

# My Future Choices

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



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# Hello from TIN

Welcome to this edition of My Future Choices.

In this issue of My Future Choices we have a fantastic selection of stories from young disabled people from around the country (and the world!), on a range of different topics that are important to them.



A shared passion amongst our bloggers is a love of sport, with Daniel taking us on a tour of his upcoming journey to the Special Olympics, and Sebastian, true to his Oxford roots, explaining his passion for adaptive rowing. Ayush tells his story of playing chess competitively with a visual impairment.

From sport to school – Hannah Louise shares her top tips for achieving in school with a disability.

Being active in the community is a great way to build confidence and make friends, as Joe and Mehmet write about in their blogs that respectively describe running a local disability network and volunteering in a care home.

Members of Access Champions in Peterborough share their mission of making their local area more accessible for the disabled community.

Paige and Rachel finish the edition with their trip to London where they learnt the importance of advocacy and using their voice.

Keep scrolling to read their story and all the others from this edition of MFC.

Enjoy!

**Lucy Slade**

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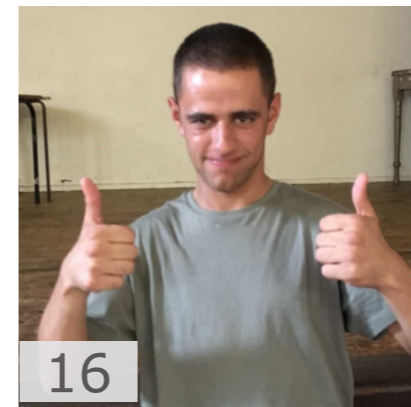
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[tin@ncb.org.uk](mailto:tin@ncb.org.uk)



[www.twitter.com/TIN\\_talks](https://www.twitter.com/TIN_talks)



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



# Useful resources

Here you can find some useful information and support in certain areas.



## Life DownLow'ed podcast

This podcast talks through all things life from the perspective of two 30 somethings, who just happen to do life down low as wheel chair users. Tune in to join their entertaining, thought provoking, honest and open journey through life.



## Difficult conversations for young adults

This resource from Together for Short Lives helps families and young adults start the difficult but important conversations around life-limiting conditions and end of life plans.

## The right to a personal health budget/integrated personal budget in easy read

This booklet explains what people said when they were asked by the government about their legal right to have a personal health budget and integrated personal budget, and what action they will take.



# Quick reads

And here you can read online opinion pieces and advice columns in the media.

**Muscular Dystrophy UK**  
Fighting muscle-wasting conditions



## Advantages of freelance work for disabled people

Journalist Frances Ryan shares her day to day work as a freelancer, the advantages and disadvantages it has for disabled people and why young disabled people should consider a career in journalism.

**HUFFPOST**



## Disability representation is seriously lacking in TV and movies

A recent study has found disabled people to be sorely lacking in representation both on screen and behind the camera, with only 2.7 percent of characters in the 100 highest-earning movies of 2016 having a disability. When you don't see yourself, you feel invisible. Disability should be part of the discussions around diversity.



## "Don't dwell on what you can't do": Travelling with disabilities

Disability hasn't stopped these travellers from seeing the world. They talk about their experiences and offer tips on taking trips – and how the travel industry needs to change.





# My Journey in Sport

Daniel Bernard



My name is Daniel Bernard, I am 24 years old and I live in Watford with my Mum, Dad, brother and sister.

I go to The Inclusion Project as I have learning difficulties and autism and sometimes I get confused and find things hard. I sometimes forget things and lose things when I am not focused.

My favourite thing to do is sport. I really love it and that's why I love The Inclusion Project because I do loads of sporty activities every week with them.



When I left college three years ago I did not know what I would do with my day because I find it hard to do a job, but then I was happy because I started to do The Inclusion Project.

The Inclusion Project was started by a man called Simon Jackson-Turner, who was my tutor at college and I am proud of him for starting it.

