.com
 East of England- grace.hawkins@coreassets.com
 *Not all Independent Support Providers have Young Person's Engagement Officers.

Our goal is to engage with young people in schools, colleges, youth groups or even at home and support them through the EHC Plan process in a number of fun and interactive ways.

3

Amy (17)

"I liked being able to talk about my hobbies and interests and it helped me realise that I might want to work with animals in the future after college"



To speak to someone about getting help from an Independent Supporter or to ask any questions please call: **0800 028 8455** or email us on:

ISreferrals@coreassets.com

Please visit our website for useful and helpful information: **coreassets.com/what-we-do/independent-support-service**

To find your local Independent Support Service, check out the map on the CDC website: **councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/findmyIS**



My life

Kat Dubber



My name is Katrina Dubber. I am 23 years old. I am a member of the Road Ahead Group which is funded by the Big Lottery and a part of People First Merseyside. The Road Ahead is for adults with learning disabilities aged 18-30.

I live at home with my family and I am from Liverpool. I love living in Liverpool. My mum's family are from the Philippines and I love going to see them.



Being a part of the Road Ahead group is amazing. It's given me the chance to try lots of new things, make real friendships and speak up.



Being healthy is really important to me. The Road Ahead work with Active Me and we do different sports. I have been going to sports for over a year now. I love trying new things and going to the sports days they organise. Each week I go to line dancing and Zumba with my friends. We walk home together sometimes which is a 2 mile walk. I have started eating healthy food and taking care of myself. I have lost weight.

I'm also on the Board of Directors for People First Merseyside. I was elected by the other members and I have to make important decisions about our company. It's hard work.



Being a part of the Road Ahead has meant I've started to go to new places in the city. We travel by train with each other and arrange to meet up and go to new places together. I love being able to travel around the City and go to things - I feel so free and independent. I feel grown up.



Part of the Road Ahead is to deliver training to other young people with a learning disability. I'm a peer educator. I give presentations about my life and my experiences. It gives me confidence. I love helping people with their worksheets and working with the other trainers. It's hard work being a trainer and you have to put lots of practise in.



I've been to the Police Headquarters and met the High Sheriff of Merseyside to get an award for the work we do - it was boss and I went with my friends Matthew and Kyle.



Changing Our Lives is a rights based organisation that works in co-production with disabled people of all ages to achieve equality, good health and social inclusion. As an organisation we work locally, but think nationally. Meet the new members, hear their journey and what their aspirations are for the future.



Gina Patel

I'm a Quality of Life Facilitator at Changing Our Lives because I am passionate about creating a change for disabled people. I first got involved with Changing Our Lives in 2010 after completing my school Work Experience placement. Before Changing Our Lives, I was a very quiet person. I didn't have any confidence in myself and I didn't have many friends at school.

Since working for Changing Our Lives, I have gained a lot of confidence in talking to people and I am able to travel independently on the train by myself. In a year or two, I hope there will be many opportunities open for me including hopefully a career progression within the organisation, if I do a brilliant job.

In 2012, I was selected to join the National Scrutiny Group alongside 14 other young people to enable Government ministers and departments to make more informed decisions on policies that affect young people. Between working for Changing Our Lives, I also help at my family business dealing with telephone enquiries and general office duties.

**Follow my journey
on Twitter:
[@COL_ginap](https://twitter.com/COL_ginap)**



Kashmire Hawker

I'm aged 17 & from Wolverhampton. My Changing Our Lives (COL) Journey has been a great one! I started with the organisation in January 2014 following a workshop at school just before Christmas 2013. As a result of all my voluntary work with them, I'm now a member of the staff team as a Quality of Life Facilitator. Things before COL were on the right track due to my involvement in Youth Participation and have accelerated since my involvement on a wider basis! Confidence and learning new things are the major aspects I've developed.

I have a good future ahead as I'm hoping to go to University in 2016 studying Politics or something linked to Politics with my big dream becoming an MP by 2030 by starting from Local Government level and then progressing.

