

## Inspirational role models

We all grow up with views of who we want to be and whose footsteps we want to follow in. Sometimes it can be difficult for children with disabilities to aspire to be like someone as their needs are so different to the celebrities they see.

With this in mind I have put together a booklet of celebrities who have a disability or an additional need. Each of these celebrities have achieved an amazing amount and are inspirational role models to everyone.

### What is a Role Model?

▮ The best definition:

**“A role model is someone who inspires you so much that you want to exceed his/her achievements.”**

A role model may be someone who you know and interact with on a regular basis, or **someone you've never met in person.**

## Stephen Hawking



Stephen Hawking CH CBE FRS FRSA was an English theoretical physicist, cosmologist, and author who was director of research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology at the University of Cambridge. Stephen Hawking was diagnosed with Motor Neuro Disease in 1963 at the age of 21, while he was a student at Cambridge University.

Stephen Hawking is best known because of his work in physics and the framework of general relativity and the theoretical prediction that black holes emit radiation, often called Hawking radiation.

Stephen Hawking has been married twice and has 3 children.

## Ellie Simmonds



Eleanor May Simmonds OBE, (known as Ellie Simmonds) Ellie has Achondroplasia dwarfism. Ellie is a British Paralympian swimmer competing in S6 events. She came to national attention when she competed in the 2008 Summer Paralympics in Beijing, winning two gold medals for Great Britain, despite being the youngest member of the team, at the age of 13. In 2012, she was again selected for the Great Britain squad, this time swimming at a home games in London. She won another two golds in London, including setting a World Record in the 400m freestyle, and a further gold medal at the Rio Paralympics in 2016, this time setting a world record for the 200m medley. Ellie announced her retirement from competitive swimming after Tokyo Paralympics.

## Alex Brooker



Alex Brooker is a 36-year-old television presenter, journalist and comedian. He was born with limb deformities, which resulted in him becoming a leg amputee and living with dexterity issues. Alex is best known for being co-host on Channel 4's comedy panel show *The Last Leg*, but has since been in a number of TV shows. In February 2018 Alex signed with Leeds Rhinos' Foundation PDRL (Physical Disability Rugby League) team.

Alex is married with 2 young children.

## Warwick Davis



Warwick Ashley Davis is an English actor, comedian, filmmaker and television presenter. He played the title characters in *Willow* (1988) and the *Leprechaun* film series (1993–2003), several characters in the *Star Wars* film series (1983–2019), most notably the Ewok Wicket, and Professor Filius Flitwick and Griphook in the *Harry Potter* film series (2001–2011). He has also presented the ITV game shows *Celebrity Squares* (2014–2015) and *Tenable* (2016–present).

Unlike most people with dwarfism who have a condition called achondroplasia (70.65%), Davis' dwarfism is caused by an extremely rare genetic condition called spondyloepiphyseal dysplasia congenita (SED).

Warwick's wife, Samantha (née Burroughs), has achondroplasia, and their two children also have SED. Their daughter, Annabelle Davis, stars in the CBBC show *The Dumping Ground* as Sasha Bellman.

Warwick Davis is co-founder of Little People UK, a charity that provides support to people with dwarfism and their families.

## **Jonnie Peacock**



Jonathan Peacock, MBE is an English sprint runner. An amputee, Peacock won gold at the 2012 London Paralympics and 2016 Rio Paralympics, representing Great Britain in the T44 men's 100 metres event.

At age 5, he contracted meningitis, resulting in the disease killing the tissues in his right leg, which was then amputated just below the knee. Wanting to play football, he was directed to a Paralympic sports talent day when he asked about disability sport in the hospital that fitted his prosthetic leg.

Jonnie took part in the 2017 series of Strictly Come Dancing, Jonnie was the first para athlete to take part in the show creating a path for others to follow.

## **Nathalie McGloin**



Nathalie McGloin is the only female tetraplegic racing driver in the world. Nathalie is also the first female with a spinal injury to be granted a racing licence in the UK.

Nathalie was in a car accident at the age of 16, which resulted in breaking her neck and being left paralysed from the chest down.

