

The Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List Awards 2024



24 April 2024

Cineworld, O2 Arena,
London

 **dimensions**

My Vote
My Voice

V O D G

A letter from Ken Bruce

Presenter and host of the 2024 Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List Awards



My dear son, Murray, was the proud recipient of a Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List Award in 2019. Following Murray's award, I have hosted annual online events to honour nearly 100 Leaders, and I am immensely proud to be in attendance with all of you today.

Murray, like you, is a passionate advocate. He conveys his thoughts and ideas with such power and depth, without uttering a single word. You may have seen him on the BBC programme "Inside Our Autistic Minds" with Chris Packham. This was a documentary that opened eyes to the fact that intelligence and the ability to express oneself should never be underestimated based on one's ability to speak.

It is increasingly crucial to showcase the remarkable accomplishments of people with learning disabilities and those who are autistic. Regrettably, outdated societal perspectives persist, with some individuals (including some who run our country) failing to recognise the invaluable

contributions, impacts, and voices of this important demographic. Platforms like these awards play a vital role in challenging such perspectives and by sharing your work we can work together to change minds.

Today is all about you – your triumphs, your journey, and the undeniable positive influence you have on our society. I am truly honoured to be a part of this joyous occasion and to recognise the extraordinary work that you continue to do.

“Today is all about you – your triumphs, your journey, and the undeniable positive influence you have on our society.”

Understanding

I dearly have the priceless admiration for the Sun in the evening.
It seeks respite from the fast pace of the day.
And yearns to rest its weary head on the pillow of the sky.
I'm a person who wants to be in the presence of the Sun.
Likening myself to the people who ever try to be better.
The Sun with its energy must rest.
Even if it has the power left to illuminate the World.
I just want to have half of the Sun's power.
But it is not seen by people on my Earth.
I have to shine brighter.
I liken my ability to the Sun's rays.
They bask in my yearning to be understood.
Now and in the future of all people like me.
Let the Sun rest and give me the energy to make a difference.

W. Murray Bruce – 31.5.19



About the Leaders' List

Awards

Every year, Dimensions runs the Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List Awards with two fantastic partners – this year that's VODG and My Vote My Voice.

The Leaders' List Awards puts the spotlight on powerful people who are taking a lead in their lives and making things better for themselves and others.

Open to anybody with a learning disability and autistic people, the awards do more than simply celebrate amazing people; they provide background lighting so winners can show why and how they're Leaders.



Website
dimensions-uk.org
Social media
@DimensionsUK

Dimensions is one of the largest national not-for-profit support providers for people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Driven by our values, we place the people we support and their families at the heart of everything we do. We want every person we support to have a great life, with excellent outcomes.

The Leaders' List Awards are run by our dedicated marketing and communications team, alongside other national campaigns, which are driven by the people we support.

About our partners



Website
vodg.org.uk
Social media
@VODGMembership

VODG (Voluntary Organisations Disability Group) is a national charity that represents leading not-for-profit organisations who provide services to disabled people in ways that promote independence, choice and control.

We work on behalf of members to influence the development of social care policy, build relationships with government and other key agencies, promote best practice and keep members up to date on matters that affect service delivery.



Website
myvotemyvoice.org.uk
Social media
#MyVoteMyVoice

My Vote My Voice is on a mission to encourage people with learning disabilities and autistic people to vote in the 2024 General Election. Because your voice matters.

The campaign was developed by United Response, Dimensions, Mencap, Ambitious About Autism and the people who draw on our care and support.

We're a coalition of organisations, groups and self-advocates who want equal voting access. Organisations and groups can support the campaign by signing the My Vote My Voice charter online.

With special thanks to...

This year is the first time we've been able to hold such a prestigious event, and that's all down to the generosity and donations from everyone involved.



Over **180,000** autism friendly visits

Cineworld
dimensions-uk.org/autismfilms

Cineworld has been a partner of Dimensions national autism friendly cinema screenings project for nearly 12 years! They've had over 180,000 visits to over 125 films and have always worked hard to be inclusive and welcoming for their neurodiverse guests.

Cineworld has kindly donated this prestigious venue free of charge, and their colleagues have helped with extra touches to make sure it's a truly special celebration for everyone.



The UK Cinema Association
ceacard.co.uk

The UKCA are the crucial connection to the cinema industry. They not only support our partnerships with national cinema chains, but have also funded training resources and events. Without their help, autism friendly screenings wouldn't be possible and we wouldn't have secured such a special venue for these awards.