I've had much experience working with, and for, Young People through COL, UK Youth Parliament, Wolverhampton City Youth Council and much more since 2012. I'd say the desire for people wanting me to stand for Election was my motivation to go forward and be the person I am today.

**Follow my journey
on Twitter:
[@COL_Kashmire](https://twitter.com/COL_Kashmire)**



Lesley Acford

I am a Quality of Life Facilitator; I was a Young Leader for 2 years before this. I first got involved with COL in April 2013, I was recruited at my school to help start the Youth Network in Wolverhampton which we named 'We Have A Voice' The youth network allows young people with a disability to come together and share their voices & opinions on topics like Transition.

Before COL I didn't get involved much, wasn't very travel independent and had little confidence in myself. Since working for COL I've gained more confidence and even learnt to travel independently, I can now use buses and trains. Both of these things have meant I get involved in a lot of things now, I feel my life is now more positive than before COL.

My biggest dream is to be seen as an equal and truly understood by those around me. In 2 years' time I'd like to think I'd still be working with COL and living in my own place, I know there is a chance for career progression with COL if I do a good job. In the future I will have to make decisions on where I live and how I support myself.

Follow my journey
on Twitter:
[@Lesley_COL](https://twitter.com/Lesley_COL)



Follow my journey
on Twitter:
[@COL_Zehn](https://twitter.com/COL_Zehn)

After speaking with Lucy I decided to take up the challenge and got involved with COL. Whilst working with COL I became more independent and confident with myself and accepted my disability as a part of myself. I understood that a disability should not and will not affect my objective and stop me achieving my goals as well as other disabled people.

My biggest dream is to make a change to the environment to help create equality, not just between races and genders but also between disabilities. In 2 years' time, I see myself in a school teaching young children to achieve their objectives and goals as well projecting an image of equality.

Zhen Khan

I am a Quality of Life Facilitator. During this role I would assist a group of young disabled adults to achieve certain goals and objectives in their lives. I received some information in the post, about an organisation looking for young disabled people from black minority ethnic communities to take part in a leadership programme called 'Rights 4 All'. At first I was a bit reluctant. My mother made some calls and arranged for a lovely lady called Lucy to come and visit me and explain to me about the project.

Find out more!