It is really brilliant because I get to socialise and I get to do sport. Every week I do swimming, tennis, golf, football and bowling with my friends, and sometimes we do trampolining.



I also play basketball for the St Albans Special Olympics team and I am really excited because I was chosen to play for the GB Special Olympics basketball team in Abu Dhabi in March.

We have to do lots of training and my coaches Simon Jackson-Turner and Greg Seymour work us so hard. We have to remember to run back. I am really good at long shots.



I am very proud to make the team because I have been chosen to do something special. One of the things I like best is working as a team and helping each other. I like it when we win but I also like just playing.

I really love basketball but I also love football and I support Arsenal like all my family (except Poppa who is a secret Spurs fan). I have a season ticket at Arsenal and I really love going even when they lose.

I like singing with the crowd and it feels really exciting when they play. Sometimes I feel nervous too.

My mum's dad was a big Arsenal fan and then my mum too and now we all are. I go to all the home matches and when we play European teams I like to look them up on the map and find out about them.

This summer I was invited onto the Arsenal pitch when I told them about the Special Olympics, there was no match on but it was awesome to stand by the goal.

Sport is a very big thing for me and the best part is that I keep fit and healthy, I feel better when I do it and I like being part of a team. I think everyone should have a go and see if they can have fun.

**Simon Jackson-Turner, Founder and Managing Director Inclusion Project & Head Coach GB Special Olympics Basketball**

*"Daniel was the first ever Participant of The Inclusion Project. I have loved watching him grow in confidence through sport. He is a shining example of what the power of community inclusion can do for one's spirit."*



# On the Water: Rowing with a Disability

Sebastian Johnson



My name is Sebastian Johnson and I am 16 years old.

I'd like to tell you how adaptive rowing – that's rowing for those with disabilities – has enabled me to compete in regattas and indoor rowing championships.

I have a visual impairment and left side weakness following a brain injury when I was a baby.

Ball sports are hard for me and this left me feeling rather left out at primary school when my friends were football mad. I am very active and love being outside so I was

keen to find a club sport I could enjoy and feel part of a team.

I live in Oxford where rowing is very popular so I thought I would give it a try.

I joined a local club and loved it from the start. Until the age of 16 everyone sculls (that's rowing with two oars – better for growing backs) and whilst I found it very hard at first to scull properly on the left side, I did start to make progress.

## Growing Confidence

As my confidence on the water grew I wanted to meet other rowers with disabilities and find more opportunities to compete, so British Rowing put us in touch with Bruce Lynn, the Adaptive Rowing Coach at Marlow Rowing Club.

Marlow RC has one of the largest adaptive rowing programmes in the country and Bruce runs the website [Adaptive Rowing UK](#) which includes a directory of clubs across the country offering adaptive programmes. Adaptive rowing covers all disabilities and with the right adaptations and expert



coaching, almost anyone can learn to row solo or supported by a non-adaptive rower.

## Training and Competing

At Marlow we train twice a week using boats adapted to our needs, including those of wheelchair users. In the winter we train in the clubhouse gym.

Indoor rowing has become very popular and most indoor rowing events now include adaptive races. Relay races are my favourite and the Marlow Junior Adaptives have won several medals.

My first indoor rowing event was the British Indoor Rowing Championships in December last year. Held at the Olympic Velodrome, it was exciting to see so many rowers all in the same place!

When competing, adaptive rowers are grouped by classification following an assessment by British Rowing, so you only race against those with a similar level of disability.

I am PR3 which means I use my trunk, arms and legs to row, but have disabilities which make it harder. It has been great getting to know other adaptive rowers both at Marlow and other clubs – adaptive rowers are a very friendly and supportive bunch!

I would really recommend adaptive rowing to anyone with a disability – it's a great feeling racing along on the water and being part of a club. Adaptive rowing is growing fast and I am proud to be part of it.





## Mastering Chess with a Visual Impairment

*Ayush Prakash Jaiswal*



Everything was perfect for me and my family when I was born on 26th September 2002 in a small village in Bhagalpur, India. There was happiness all around me as a new life had just entered this great universe to face various challenges proposed by it.