The UKCA run the national CEA Card initiative. This is a card that allows carers free entry to cinemas when they're supporting the cardholder to go.

Visit their website to see if you're eligible.



eventers

Your next event is going to be awesome!

Eventers London
eventerslondon.co.uk

Eventers London are the brilliant catering company who have not only given an extremely generous discount for the food and drinks you're enjoying, but also put extra thought and effort in to make sure that everybody's dietary needs are catered for and inclusive in the menu.

Genesis Print Solutions Ltd
Tel: 01753 696940

Jason at Genesis Print Solutions kindly offered special rates and with his help we've been able to print this programme, your tote bags and much more.

C L I F F O R D
C H A N C E

Clifford Chance
cliffordchance.com

Clifford Chance are one of the world's largest law firms, and their London Foundation Management Group kindly covered the costs of the trophies and medals the winners and finalists receive today.



Designed by Simon Gilles
simongilles.co.uk

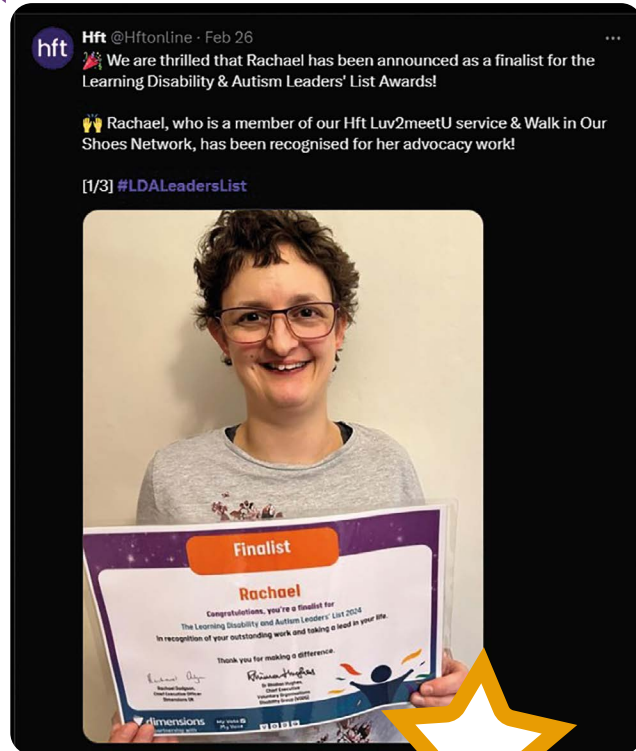
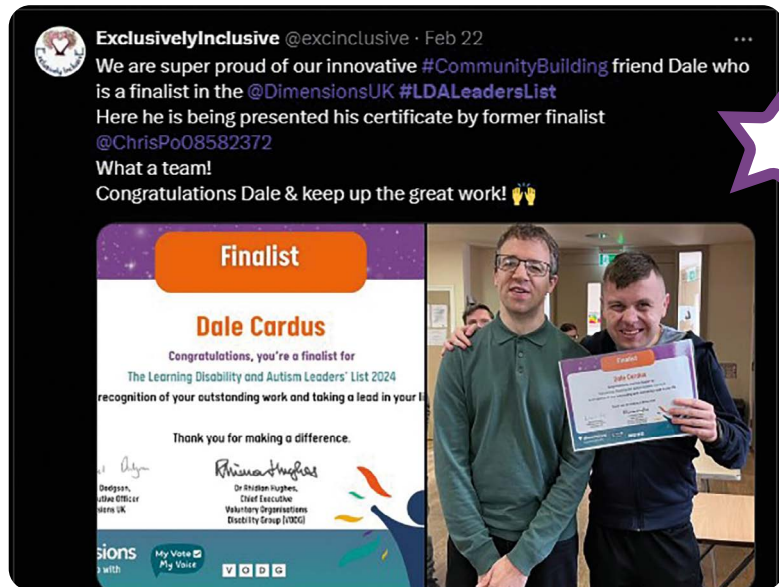
We are so thrilled with how this programme looks, and it's all down to the skills, hard work and incredibly generous discount of Simon Gilles Graphic Design.

Tel: 07960 715538
Email: design@simongilles.co.uk

Let's really

Celebrate today

Post your photos and videos with the hashtag #LDALeadersList. Share the excitement and show everyone that YOU make Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List Awards possible.



Keep in touch:
We love to see what you're doing!