After the accident Nathalie main focus was school and ensure she could return to study A levels. Nathalie went on to study English Literature at Nottingham University, it was at university that Nathalie joined a team, the team was the local wheelchair rugby team.

As well as being an ambassador for the F1A Disability and Accessibility Commission and Wings for Life which funds research to cure spinal cord injuries. Nathalie is co-founder of Spinal Track which is a charity dedicated to giving free track days and rally experiences to disabled drivers.

### **Dame Sarah Storey**



Dame Sarah Storey DBE is a British Paralympic cyclist and former swimmer. She is a multiple gold medal winner at the Paralympic Games in both sports, and six times British (able-bodied) national track champion (2 × Pursuit, 1 × Points, 3 × Team Pursuit). Her total of 28 Paralympic medals including 17 gold medals makes her the most successful female British Paralympian of all time as well as one of the most decorated Paralympic athletes of all time.

Sarah Bailey was born in Manchester without a functioning left hand after her arm became entangled in the umbilical cord in the womb and the hand did not develop as normal. As a schoolgirl, she was subjected to bullying by her school mates and also faced eating disorder issues at school. She joined her first swimming club at the age of ten and was told by her coach that she had started her training too late to be good at anything. (How wrong were they?)

### **Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson**



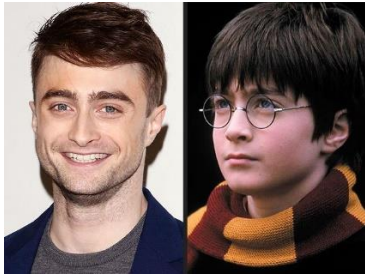
Carys Davina Grey-Thompson, Baroness Grey-Thompson, DBE, DL. Known as Tanni Grey-Thompson. Tanni is a Welsh politician, television presenter and former wheelchair racer. Although christened Carys, her sister thought she was small for a baby and started calling her 'tiny', after a few days this became Tanni by which she has subsequently been known.

Grey-Thompson has spina bifida and is a wheelchair user. She is one of the most successful disabled athletes in the UK. She graduated from Loughborough University in 1991 with a BA (Hons) degree in Politics and Social Administration. She has also been the Chancellor of Northumbria University since July 2015.

Tanni's Paralympic international career began in 1988 in Seoul, where she won a bronze medal in the 400m. As a young athlete she also competed in wheelchair basketball. Her fifth and last Paralympic Games were in Athens (2004) where she won two gold medals in wheelchair racing in the 100m and 400m. In total in her Paralympic career she won 16 medals (11 gold, four silver and a bronze) and also 13 World Championship medals (six gold, five silver and two bronze). Over her career she won a total of 16 Paralympic medals, including 11 golds, held over 30 world records and won the London Marathon six times between 1992 and 2002

On 27 February 2007 Grey-Thompson announced her pending retirement, with her last appearance for Great Britain at May's Paralympic World Cup in Manchester. In preparation for her retirement from the track, Tanni expanded her television presenting career on BBC Wales and S4C, as well as BBC One.

## Daniel Radcliff



Daniel Radcliff is an actor, of course best known for his role as Harry Potter. Daniel has recently revealed he has dyspraxia, a condition that can cause problems with coordination. Daniel believes that he decided to become an actor partly because he had trouble in school due to dyspraxia. As a child, Daniel had trouble with handwriting and tying his shoelaces. His early school years were very difficult because he was awful at “everything, with no discernible talent.” Dyspraxia it’s quite common and often co-occurs with those issues. Between 6 and 10 percent of all children show signs of dyspraxia. Boys are more likely to have it than are girls.

## James Moore



James is best known as Ryan Stokes from Emmerdale. James has ataxic Cerebral Palsy. James is one of the first people with a disability to play a disabled character, James won the Best Newcomer at the 2019 National Television Awards for his part in the long-running soap.

## Chris Packham



Chris Packham is known for his work as a television presenter. Chris was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome in as an adult in 2005. Chris’s career began in 1986 with the BAFTA-winning BBC1 children’s programme The Really Wild Show (1986–1995) and nature photography series Wild Shots on Channel 4. He also wrote and presented the BBC One series The X Creatures and BBC Two’s Hands on Nature and Nature’s Calendar.