I grew up like a normal kid, the favourite amongst everyone in my family. The turning point came when one day I was not able to walk properly, not because of my legs but because I couldn't see properly.

My family got tense as this was an extremely difficult situation for them. Time passed and I underwent treatment. Despite the fact that during one of these sessions, an eye drop reacted against the expectations, my sight kept on getting dull as each day passed. In hope of my recovery, I was taken to Chennai to India's best eye hospital known as 'Shankar Netralaya.'

Post my three years spent here, I was sent to a blind hostel due to the fact that the doctors had no hope of me getting my eyesight back. Securing a spot at the blind school was like a golden 'eye' in my life. I got into the National Association for the Blind (NAB) in Delhi.

This was one of the best schools to be in, due to the prospects of inclusive education practiced there. I slowly started accepting the facts of life and the way it was, making a number of friends along the way.

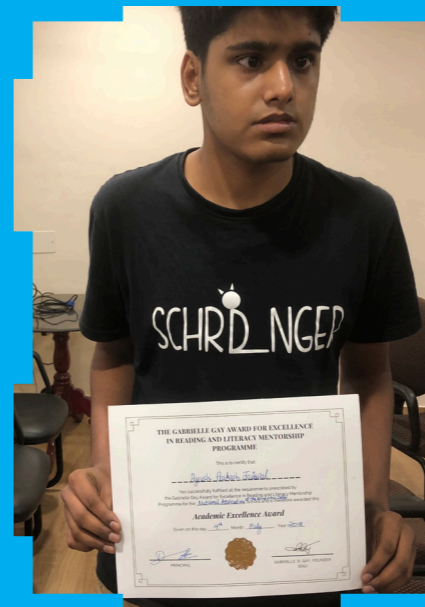
After one year of training in Braille, I was integrated into Tagore International School, New Delhi. I loved my new school and I couldn't contain my excitement when I heard that I had passed the entry test to the school.

During my time here, I have made more friends, learning great values and achieved an enormous amount of knowledge. As the days passed, I started my adventure in the world of chess. My brother taught me how to play the game. This was followed by my numerous games with my friends and family, which made me get stronger.

In 2016, I got to meet Devanshi Rathi through her Project Checkmate and she has been working on improving my game until now, giving me various opportunities to take part in numerous events. Two of my biggest achievements were to obtain my classical and rapid ratings in the game in 2017.

I have also participated in various events in my school such as debate and declamation, national and international Olympiads, and acting events. I am an active member of my school's heritage club and computer club. I am also a part of various national social service campaigns such as 'Dare to Rise' (drugs awareness) and 'Breaking Barriers.' (rights for LGBTQI). These activities coupled with my increasing interest in chess has made me a stronger person both mentally and physically.

I am proud of the fact that I didn't think about my disability in its original course and took up the challenge to accomplish something good in my life. Currently in class 10th and preparing for my boards, my ambition is to become a Chartered Accountant (CA) without giving up on my dreams of playing more competitive chess.



I hope that I could inspire many more people to kick up and dream big because a disability can give an ability in many ways like it did in my life through my chess and other activities that I participated in.





# 10 Top Tips for Surviving and Achieving in School

Hannah Louise



My name is Hannah Louise and I have just finished Sixth form and my 13 years in school. In this long period I have learnt that there are many ups and downs that come with school life, especially as a student with a disability. I wanted to share my top tips for overcoming challenges and achieving in school even with the added challenges of disabilities or SENs.

## My top 10 tips



### 1. Develop resilience

Always keep going and try not to drown in problems, sit down and logically think about it. Even though some problems may be large and you may need a lot of support to sort them; most are small and just seem big. I know school, along with the added challenges can be tough but break them down and you will be sure to solve them.

### 2. Talk to people!

It is really important that you talk to people if you're stressed or if you are concerned about something. Try and find a family member and/or a teacher who you can sit down with and talk your worries through. There are some really amazing teachers who will go the extra mile to help you out.