Follow us on:
f i c X in
@DimensionsUK

Advocacy, policy and the media

Advocates, lobbyists, spokespeople and journalists are all perfect fits in the Advocacy, policy and the media category. Here we celebrate people with learning disabilities and autistic people who are challenging negative views and making society fairer.

Judges



Jonathan Andrews

“It’s a great honour to be a judge and becoming a Leader really supported my campaigning on employment opportunities. Now I’m a qualified solicitor, fourth on Shaw Trust Disability 100, one of 20 worldwide on the Enable Role Model List and an elected councillor. I understand the recognition and support that the Leaders’ List brings people to achieve their ambitions.”



Martin Cornford

Martin is Trustee in Training for The Include Project and has run two half-marathons to support them! He’s a keen actor, singer and member of many arts groups. Martin is passionate about the environment and hopes to help raise funds for an electric minibus. He is always ready to help anyone who needs it.



Finalists

Emma-Jane Clark

Emma, a late-diagnosed autistic family carer, advocates for children and young people with autism and ADHD at parent carer groups. She also works for NHS England as a Lived Experience Policy Co-Worker. She also collaborates to ensure healthcare accessibility for people with learning disabilities and autism.

“Respect at how, despite facing barriers, Emma works hard to help her family and others.”

Troy Njenje-Mbanga

Troy is a hard-working advocate, inspiring young people to get involved and make a difference. He shares his experiences with passion and encourages others to believe in their voices. Despite facing challenges, he remains true to himself and spreads joy wherever he goes. His journey is empowering and he never gives up on sharing his stories. Troy’s dedication and positivity are truly inspiring.

“Brilliant to hear about all the participation groups Troy has worked with to help others.”

MacIntyre Checkers Advisors

MacIntyre Checker advisors review and approve documents for easy understanding. They have expanded their services and now check videos and podcasts, impacting both internal and external organisations. The team has been together for ten years, with members transitioning into Easy Read Creators. They receive thanks for their contributions and have had a significant impact on MacIntyre. New advisors are welcomed, and team members have seen personal growth and increased confidence.

“Impressed – again, the judges thought the MacIntyre Checkers Advisors are doing brilliant work.”

Rachael Stead

Rachael advocates for learning disabled adults and helped develop Voices for Our Future. She has spoken at Parliament, is an active member of Hft’s Walk in Our Shoes Network and Allies Working Group and is an NHS Oliver McGowan trainer.

“Great to hear all about the various working groups that Rachael supports.”

The Agents of Change (Flamingo Chicks)

Flamingo Chicks’ Agents of Change is a group of disabled and non-disabled change-makers aged 5-18 who meet monthly to advocate for a fair future for disabled children. They engage in activities such as giving feedback to organisations, public speaking, training, and advocating for inclusive environments. They aim to break down barriers to inclusion for disabled children, championing their rights and showcasing their abilities. Their mission is to create a society that values and includes disabled individuals.

“Very impressed to hear about all of the fantastic work being done by all the Agents of Change.”

Advocacy, policy and the media

Winners



Researcher group

Becky Wilson, Senen, Felicity & Charlena

Becky, Senen, Felicity, and Charlena are described as having profound and multiple learning disabilities. They all collaborated in research on embodied identity. Their work has influenced practices and sparked awards, publications, conference presentations, and social media sharing. It has shifted perspectives on interacting with people with severe disabilities. The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists praised their work as a model of respectful practice.

“Impressed to read about the groundbreaking work regarding research and identity, and happy to hear about the characters and positivity of the group.”



Denise Bowles

Overcame discrimination and homelessness

Denise overcame discrimination and homelessness to become an advocate for people with learning disabilities. She’s authored a book, trained health staff, and organised events for people with dementia. Denise’s confidence grew as she became a director of Inclusion North. As a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community, she strives to improve quality of life for people with disabilities.

“Encouraged by Denise’s commitment and enthusiasm, and ability to use negative experiences to drive positive change.”



Lorraine Stanley

Fought for disability awareness, sex education, and accessibility

Lorraine got sick at 32 and needed a wheelchair and sunglasses. Lorraine fought for disability awareness, sex education, and accessibility in medical centres. She has overcome anxiety to speak at conferences and won a Sexual Health Award. After she was diagnosed as autistic at 42 she started her own business.

“Great respect for Lorraine’s commitment to tackling a taboo subject and persevering despite difficulties.”



