

# Meet Stephen



**Stephen**

Despite limited movement and learning difficulties, with the right support Stephen can and does lead a good life. Supported by trained staff at the Parity service, he pursues interests, develops skills and abilities, tries new experiences, socialises and explores the world around him.

Stephen has used the service since reaching school-leaving age, the age when the statutory services available to all children come to an end. Stephen, his mother Janet, and their social worker meet regularly with Parity staff to ensure Stephen's requirements are being met. His feelings, opinions and choices are respected, in line with Parity's person-centred approach.



**A mobile zoo visits Parity.**

Berkshire offers a rich variety of amenities, activities, and educational opportunities. Despite this, some adults with disabilities are forced to look outside the county for the right services.

Stephen, 29, travels from home in Bracknell every weekday to use Parity for Disability's day service in Camberley, Surrey.

Because of his high support needs, Stephen's daily life would be different if spent at home. "He'd watch telly, listen to music," Janet says. "During the week, his dad is working, so it would be hard to make trips out."



**One of Stephen's paintings.**

According to Stephen, social contact and developing friendships is one of the top benefits of using the service, and he makes the most of every opportunity.

"He's able to build up relationships with others, because he's there every day," Janet said.

Darren Shergold (pictured left, with Stephen) supports him as his main keyworker and is trained in providing the right support for a person with multiple disabilities.

"As Stephen's keyworker I have got to know him really well. Stephen loves going out on trips especially the ones he chooses. He organised an ice skating trip last year and chose who he wanted to go with by using his communication board that we both developed."

The communication board has pictures that Stephen can point to, to get his thoughts across. Although Stephen has some speech, certain words are difficult for him to say. Darren has been instrumental in developing ways for Stephen to communicate.

“Stephen’s communication is very important to him,” says Darren. “He gets frustrated if people can’t understand him, so we work together using various methods to improve this. Stephen enjoys discovering new ways to communicate.”

As well as expanding his social life and communication skills, Stephen also takes advantage of regular physiotherapy at Parity. A motor skills programme, overseen by a qualified physiotherapist, ensures Stephen’s limbs keep the movement that they do have, and relieve the stress on the body of spending so much time in a wheelchair.



**Stephen with his friend Alan at Farnborough Airport.**



**Staff encourage the students’ independence.**

A recent report called *Raising Our Sights*, commissioned by the government and carried out by University of Kent professor Jim Mansell has shown the need throughout the UK of person-centred services tailored for adults with profound disabilities.

Without access to appropriate support, quality of life for this group of people is extremely limited. Each person’s social, educational, recreational, physical and health needs are left entirely to the families and carers to manage, an impossible task that creates huge strain.

“Without Parity, Stephen would be bored, miserable and lonely,” says his mother Janet.

In all parts of the country, the opportunities remain limited for people with multiple disabilities to explore their potential and become an integral part of their community. Stephen and adults like him are shaping the direction of services towards true equality and dignity, and a fairer and more fulfilling future.