### 3. Your view is important!

My friends and I have had a lot of dealings with many different SENCOs. I have realised that whilst some are supportive, others impose their view on what is best for you. But you

know what is best for you, don't let others solely make decisions for you.

### 4. Ask for help

I have unfortunately witnessed all the way through school, children and young people being bullied for being disabled or having a SEN. If anything is said about you or anyone else tell a teacher or a parent, stand up for what is right and do not take their mean words to heart. What they are saying is just their opinion and their opinion cannot be right as most do not know you. Ignore and show them you are better and ask for help.

### 5. Change is going to happen!

Throughout your school life there are going to be many changes. I know change can be difficult to cope with, so always try to gain as much information as possible and then it will seem less worrying. Try to give it a go and use the change to better yourself.

### 6. You are the expert!

No one knows you better than you. People who run and work within schools can suggest support but you must use your voice and say what you think is best for you, respectfully but clearly state what you need.

### 7. Be realistic!

Schools are limited to funding and staff and you must realise that whilst some schools really do want to help higher powers make the decisions and that

if there is not enough funding then only limited help is available (again showing why talking to teachers and family to de-stress is extremely necessary).

### 8. Be patient

I know that finding friends can be harder for those with disabilities and I have found this extremely hard! I think I've only just about cracked it and I'm 18! Just realise that you are never alone and that you will find friends who will accept you and will care and support you. Be patient and know you are never alone!

### 9. You can achieve

For those choosing their GCSEs or A-levels remember that you can achieve anything. The transition from A-levels to university can be a difficult and daunting process, but there is a lot of support available from schools, universities or sixth form, just ask!

### 10. Your disability doesn't define you!

With the right help and support you can achieve what you want. You will always hear the words SEND in schools, but this is just a label. Just remember you are as able to do things as others; it may just take longer, for instance to achieve your grades or to make friends, to increase your confidence to talk to teachers but you can do it! Defy expectations and shine, prove them all wrong! You can do this!





# The Importance of Social and Educational Inclusion in the Mainstream System

*Joe Wastell*

When I was five years old I had encephalitis. When I recovered I lost my ability to walk and talk, I also lost my ability to read and write. Soon after returning to my mainstream school, I got moved to a SEN school. Half way through my education I joined a mainstream scout group and went to several jamboree camps.

The thing that really raised my confidence was joining an expedition to South Africa, where my scout group and another built a borehole supplying water to a local village. We also attended a South African jamboree camp celebrating so many years of scouting in Mpumalanga.

Whilst attending the jamboree camp we were sent to build a play area for an AIDs orphanage. This experience really opened my eyes to the rich and poor gap between both different people and countries. A couple of years after that in my last year of school, I was told by my head teacher that I will never cope in a mainstream college.



I ignored her and after spending five years at college I started work. Whilst working I studied for two years at the Open University.



A couple of years ago just after the 2016 European referendum I decided to set up a group called Disability Medway Network to encourage and support people with disabilities like myself to take up a greater role in society.

Through my work with Disability Medway I have been invited to sit as a panellist representing people with disabilities on a consultation about changes to GP surgeries.

I have also been nominated for a couple of awards and have been invited to an opening of a wellbeing cafe. Disability Medway Network is also an information sharing group and I have held three information sharing events so far.

I am also an active member of my local political party and I am hoping to stand in the 2019 local elections. I don't think any of this would have been possible without the initial confidence of being a scout and being given the opportunity to be included in to the mainstream system.







# Finding Happiness through Volunteering

Mehmet Zorba



Mehmet

dreams, goals and talk to them about my aspirations.

I have built great relationships with the clients, their families and the staff.

Whilst at work I have been told that I am a 'people person' as I really enjoy talking about my dancing and my drama.

I know the clients enjoy listening to me as I have been told that they like to hear a young voice with fresh ideas and dreams about their future as it sometimes brings back memories of when they were younger.

