

Expanding horizons – Opening doors

Summer 2021



Dear Member,

Welcome to Unlimited's summer newsletter, our first since autumn 2018. The last eighteen months have been challenging for everyone but particularly for disabled people, many of whom have been shielding and do not have the technology that has made contact with friends and family at least possible remotely. Unlimited has been fortunate in being given a small grant by Disability Action and the National Emergencies Trust (NET) which has enabled us to produce this newsletter, and employ Nicola Sutherland to do some freelance work for us on raising our social media profile and updating our member list. We are pleased new (and younger) people have joined us. Sadly we have lost touch with some members who have moved into care homes, passed away or simply moved house.

Unlimited continues to champion the needs of disabled people across Oxfordshire, writing to the different Councils and submitting information to Government consultations.

We even managed an online AGM and tea party though we couldn't share any cake!

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. We hope to send another later in the year but in the meantime, if you use Twitter or Facebook, keep in touch that way.

Twitter - [@Unlimited_Ox](https://twitter.com/Unlimited_Ox)

Facebook - www.facebook.com/unlimitedoxfordshire

Diane Sider, Editor



Tim Treuherz Joins Our Committee

We have a new committee member, Tim Treuherz, who joined us at the AGM. He has three children who are not children any more and lives in Oxford. Tim is a wheelchair user and is currently a trustee of Citizens Advice Oxford. Before he retired, Tim was Head of Legal at the Vale of White Horse District Council where his specialisms included planning and highway law. So he knows how to write a robust letter to the authorities and to press the right buttons! 'I joined' says Tim 'because I felt I had something to offer. I found myself writing on my own behalf about poor provision for people with disabilities and I realised my letters would carry more weight if they were on behalf of other people too'.

One of the issues he is currently dealing with is North Parade Avenue. This is a lovely street in North Oxford full of character. The city and county councils have put gates at either end so the businesses can put tables and chairs in the street. Did they think of wheelchair users? It doesn't look like they did. 'We are not spoilsports' says Tim. 'People with disabilities and particularly wheelchair users and visually impaired want to get out and enjoy themselves after lockdown just like everybody else. The council needs to think again about the scheme'. Tim is hoping to meet one of the officials responsible in the next few weeks.

Tim is a member of the sailing group for people with disabilities, Oxford Sailability, and he is looking forward to going sailing on Farmoor Reservoir outside Oxford. 'Sailing gives me peace of mind that I don't get anywhere else', he says. 'They hoist me into a specially adapted trimaran yacht and off I go on my own'. New members are welcome and the volunteers will always be ready to go out with you and teach you how to sail - but only if there is enough wind!

For more information, contact Tim via Unlimited.
For Sailability see accessiblesailing.wordpress.com/oxford-sailability/

email: oxfordsailability@gmail.com

Tel: 07948 353887

Versus Arthritis launches a guide for TV and Film industry as research shows people in chronic pain feel 'invisible' on screen

It sounds like a devastatingly tough film script, being in so much pain that it takes away your ability to work, to socialise, to care for your family, or even to move freely; but for over 18 million people in the UK with chronic pain – of which arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions are one of the biggest causes – this is their day-to-day reality.

These experiences are rarely shown or depicted accurately on TV or film screens, making people feel as invisible as their pain and enabling misconceptions about arthritis to continue, such as that it's an older person's condition. All this stops people from speaking up and getting the help they need. That's why Versus Arthritis has launched *The Painful Truth: A Guide to Depicting Chronic Pain on Screen*. For the first time, guidance for the TV and film industry aims to bring an increased and more accurate portrayal of chronic pain. With research findings from nearly 4,000 people with arthritis and chronic pain in the UK, as well as input from TV and film professionals, this unique guide provides information about arthritis and chronic pain (defined as pain which has lasted more than 12 weeks despite treatment or medication). It also brings practical suggestions for accurate storylines and characters and features personal experiences to illustrate what it's really like so that society can begin to understand, and so that people with pain feel represented, heard and seen.