Matthew Lester

Excelled as a Quality Consultant at Dimensions

Matt has excelled as a Quality Consultant, impressing colleagues and senior management. He has actively contributed to reviews, received praise for his presentations, and shared his personal story to inspire others. Matt is passionate about advocacy and has engaged with politicians to support social care initiatives. Overall, he has made a significant impact in his role and continues to inspire those around him.

“Pleased by the range of work being carried out to support those with learning disabilities, including with Parliament and government to help get more people voting.”



Respect in Bexley

Part of Bexley Mencap x 30 members

Respect in Bexley, a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities, celebrated their 30th birthday last year. They work with a learning disabilities nurse to provide training sessions at hospitals, educating nurses on the needs of people with learning disabilities. The interactive sessions include comedy, videos, music, and discussions on important topics such as equality, bullying, and changing attitudes. The group has received positive feedback and praise for their impactful sessions.

“Impressed. We thought the group were doing really important work, training health care staff. We loved the ideas and range of activities they used.”

Congratulations to all our winners



Local communities

Being out and about in your local community isn't something to aspire to, it's something everyone has the right to. But our finalists and winners in this category are taking things a step further; they're people with learning disabilities and autistic people who are improving where they live and helping other people enjoy what their local area has to offer.

Judges



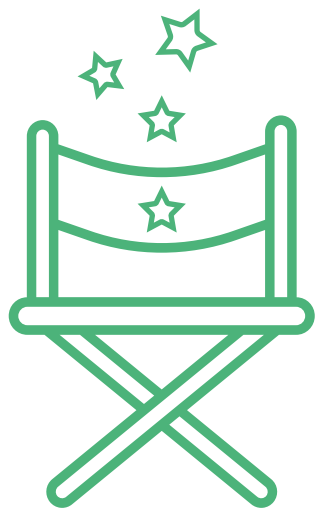
Jemma Clancy

"I love to read all the stories that get published. It felt amazing to be a leader myself and an achievement I was very proud of. I am especially excited and grateful to be part of the judging the team this year."



Nigel Hollins

"First we used voting boxes; Nigel put six in the smiley face box and four in the 'not sure' box. Then, out of each box, he chose his favourite, second favourite, etc. and added comments on each. It is very hard to decide which order to put them in, they all sounded like great people."



Finalists

Dale Cardus

Dale from North Yorkshire set up Happy Mondays Together, a social group to combat isolation. With his friends, he hosts sessions for over 40 people. His dedication has made the group a success and everyone is welcome to join and bring their true selves. Dale's achievement is something everyone is proud of.

“Admiration for his work on this and for others. Clearly a very positive person who makes others feel positive too.”

Russell Gerber

Russell volunteers extensively in his community, sharing his experiences with social care and stroke awareness. Despite suffering a stroke during the pandemic, he made a full recovery and now raises awareness about the symptoms. He also gives talks on living independently, loneliness, and the role of support workers. Russell promotes positive relationships in social care.

“A positive person who doesn't give up, it was inspirational to read about someone sharing their experiences to make change for others.”

Bromborough Pool Café Team (part of Autism Together)

In 2022, our charity's café reopened post-pandemic. Now, 21 people work at the café weekly, gaining skills and awards. The café now operates seven days a week, with a focus on co-production involving those we support in decision making. The café has received positive feedback from the local community since reopening.

“Teamwork makes me happy, and to see people gaining real skills and real employment. We need more of this!”

Matthew Halligan

Matt lived with two nagging ladies, but started a Man's Club without them. The group boosted his confidence, leading to art exhibitions, fun runs for charity, and even performing in a pantomime. His mum was proud, and he plans more events for the club despite his busy schedule.

“Happy to see someone gaining confidence in themselves and making things happen!”

Jordan Hale

Jordan is amazing and has loved his lads' day activities such as going to the pub, going to the aviation centre, watching the darts and having a little flutter on the 2p machines at the arcade.

“Happy to see someone enjoying their life and following their interests.”

Local communities

Winners



Kelly Rainey
Inspirational transformation

Kelly lived in institutions for 12 years, then moved to a long-stay hospital where she had limited freedom. After the Transforming Care programme, she moved back to Leeds, got her own home, reconnected with family, attended college, and learned new skills. She is proud of her progress and enjoys her newfound independence (including holidays!). The success of her transformation has led to the development of a new supported living service for others. Kelly is highly respected by those she works with.

“A great role model to show the importance of opportunity for change, but also how far someone can go when they make the most of that opportunity and don't give up.”