I am a student, I am 20 years old and I attend a special school.

Last year I was extremely fortunate because I was offered a voluntary job as a carer who works with clients who have Alzheimer's.

My role is to help feed them, read to them, play games and to speak to them.

This is a job that I really like as I can speak with the clients and share my

Whilst continuing to work voluntarily once again I was fortunate as I was given training for first aid and how to handle the elderly.

This was overwhelming as I felt not only did the staff support me with the teaching methods, they gave me support when I made a mistake time and time again.

This has helped me to remember methods and I have built a strong relationship with the staff and the



clients. They understand that I have learning difficulties and sometimes I have trouble remembering to do simple things like pack my lunch.

However, the staff have helped me to organise myself, to learn about time and how to become more independent slowly but surely.



This method calms them down and their mood changes with tears transferred to a smile. That's one thing I love about my job.

I love going to work because the best thing about working with clients who have Alzheimer's is that every day is brand new.



The clients I work with are sensitive and sometimes confused, forgetful, happy or very sad.

They have mixed feelings and I like to see them feeling happy and I often sing to them.

I reassure the clients that every little thing is going to be all right. They have gained my trust and believe in me.

I say yet again I care and I will be there to find the best in YOU!





## Making our Local Area More Accessible: One Surgery at a Time!



We are Access Champions, a small group of young, passionate disabled individuals in Peterborough on a mission to make our local area more accessible for the disabled community.

Within the first week of Access Champions, we came up with a mission statement: "Our hope to gain fair access becomes our destiny to fulfil." This is what we have, and will continue to achieve!

We have been together for three years and regularly experience the various problems that inaccessible facilities and information can cause the disabled community. Currently, we are working

with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to help disabled people become more independent when booking and cancelling appointments online. Our project name is Access Health and we are offering local surgeries the chance to have their website reviewed by us.

We are excited about this project as, with the rise of technology, many people are now booking and cancelling appointments and ordering prescriptions online.

This is something we have found that disabled people are not able to do due to inaccessible websites.

Over the years, we have completed many projects, which have all been close to our hearts, including:

- Conducted access audits on public buildings
- Represented the college at the annual scrutiny panel
- Delivered presentations to Peterborough's Commissioning Directors
- Appeared on local radio
- Helped with local plans for a new, accessible tea room
- Produced a film showcasing the hopes, dreams, aspirations and challenges of young disabled people in Peterborough
- Written a Level 1 AIM Awards Disability Awareness Qualification

We are fighting to change this one surgery at a time! We are also reviewing local public transport, providing feedback directly to the services on how they can be more accessible to disabled individuals.

Alongside this, we are also promoting our travel training scheme; a scheme that aims to teach young disabled people how to use public services and thus far, it has been very successful. As you can see, we are always very

busy and we would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Tash Dalton, whose fantastic idea Access Champions was, and Aisleen Parker who has recently taken over. Without them, Access Champions wouldn't be here today!

If you are interested in finding out more information or working with us, please do not hesitate to get in contact however near or far you are; we will always be able to help!

**Email:** [achampion@citycollegepeterborough.ac.uk](mailto:achampion@citycollegepeterborough.ac.uk)

**Facebook:** Access Champions

**Twitter:** @AccessChamps

**Website:** <https://accesschamp.weebly.com>





# Using our Voice to Share the Importance of being Heard

Paige and Rachel

## Paige

My name is Paige and I am 21. I live in Derby and have Williams Syndrome. I am in my second year at Transition 2, this is a college for young people with learning disabilities.

When I first came to college I found speaking up tricky and most things frightened me. Being anxious is not good as it stops you from doing fun stuff. I didn't even want to go to college, but now I am here and I love it.

Transition 2 has supported me to become more confident and now I have a boyfriend and go on dates. I have even given a presentation in front of my college friends. Instead of leaving this year, I am coming back to become a peer advocate.