Research from the charity highlights the huge impact of a lack of storylines and poor representation on screen, with a third of people with arthritis saying it has even made them less likely to seek out support. It also shows why TV and film need guidance as half of people with arthritis saying that TV and films don't portray pain well, while nine in ten say their pain or condition have not been accurately represented by a character on screen.

Versus Arthritis' research also revealed that just six minutes of the UK's most watched TV shows and films in 2019 featured chronic pain. But even when it did feature, it perpetuated unhelpful ideas, as there were no young characters living with painful conditions like arthritis, and characters hid their pain from those around them for fear of judgement. Consequently, half of people with arthritis say they speak up less about their pain with family and friends and one in three report a negative impact on their mental health.

Faye Young, 27 from Bristol, living with axial spondyloarthritis and fibromyalgia said: 'I have never seen the pain that I go through with arthritis shown on film and TV. It is upsetting. I don't feel it's represented in any way. If it was depicted on screen, I would be so happy as it would spread awareness of what people actually go through every day, like being bedbound by the pain,

or so fatigued you can't even drive home from work. It takes so much strength to live with arthritis, I'd like more people to know and understand that. It is not just the physical pain, but the mental and emotional pain we go through is truly overwhelming.'



In our recent telephone survey some Unlimited members told us how they live with chronic pain and fatigue. It is important that on TV (and in radio dramas) there are characters who are shown getting on with everyday tasks like cooking, going shopping and playing with children, whilst trying to manage pain. It helps create understanding of the challenges for friends and family, and the general public. They can see that pain and fatigue are very real issues, as much an impairment as visible impairments like sight and hearing loss.

To read the guide and find out more about the campaign, visit Versus Arthritis

www.versusarthritis.org

enquiries@arthritisresearchuk.org Tel 0300 790 0400

Letter from OxPA



Oxford Pedestrians Association (OxPA) is starting a new campaign to call for accessibility for everyone to places where walkers can access. We are aware that, for example, wheelchair users cannot get through kissinggates or over the steep rainbow bridges. We'd like to ask you if you would be willing to share with us examples of places where your members are obstructed whilst going around Oxford city, so that we can add such places to our call for changes to barriers to getting about actively in our city.

I look forward to hearing from you., Sushila

Sushila Dhall

Chair, Oxford Pedestrians Association

12 Stable Close, Rewley Park, OX1 2RF

susxiladhall@gmail.com Tel: 01865 790783



Covid-19

Talking to Unlimited members on the phone about their experiences in lockdown they have told us how difficult it is to find vital information or get hold of services without a PC or a smart phone. Others said that without good neighbours they would have struggled to get supplies, and some were simply so grateful to have a phone call from us.

'I didn't go out at all during lockdown.'

'I didn't feel too isolated but it was a very difficult time because I really look forward to getting out and going to the shops.'

'I'm very lucky to have my family round the corner and they brought me food during the lockdown, otherwise I don't know what I would have done.'

'I did feel very lonely because I don't have family and friends who live near by and I don't go on the computer.'

Triple Jeopardy: disabled people and the COVID-19 pandemic by Tom Shakespeare, Florence Ndagire, and Queen E Seketi, edited from *The Lancet* first published: March 16, 2021

Disabled people have been differentially affected by COVID-19 because of three factors: the increased risk of poor outcomes from the disease itself, reduced access to routine health care and rehabilitation, and the adverse social impacts of efforts to mitigate the pandemic. 10 years ago, WHO's *World Report on Disability* noted that disabled people were more likely to be older, poorer, experience comorbidities, and be female. Older age, deprivation, and comorbidities are also associated with increased risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19.

Risk of death from COVID-19 between January 24th and November 30th 2020 in England was 3.1 times greater for disabled men and 3.5 times greater for disabled women than for men and women without disabilities. People with learning disabilities living in communal residential settings had a higher risk of death from COVID-19 than people without disabilities. But even in household settings, people with a learning

disability have an increased risk of COVID-19 death. Without assistive technology disabled people who need it cannot be independent.

