

SEE  
ABILITY

# SeeAbility Stories

Autumn 2021

**“Because we have  
lived experience,  
we’re able to  
connect with people  
in our community  
who also have  
a learning disability”**

**Joanne, SeeAbility Eye Care Champion**

**#WeSeeAbility**

# Joanne's vision

Meet Joanne, one of SeeAbility's Eye Care Champions. Growing up with a learning disability, Joanne has always been passionate about making community services accessible for more people like her. Joanne explains:

**"When I heard SeeAbility were looking for people with lived experience to become their Eye Care Champions and help people with disabilities access better eye care services, I knew I had to apply for the job. I was over the moon to be hired, because not only is it my first paid job, but it's also something that I care about."**

Our Eye Care Champions have experience of working in eye care or lived experience of disabilities. We believe this makes them ideal advocates to fully understand the barriers that people face in accessing eye care that works for them and to empower their peers by leading by example.

Since joining SeeAbility two years ago, Joanne has been able to reach and advocate for people like Tom to receive life changing eye care.

**"Tom is autistic and often struggles with his mental health. For the past four years, he's been living in a secure hospital where he's unable to leave without support. During one of our video calls, Tom told me his eyes were aching and very itchy. I immediately knew that Tom needed an eye test and encouraged him to seek help at his hospital."**

Despite asking for help, Tom was told that he couldn't go to the opticians and get an eye test during the pandemic.



**"When Tom told me what had happened, I wasn't surprised because the voices of people with learning disabilities are often ignored. I explained to him that optometrists can travel to the hospital he has been admitted to and give him an eye test there."**

After speaking with Joanne, Tom spoke to the staff again and they arranged for him to have an eye test at the hospital. At his appointment, he was prescribed eye drops to help with his itchy eyes and glasses to see more clearly.

**Many people don't realise the permanent damage that can occur if you leave an eye care issue untreated. An early intervention such as a simple eye test can stop someone from going permanently blind.**

**People with learning disabilities are 10 times more likely to have serious sight problems, but are also less likely to access the eye care they need due to a lack of awareness and inaccessible services.**

**Your gift today can help Eye Care Champions like Joanne to ensure more people with disabilities understand the need for good eye health and get the treatment and support they vitally need.**



# SeeAbility wins BIG at the Charity Awards

We're excited to announce that SeeAbility won two awards at this year's Charity Awards ceremony. We took home the Overall Award for Excellence, which is the oldest and most prestigious award in the charity sector. We also won the top prize in the Healthcare category for our work to convince the NHS to roll out eye testing for children with learning disabilities in all special schools across England. Sue Sayer, Chair of the Charity Awards judges, said:

**"We can all appreciate what a huge difference being able to see clearly can make to anyone's ability to engage in everyday life. This is an outstanding project which, by influencing the NHS, will make a lasting difference to many people with a learning disability across the UK."**



Lisa Hopkins, Chief Executive at SeeAbility, added:

**"The support we've had over the years across health, research, the third sector, education and at the NHS has been immense and there are too many people to thank, but this award is for them all too. We also pay special recognition to the funders who have helped us get to this stage. We sometimes have to pinch ourselves when we think of the difference this will make to the lives of future generations of children with learning disabilities."**

Thank you all for your continued support. We couldn't have achieved this without you.

## Make your steps count, because everyone counts.

This October, you can help us take a giant step towards inclusion for people with disabilities by making your steps count. From fast running steps to assisted wheelchair steps, baby steps to dog walking steps, every step you take this October counts because everyone counts.

### How to get involved:

1. Register at [www.seeability.org/stepscount](http://www.seeability.org/stepscount)
2. Receive a **FREE** Steps Count t-shirt
3. Get sponsored and stepping



# HIRED!

## Beatrix serves up employment success



Finding your first job is never easy, but for people with learning disabilities it's even harder.

Beatrix has been ready to work since she left school, but despite her drive, she's been unsuccessfully searching for seven years. That's until SeeAbility's supported employment programme Ready, Willing and Able stepped in.

Beatrix got her own supported employment coach to develop her skills and prepare for work. Our coaches help employers see beyond people's disability, to assess their skills and abilities just like everyone else.

Finally, Beatrix secured a much-anticipated interview to be a waitress at an award-winning restaurant in Bristol.

Her cheery personality and extensive preparation meant Beatrix got the job, bringing her long search to an end:

**"It feels really good. By having a proper job, I feel a weight lifted off my shoulders. Life is a lot less stressful now! The support has been fantastic – some of the best I have ever had. It made it so much easier not doing it on my own."**

Her supported employment coach, Rhian, says it's no surprise Beatrix found work, now she has the right support:

**"Beatrix's caring personality is something you're instantly drawn to. From the start, she's shown lots of motivation. She put her all into finding work and we're so happy for her."**

To find out more about our Ready, Willing and Able programme visit [www.seeability.org/RWA](http://www.seeability.org/RWA) or get in touch by emailing [RWA@seeability.org](mailto:RWA@seeability.org)

## See your impact on BBC One this November

We're delighted to have been selected for a BBC Lifeline Appeal, which will broadcast at the end of November. Please tune in to BBC One to watch our appeal on **Sunday 28th November** to see how your support is making a difference. Times may vary, please check your TV schedule.



**theBigGive**

CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE  
30 NOV—7 DEC 2021

**Save the date &  
double your donation**

Our Big Give Christmas Challenge is back! This means that every penny you give to SeeAbility on the Big Give website from midday 30 November until midday 7 December 2021 will be doubled. To find out more and to see how your donation can make TWICE the impact, visit [www.seeability.org/biggive](http://www.seeability.org/biggive)

## Leave a legacy

Gifts in wills play an incredibly important role in helping us to improve the lives of people in the UK with learning disabilities, autism and sight loss. Every gift enables us to provide tailored support and specialist services to those who need us now and in the future. If, like us, you see ability in everyone, please consider giving a gift in your will and leave a legacy.

Visit [www.seeability.org/future](http://www.seeability.org/future)  
or call us in confidence on 01372 755 042.

## Any questions?

To **keep in touch** or find out more about how we're helping to change lives by focusing on ability:

**Call:**

**01372 755 042**

**Email:**

**[supportercare@seeability.org](mailto:supportercare@seeability.org)**

SeeAbility, Newplan House,  
41 East Street, Epsom KT17 1BL.



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