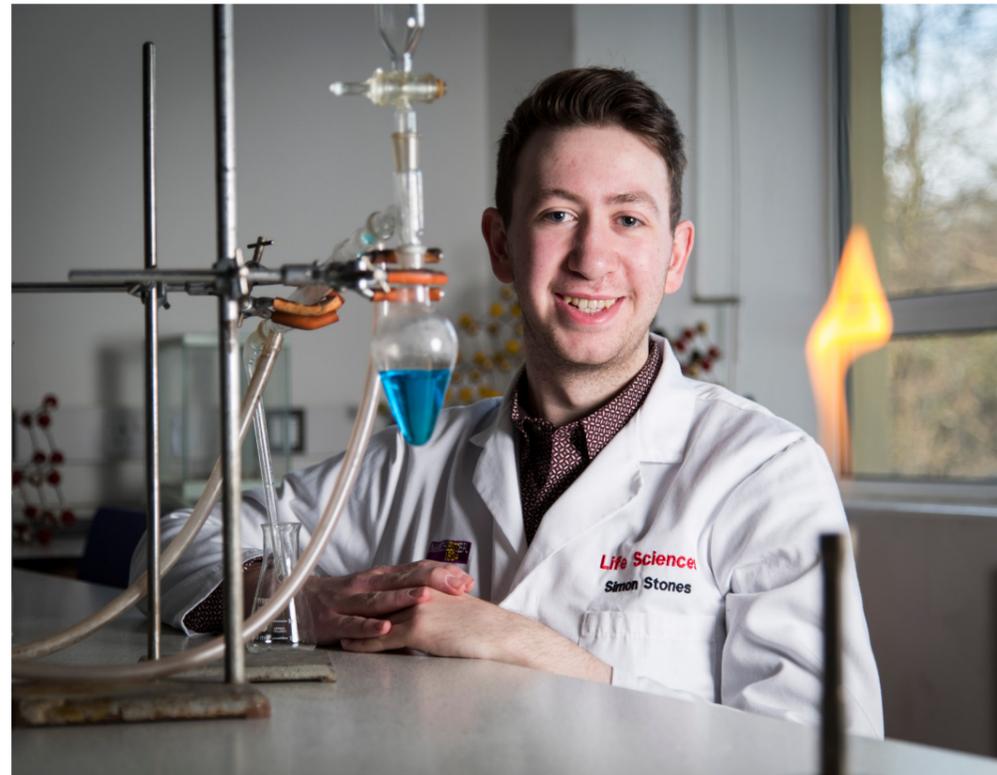


www.changingourlives.org
[@Positive_Lives](https://twitter.com/Positive_Lives)



So many things; so little time!

By Simon Stones

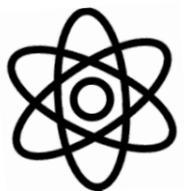


“You do too much!” I hear this far too many times from friends, family and colleagues at work. Having experienced years of tests, visits to the hospitals, and living with daily health problems, I make it my goal to live life to the full. Every single day.

At the age of 3, I was diagnosed with a form of childhood arthritis, called juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Over the years, I have gone on to develop Crohn’s disease (inflammation of the digestive system) and fibromyalgia (inflammation of the muscles).

Living with multiple long-term conditions can be challenging. Some days, your ‘get up and go’ has ‘got up and gone!’ Once you come to accept your conditions, you begin to realise your capabilities (and limitations, of course).

Participating in lots of physical sports didn’t work for me, so I decided to keep doing gentle exercise, in the form of walking and swimming, and channel my efforts into progressing my education and academic abilities.



Utilise your strengths

Perseverance was one of the key attitudes that enabled me to complete GCSEs and A-Levels. I fully appreciate how difficult it can be to fit in studying around healthcare appointments, as well as finding the energy and enthusiasm. For me, there was an inner determination to prove to the world that no matter what obstacles land in your path, you are capable of achieving anything that you want! Why should my disabilities prevent me from doing this?

Following on from A-Levels, I decided that I wanted to study Biomedical Sciences at University. It is no coincidence either. Growing up, I was forced to learn about health, and actually, I loved to learn how things work, and why they do so. In 2012, I began my studies at The University of Manchester.

Three years have passed incredibly quickly. I am now in my final year, and will graduate in 2016. My next goal is to do a PhD in healthcare, where I will look at supporting young people with long-term conditions.

Do what makes you happy

Aside from my studies, my leisure time is filled up with lots of meetings, conferences and commenting on different documents, as part of my ‘voluntary role’ as an advocate for children and young people with long-term conditions.

My role is to help improve healthcare services for young people with arthritis, and similar conditions. In doing so, I want more young people to become involved in shaping research in the future.

People think I am slightly mad for doing so much, but I enjoy it, and so that is all that matters. I do, however, make sure that I find time to meet family and friends, usually over coffee and/or food! I also like to see new places and try new things. What I am trying to say here, is that you should do what makes you happy. Physical or mental health conditions should never stop you from doing what you love or what you dream of doing. When you realise this, the world really is your oyster.



For more information on managing a health condition or looking into further education take a look at our website: transitioninfonetwork.org.uk/resources



Progression Sessions



By Rebecca Jackaman

This became apparent after I finished sixth form and, most significantly, when I attended conventions that looked to find ways to support disabled people moving into adulthood. Oddly, very few young people actually came to these events. I say oddly, because one would think they would have greatly benefitted from them – so I decided to do something about it.

Progressions Sessions are run by disabled people for disabled people. The meetings are semi-formal, as we endeavour to help each other with any obstacles when moving into adulthood. For example, during a discussion about volunteering opportunities, one regular in the group was looking for volunteering opportunities to build up her CV after graduating from university. As a result of coming to the Sessions, she hopes to start volunteering at Voice Ability this year.

"In the near future, Progression Sessions will be getting involved in their own campaigns, endeavouring to challenge society's attitudes towards disabled people"

Do you want to meet new people? Do you want to challenge attitudes and accessibility issues? If so, then Progression Sessions could be the group for you.