Crystal Higgins
Empowers others to achieve

Crystal is an inspiring woman who uses her own past trauma to help others. She runs a group for women with disabilities who have experienced similar struggles. She organises various charity events and is becoming a Safeguarding Champion. Crystal bravely shares her vulnerabilities to empower others, making them feel special and capable.

“Very inspired to read this story, turning her bad experiences into positive changes and helping others do the same is something we can all aspire to, I think. A great advocate for 'Girl Power' yes!”



Jason Eade
Showcasing strength, creativity and leadership

Jason challenges low expectations for autistic people to large audiences through his award-winning radio show Carousel Radio. He hosts the Blue Camel Club and leads workshops at SEND colleges in Brighton and Hove. Despite losing both parents, he continues to showcase strength and develop his creativity and leadership.

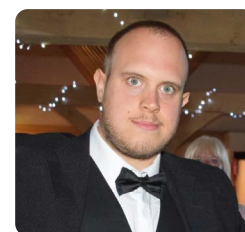
“I was sad when I read about him losing his parents but amazed at his talent and achievements. Inspired by how he has kept going thinking of others and making a big difference.”



Judith Bywater
Challenging disability perceptions

Judith challenges perceptions about disabilities by actively participating in her community and supporting various causes. She volunteers at the local food bank, as a Santa's elf, in a charity shop, and at the community centre. Her colleagues greatly appreciate her hard work and positive attitude.

“Wow! So much contribution. Is clearly very active and gives so much to her community. Great reading this story!”



Daniel Sadie
Caring, thoughtful, respectful, and inspiring

Daniel is a passionate, charming, and generous individual. He raised over a thousand pounds for prostate cancer in memory of his grandfather; actively supports the Liberal Democrat Party and campaigned for remaining in the European Union during Brexit; volunteers at a local care home and provides autism training; volunteers for the Salvation Army and offers help to those in need; and has a positive impact on those he supports, with people describing him as caring, thoughtful, respectful, and inspiring.

“Impressed and inspired at how much activity he does and what lovely feedback showing how much he and his work is valued.”

Congratulations to all our winners



Leaders' List in numbers

Welcome to our sixth Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List Awards! The past few years have been incredible; let's see what we've achieved...

6 years



of the Learning Disability Leaders' List Awards

1000

Entries and nominations



180+

Leaders



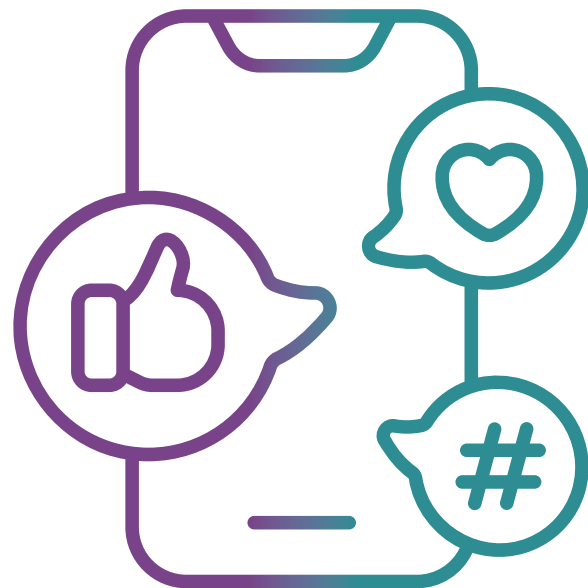
Social media and website

999,999

impressions

259,000

webpage views



10,000+

engagements

#LDALeadersList

Please note: Calculated estimates based off six years of statistics

Over

175

pieces of media coverage



Featured in:

The Guardian, BBC Radio 2, The i, Channel 5 News, Pick Me Up, Care Talk, Care Management Matters, Learning Disability Today, Daily Express, local BBC Radio and local newspapers

2020 special Covid Leaders' List



Celebrity support past and present:



Sally Phillips



Liam Bairstow



Ruben Reuter



George Webster



Ken Bruce

A warm tribute to...

Elspeth

Elspeth was a Speak Out Leader at VoiceAbility for nine years. She used her lived experience of Asperger's to talk with autistic people and listen to their experiences and then share any issues with professionals who could help change things.



“She always ensured that the voice of autistic people was heard, loud and clear, holding professionals to account and helping them to do better.”

room who asks, ‘Why does it have to be that way?’ about a process, is so helpful and makes everybody think again about what we are doing.”