When individuals are expected to use face masks and physically distance, people with hearing loss who cannot lip read or people with visual impairment who use guide dogs can find it difficult to follow these rules and as a result they might be stigmatised. Additionally, confinement in homes increases the risk of physical or sexual violence and abuse, to which disabled children and adults are additionally vulnerable.

Inadequate preparedness for the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has been shockingly familiar. Disabled people have been overlooked or are an afterthought in the education provision for children with special educational needs, the provision of personal protective equipment in social care, or the inclusion of sign language in government announcements. In a public health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, clear information becomes more important than ever. In the UK, messages have been confused or complicated, which has been difficult for people with learning disabilities to understand. In other countries, there can be low confidence in public health messaging.

When social care is put on hold, cancelled, or reduced, people with disabilities are thrown back on the support of families if they have them. When it is not possible to attend day centres or voluntary projects, people with disabilities may be left with no one to meet.

Increased isolation and uncertainty or fear about the pandemic, have also impacted the mental health of disabled people. People with mental illness can find isolation and fear particularly debilitating. People with physical impairments are also disproportionately at risk of mental health conditions. For many people, this pandemic has generally been bad for mental health. Yet in the pandemic there have been some positive developments for people disabled people. Where they can get internet access, disabled people have been able to participate in society as never before, because physical and communication barriers have largely disappeared as education, work, shopping, and many leisure activities have been driven online.

Disabled people do not want a return to the pre-pandemic 'normal' which was a world filled with complex barriers to inclusion. A better future has to grow from learning the lessons, listening to the life experiences of disabled people, and making meaningful investments that improve the wellbeing and socioeconomic conditions of disabled people.

If you need to contact Oxfordshire County Council about social care help and you cannot get online, you can phone
0345 050 7666
8.30am - 5pm Monday - Thursday
8.30am - 4pm Friday

Meet the World's First Inclusive Deodorant for People with Visual Impairment and Upper Limb Disabilities

Identify the product you want. Pull off the cap—twist up the small swivel at the bottom of the tube to release the product. Put the lid back on. These are all daily motions for many of us when it comes to our beauty routines—but for some, it's an accessibility barrier that's kept them from using specific products.

'There is currently no deodorant designed for people with upper body disabilities or visual impairment to use,' says Esi Eggleston Bracey, EVP & COO of Beauty & Personal Care Unilever North America.

'That's why we set out to create a revolutionary deodorant application process that ensures usability for everyone—however you move.'



That product is : *Degree Inclusive*. It took the Degree team, who co-created every single prototype alongside about 200 differently-abled consultants, about a year to perfect the design. This version includes a hooked top and enhanced grip placement so you can apply in a myriad of ways, a magnetic lid for easy opening and closing, a braille label, and a larger applicator area, so you get more surface area per application. Inside the *Degree Inclusive* packaging, you'll find the same sweat-and-body odor demolishing formula that shoppers love. Two of the 200 people who helped create the current design of *Degree Inclusive* are author and journalist Keah Brown and Christina Mallon, the head of inclusive design at New York-based communication agency Wunderman Thompson.

'I was working at an ad agency on a major competitor of Unilever when my arms became paralyzed because of a motor neuron disease,' Mallon says. 'I was frustrated with not being able to see myself in the advertising and not being able to use the product. Rather than being discouraged, I recognized the opportunity to help brands create inclusive communications and products.'

Degree Inclusive is currently in beta testing, and the Unilever team is taking feedback from users to perfect the model and make it as helpful as possible.

Low-traffic schemes have ignored disabled residents, says new research

Disabled people have been ignored by policy-makers in the post-COVID rush to introduce low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs), according to new research by disabled people's organisation Transport for All (TfA) which interviewed disabled people and carers from 19 London boroughs, as well as Newcastle, Manchester, Yorkshire, Surrey, Oxford and Edinburgh. Although disabled people have both positive and negative views about LTNs, local authorities and transport bodies have failed to consult with them on the potential impact of LTNs on their lives and travel, says the *Pave the Way* report.