Since late 2013, Progression Sessions has been a group for young disabled people looking for guidance, with anything from accessible leisure activities and campaigns, to advice with higher education and employment. They officially became a business early last year.

They were established due to a lack of understanding between professionals and disabled people.

We are also involved with some of the campaigns that Scope has been running. Their latest campaign, End the Awkward (which started last year) includes short, funny videos, shown across social media, demonstrating what not to do when meeting disabled people (with hilarious and cringe-worthy results). Moreover, it encourages people to share their own awkward stories through Twitter and Facebook. In the near future, Progression Sessions will be getting involved in their own campaigns, endeavouring to challenge society's attitudes towards disabled people.

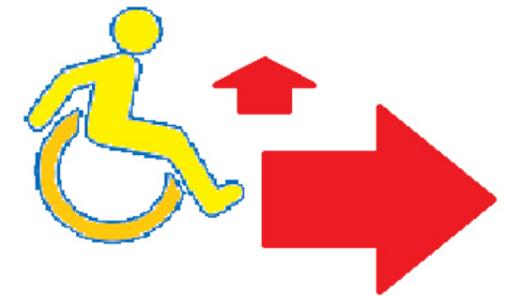
The group meets once a month, with different discussions each session. Depending on the subject, we also invite guest-speakers. In June we had a professional who works at SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice Support Service) to come and discuss the reforms around the Education, Health and Care plans.

Perhaps most significantly, the Conservative MP, Ben Gummer also came to talk to us in April (before the election), about getting young people into work, and improving rail services for wheelchair-users in Ipswich. We also spoke of the need to make his office in Ipswich more accessible.

As a result of this, he wrote to me in June to say that he may consider moving if he cannot make any changes. Needless to say, this was really surprising, and fantastic news!

With Progression Sessions, our main aim is to make young disabled people's transition into adulthood that little bit easier. If you, or someone you know is interested, please contact Becca Jackaman at jackaman93@hotmail.co.uk.

Progression Sessions



Find out more!

For the latest updates, you can follow Progression Sessions on Twitter: @ProgSesh or visit the website at www.progressionsessions.wordpress.com

Useful Organisations

Action for Sick Children

www.actionforsickchildren.org.uk

Afasic

www.afasicengland.org.uk

Ambitious about Autism

www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

Anti-Bullying Alliance

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

British Association for Supported Employment

www.base-uk.org

British Institute of Learning Disabilities

www.bild.org.uk

Cerebra

www.cerebra.org.uk

Challenging Behaviour Foundation

www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk

The Communication Trust

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Contact a Family

www.cafamily.org.uk

Council for Disabled Children

www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

Dimensions

www.dimensions-uk.org

Disability Rights UK

www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Down's Syndrome Association

www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

Dyslexia-SpLD Trust

www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk

Family Fund

www.familyfund.org.uk

Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

www.learningdisabilities.org.uk

Home Farm Trust

www.hft.org.uk

Housing and Support Alliance

www.housingandsupport.org.uk

I CAN

www.ican.org.uk

IPSEA

www.ipsea.org.uk

Macintyre

www.macintyrecharity.org

Mencap

www.mencap.org.uk

nasen

www.nasen.org.uk

National Autistic Society

www.autism.org.uk

National Deaf Children's Society

www.ndcs.org.uk

National Development Team for inclusion

www.ndti.org.uk

National Network of Parent Carer Forums

www.nnpfc.org.uk

Information, Advice and Support Network

www.iassnetwork.org.uk

Paradigm

www.paradigm-uk.org

Preparing for Adulthood

www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk

RNIB

www.rnib.org.uk

Scope

www.scope.org.uk

Sense

www.sense.org.uk

Shaw Trust

www.shaw-trust.org.uk

Together for Short Lives

www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk

Whizz-Kidz

www.whizz-kidz.org.uk

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Statement of Association

The Transition Information Network is based at the Council for Disabled Children. The Council for Disabled Children is hosted by the National Children's Bureau. Registered Charity number 258825.