## Rachel

My name is Rachel; I am also 21 and go to Transition 2. I have Down's syndrome and live in Derby with my Shared Lives carers.

My end goal after finishing two years of college is to improve my skills, become more confident and responsible, so I can get a job.

And guess what? I now have two jobs in town and like Paige have also been offered a third year at Transition 2. This will enable me to build on these skills and to find my own voice through advocacy.

We were lucky enough to be offered a trip to London, where we met Caroline who works for SEAP (SEAP is an independent charity that specialises in the provision of advocacy and related services).



Caroline helped us to understand all about Advocacy. Advocacy is to making we all have a voice, talking about the things in our head.

So what's next for us? We want to make sure we spread the word about advocacy and how important it is to be heard.

And then....

**GOOD THINGS WILL HAPPEN!**







# Rights are important because...



In April CDC ran a social media week to get a discussion started with young people on their right to participate in decision making, specifically why they think it is important they have and can use rights effectively! This is what they said:



#CYPRights



# Useful Organisations

**Action for Kids**  
[www.actionforkids.org.uk](http://www.actionforkids.org.uk)

**Action for Sick Children**  
[www.actionforsickchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforsickchildren.org.uk)

**Afasic**  
[www.afasicengland.org.uk](http://www.afasicengland.org.uk)

**Ambitious about Autism**  
[www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

**Anti-Bullying Alliance**  
[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

**British Association for Supported Employment**  
[www.base-uk.org](http://www.base-uk.org)

**British Institute of Learning Disabilities**  
[www.bild.org.uk](http://www.bild.org.uk)

**Cerebra**  
[www.cerebra.org.uk](http://www.cerebra.org.uk)

**Challenging Behaviour Foundation**  
[www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk)

**The Communication Trust**  
[www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

**Contact (Previously Contat a Family )**  
[www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

**Council for Disabled Children**  
[www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)

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

**Disabled Children's Partnership**  
[www.disabledchildrenpartnership.org.uk](http://www.disabledchildrenpartnership.org.uk)

**Disability Rights UK**  
[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

**Down's Syndrome Association**  
[www.downs-syndrome.org.uk](http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk)

**Dyslexia-SpLD Trust**  
[www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk](http://www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk)

**Family Fund**  
[www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk)

**Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities**  
[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities)

**Home Farm Trust**  
[www.hft.org.uk](http://www.hft.org.uk)

**Housing and Support Alliance**  
[www.housingandsupport.org.uk](http://www.housingandsupport.org.uk)

**I CAN**  
[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

**IPSEA**  
[www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)

**Macintyre**  
[www.macintyrecharity.org](http://www.macintyrecharity.org)

**Mencap**  
[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

**nasen**  
[www.nasen.org.uk](http://www.nasen.org.uk)

**KIDS**  
[www.kids.org.uk](http://www.kids.org.uk)

**National Autistic Society**  
[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

**National Children's Bureau**  
[www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

**National Deaf Children's Society**  
[www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)

**National Development Team for inclusion**  
[www.ndti.org.uk](http://www.ndti.org.uk)

**National Network of Parent Carer Forums**  
[www.nnpfc.org.uk](http://www.nnpfc.org.uk)

**National Sensory Impairment Partnership**  
[www.natsip.org.uk](http://www.natsip.org.uk)

**Information, Advice and Support Network**  
[cyp.iassnetwork.org.uk](http://cyp.iassnetwork.org.uk)

**Paradigm**  
[www.paradigm-uk.org](http://www.paradigm-uk.org)

**Preparing for Adulthood**  
[www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk](http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk)

**RNIB**  
[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

**Scope**  
[www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

**Sense**  
[www.sense.org.uk](http://www.sense.org.uk)

**Shaw Trust**  
[www.shaw-trust.org.uk](http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk)

**Together for Short Lives**  
[www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk](http://www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk)

**Whizz-Kidz**  
[www.whizz-kidz.org.uk](http://www.whizz-kidz.org.uk)

**Young Minds**  
[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://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.