It is the first detailed research into the impact of LTNs on disabled people. The schemes aim to reduce traffic on roads and promote walking, wheeling and cycling – so-called 'active travel' – by restricting access for vehicles to residential roads. The TfA research found many disabled people felt 'a great sense of injustice and unfairness at LTN measures, because there is such a distinct lack of alternative options for transport'. The report says: 'In some of the areas where LTNs have been introduced, participants have told us that the streets are very unfriendly. They say uneven pavements, trees and tree roots, lack of dropped kerbs, street clutter and dockless bikes all contribute to it being very difficult and exhausting to get through.'

A criticism raised by TfA's research was that LTNs have led to longer journey times for residents, as well as their care workers, with travel becoming more exhausting, expensive, complicated or difficult. The report concludes: 'It is clear from our findings that, although some disabled people are experiencing benefits as a result of LTNs, many disabled people are being disproportionately and negatively impacted, compounded by the many existing barriers that disabled people face in many aspects of their lives.'

Oxford City has several LTNs up and running already with plans to introduce 3 more over the summer which between them will have 14 filters. Unlimited understands the need for traffic calming measures to help reduce pollution and increase safety of pedestrians and bike users. However we know that some of our members have experienced problems with increased taxi fares to vital appointments and hassle for their carers living out of the neighbourhood. We have been working with City Councillors to improve how disabled people are consulted with and their voices heard.

Email or phone us if you want to tell us your LTN story or concern.

info@unltdox.org.uk

07460 837471

Meet the Member - Nick's Creative Journey



During Oxfordshire Artweeks 2021, we spoke to Oxfordshire-based artist, writer and Unlimited member Nick Lewis about his work, and his experience as an artist living with MS.

'I spent a whole hour doing my first ever sketch back in the 1970s. It was really wonderful and when I'd finished, I realised I hadn't thought about anything else for that hour.'

In the 1980s, Nick was diagnosed with MS which has had an impact on the way he works – 'Having MS means I have gradually had to change the way I paint. I used to use charcoal, then watercolour because I discovered I really enjoyed adding colour to my sketches, then I moved onto acrylics. But now I'm getting more abstract and not very good with using brushes so I've evolved into using oil bars as I can get hold of them easily and paint canvases in that way.'

Now living in Oxfordshire, Nick is an active member of a local art class, which has continued to meet online since the first lockdown in March 2020. His local west Oxfordshire MS group also encouraged members to participate creatively on Zoom during lockdown, and printed Nick's illustrations and excerpts from his life story.

Lockdown also provided Nick with an opportunity to set up an online art book group – partly set up because, 'I like looking at art books but they are too heavy for me to pick up!' The group has proved a popular way for people to look at art together and focus on different painters and different types of art. 'We can explore subjects like shading and tonal work and look again at the work of the Old Masters, who people think were

all men but they weren't. So, we can challenge that sexist idea by looking at women painting at that time as well.'

Connecting with other artists is something Nick really enjoys and he's looking forward to '*springing*' out of lockdown and his local art class being able to meet in person again.

'People in the group are really helpful and are always happy to help me set up and get my materials together.' When it comes to what subjects to paint, Nick thinks keeping an open mind is key, 'Paint what you think would make a good image, it could be anything. One of my art teachers brought in some of their paintings once. They'd painted sewage pipes being excavated! But they were fantastic paintings so colourful.'



And his advice for those who might be just starting out on their artistic journey and are looking to build up their confidence is practical and simple. 'In lockdown our art teacher said, just look at what's in front of you and represent it in any way you can. I thought, I haven't got anything interesting in front of me, then I saw a green jug which I started sketching, then painting. It came out well. I wouldn't have thought to draw this otherwise. So, my advice would be, just look at what's in front of you, think how you feel about it and then start painting!'