Chris became the Ambassador for the National Autistic Society in October 2017. Chris has presented a number of different programs, at present he presents Spring Watch.



## Keira Knightley



Keira Knightley is a very well-known actress. Keira has recently disclosed that she was diagnosed with dyslexia at age six, but by the time she was eleven, with her parents' support, she says, "they deemed me to have got over it sufficiently." She is still a slow reader and cannot read out loud. She overcame dyslexia as a child by reading a screenplay by Emma Thompson. Keira said the only way she was able to get over her learning disability was by reading the screenplay for *Sense and Sensibility*, and imagining what Thompson would do in her shoes.

## Sir Lee Pearson



Sir Lee Pearson is a 14-times Paralympic Games gold medallist having represented British para-equestrianism in Sydney, Athens, Beijing, London, Rio, and Tokyo. Over the course of his career he has won 30 gold medals at European, World and Paralympic level.

Lee was born with arthrogryposis multiplex congenita and first came to public attention in 1980 when British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher carried him upstairs in 10 Downing Street having awarded him a 'Children of Courage' medal.

Lee turned professional after he was inspired by the Atlanta Olympics. He won three gold medals in the championship dressage, freestyle dressage, and team dressage events at the 2000, 2004 and 2008 Summer Paralympics, he won gold in the team dressage event at the 2012 Summer Paralympics, silver in the championship dressage and bronze in the freestyle.

### **Adedoyin Olayiwola "Ade"**



Adedoyin Olayiwola "Ade" Adepitan MBE is a Nigerian-born British television presenter and wheelchair basketball player. As a presenter, he has hosted a range of travel documentaries and sports programmes for BBC television.

Adepitan was born in Lagos. As an infant, he contracted polio, resulting in damage to his legs that left him a wheelchair user. At the age of three, he moved with his family to the United Kingdom, where he grew up in East London. Becoming a wheelchair basketball player, he was part of the British team that played at the 2004 Summer Paralympics, securing a bronze medal. Involved in a range of charities promoting access to sport for disabled people, in 2005 was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to disability sport.

In 2018, Adepitan married Scottish singer Linda Harrison (who performs as Elle Exxe) they had their first child in January 2021.

### **Katie Piper**



Katie Piper is a best-selling international author, inspirational speaker, TV presenter and charity founder. She rebuilt her life after surviving an attack in March 2008 at the age of 24. The acid, some of which Piper had swallowed, blinded her in her left eye, and caused partial thickness and full thickness burns.] The surgeons completely removed the skin of Katie's face, and replaced it with a skin substitute, Matriderm, to build the foundations for a skin graft. This procedure was the first of its kind to be done in a single operation. In 2009, while still in the early stages of recovery, Katie set up a charity. Her charitable focus is on creating a specialist rehabilitation experience in a space where adult survivors of burns can come and live for as much a month in one go, to focus wholly on their recovery.

In, 2014, Katie gave birth to her first child, Belle Elizabeth. In December 2014, she announced her engagement to her partner, they got married in 2015. Then in 2017, Katie gave birth to her second child, Penelope Diane.



## **Amy Dowden**



Amy is best known for her on going appearances on Strictly Come Dancing. Amy joined the TV show as a professional dancer in 2017. Amy has suffered from Crohn's disease since she was a child. In May 2019, she spoke out about the effect the condition has had on her career as a professional dancer. In October 2020, the BBC aired a documentary about Amy's experiences of living with the condition.

Amy is engaged to Ben Jones, her professional dance partner, and together they run the Art in Motion dance school in Dudley.

## **George Webster**



George is 20-year-old actor, dancer and ambassador for the charity Mencap. George has Down's syndrome.

George's job will be to help introduce CBeebies shows and to have fun with the audience. George has previously appeared in a BBC Bitesize video aimed at dispelling the myths of Down's syndrome.

Twitter users expressed how important it was to see diversity on television channels which are aimed at the next generation. Lots of people were excited to hear about George's new role when it was announced on social media on Monday.

George himself has said "Today's reaction has been amazing and I am so happy to have so much support. I am over the moon and overjoyed. It's brilliant.