You can see more of Nick's work and read more about his life story on his website at:

www.travelswithmyself.co.uk

Wallingford Accessible Boat Club

The vision for the Wallingford Accessible Boat Club was created by John Jenkins MBE, a lover of the countryside, and the waterways, a keen fisherman and a passionate advocate of disabled people's rights to participate in sport and outdoor activities. John grew up on the river here in Wallingford, spending every spare moment boating and fishing, particularly in Benson weir. He had a wonderful time and recently he retired back to Wallingford with a determination to once again get out onto the river. John is a full-time wheelchair user and currently opportunities to do that independently are non-existent, not only for him but the majority of disabled people. Many other disabled folk in the area that John spoke to also want to get out on the river. Whilst wheelchair users can go cruising on large craft in groups, to go boating independently or drive a boat yourself, is nigh on impossible. The Wallingford Accessible Boat Club changes all that – it enables this disadvantaged segment of the community to achieve what able-bodied people do; to just get out on the river.



We are situated not only on a lovely stretch of the Thames but also on the longest lock-free reach on the river – so a Wallingford base is ideal. Formally launched in July 2014, the glass fibre Coulam Wheelyboat V20 is designed for a wide range of activities on inshore and inland waters and is The Wheelyboat Trust's most versatile Wheelyboat to date. It is built for use with outboards up to 90hp at speeds of 30mph+ to provide exhilarating power boating to people with mobility difficulties. It comes with a drive-from-wheelchair helm as standard and its huge 90 square feet of level floor space can comfortably accommodate up to ten adults including six wheelchair users. Its innovative design, ease of access on and off and large open cockpit means it also has considerable versatility as a rescue and safety craft, workboat, water taxi and general-purpose leisure craft. Service resumed on May 17th. To book contact John Jenkins on 07976 297835, or email john.jenkins@wabc.org.uk www.wabc.org.uk/

Oh those Cobblestones!



Any of you who have tried to navigate the cobblestones on many of Oxford's streets in a wheelchair or scooter, or with a cane, walker or even a baby buggy, will know how uncomfortable, even painful, it can be. Every year since 2010 the EU has given one city the Access City Award, naming it the most accessible city in Europe, having prioritised accessibility in urban planning. Winner of the 2019 Access City Award, the medieval Dutch town of Breda is like many other European cities. It's home to stretches of ancient cobblestones, which all add to the city's charm but are an accessibility nightmare, with many people avoiding travelling down them altogether.

Breda, however, has gone to great lengths to find a balance between maintaining its medieval aesthetic while still making it accessible for everyone. Throughout the streets of Breda, city planners have used machinery to pull up the inaccessible cobblestones. They've sliced them, flipped them over, and returned them to the ground. This allowed Breda to maintain its cobble aesthetic, while also making the pavements accessible. This was a big engineering feat for Breda as city planners weren't able to pluck the cobblestones out by hand and had to use small devices in order to peel them from the ground, due to EU regulations. 'The cobbles were all round-tops,' says Wouter Schelvis, an accessibility advisor in Breda. 'They removed these old cobblestones, they flipped them over, and they sawed them in a way in which it still looks mediaeval.'

Oxford City Council please take note!

If you have come across a problem with a pavement in Oxford City which is making getting around for you difficult or is a hazard you can report it - phone 01865 252956.

If you can get online you can report it via an online form – search for oxford.gov.uk to report a pavement problem and click on the form.

If you live outside of Oxford City you can use www.fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Customer Service Centre on 0345 310 1111.

Layout by Bob Hundley, Mailing by Lilian Sherwood
Contact details: www.unltdox.org.uk email: info@unltdox.org.uk
Tel: 07460 837471 @Unlimited_Ox

Unlimited Oxfordshire is a registered charity no. 1156718
c/o Joanna Matthews, Cherry Cottage, Noke, OX3 9TX