We wish Elspeth had realised how her work was so very much appreciated. We have received many, many messages from those who worked with her beyond VoiceAbility. The word ‘powerful’ comes up over and over again. We know she didn’t always realise what power she had but that power changed people’s views. We have heard how staff attending training that Elspeth delivered, always commented on how it made them think and see things from a different viewpoint. How she always ensured that the voice of autistic people was heard, loud and clear, holding professionals to account and helping them to do better. Elspeth was a force to be reckoned with when she challenged politicians and on one occasion, attended a Select Committee on Disability – standing up for the rights and views of autistic people there.

Elspeth’s ability to say it how it was, changed opinions, and because of that she changed lives. Her work was serious, her messages were serious and meetings were often emotionally challenging for her. But Elspeth had a wonderful ability to make everyone laugh, with an off-the-cuff comment, or a story and her wonderful chuckle.

Elspeth had a great sense of humour and fun and never wanted a meeting to be boring if it didn’t need to be, even going as far as encouraging a room full of parents and carers to do a Mexican wave! She really broke the ice there!

Our Speak Out team remember Elspeth as our kind, funny, warm colleague, who made us laugh and very importantly made sure all the Easy Read documents or presentations we made were perfectly proofread. She was proud to call herself our official proofreader and always checked our work.

Talking with and not to people was incredibly important to Elspeth; she really wanted people to have the opportunity to be heard. She was motivated by her lived experience to make sure that other people didn’t suffer in the way that she had.

Elspeth was particularly skilled at sharing her own experiences with a story or a phrase that would stay in your mind. She was especially passionate about changing things, such as knowing how long waiting times might be and disability benefits assessments.

Elspeth was especially good at asking just the right question in meetings that would get to the heart of an issue. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adult Social Care Forum told us, “Health and social care matters can often be complicated and sometimes bureaucratic and having somebody in the



Sports, arts and entertainment

The Sports, arts and entertainment category is a place for finalists and winners to show off not only their talents, but the work and passion that has gone into their skills. Here, we are showcasing the dedication of athletes, artists and performers who have learning disabilities, are autistic and are deserving of their spotlight.

Judges



Jessie Carter-Kay

"I am 33 and I have learning disabilities and autism. I am a director of Pulp Friction CIC, a company that gives work experience to people with learning disabilities. I sing in our choir and speak at conferences with friends. We do a lot in the community and show that people with learning disabilities want the same things."



Elliott Garcia

"Hello, my name is Elliott Garcia, I am the voice actor behind the UK version of Bruno the Autistic Brake car from Thomas and Friends All Engines Go. As an autistic person I feel very strongly about representation in entertainment. I can't put into words how happy I am about being a judge."



Finalists

Gabriel Phelps

Gabriel, an Asperger's football referee, overcomes many challenges to help teams and remains dedicated. Despite his struggles, he helps the community with compassion and never gives up on those in need.

“His kindness comes through, to get to the games and always give 100% so others can enjoy sport.”

Charis Gambon

Charis, a freelance writer, has connected with the autistic community through her article 'My struggle to accept my autism'. Many individuals, especially autistic women, found the article to deeply resonate with their own experiences. Despite facing challenges with dyspraxia, Charis has achieved a Masters degree in History of Warfare and excels as a sabre fencer. She continues to push herself beyond her limits and inspire others in the community.

“I find this highly relatable, it was brave to write the article and share your experiences.”

Alex McNally

Alex is a dedicated runner with over 60 medals, including six marathons. Despite early mornings, he trains regularly and excels in his sport. Truly awesome!

“I admire the commitment. I'm always struggling to get out of bed so I'm amazed at his dedication and determination.”

Mikey Reynolds

Mikey Reynolds, known as DJ Mikey, spread joys and promotes rights for adults in East Sussex. He is very good in easy read document approval, delivers training, and is an Arts Connect Ambassador. Mikey is a founding member of the band Delta 7, who uplift and inspire through their music. As a DJ, Mikey brings people together and breaks down barriers to inclusion, proving to be a true community leader.

“I loved this, I found this very interesting. His work to support his community and make it easier to access health services is really important.”

Katie Day

Katie went from a silent athlete to a national voice, leading the Athlete Leadership Team at Special Olympics GB. She advocates for inclusion in media, public speaking, and sports, with a focus on employment. She believes in showcasing athletes' abilities beyond their disabilities and giving them a voice. In addition, she was recognised as the 'volunteer of the games' at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham for her boxing support.

“It's great that Katie is getting her voice heard. Her work fighting for inclusion in sport and employment is amazing.”

Sports, arts and entertainment

Winners



The Inclusion in Sports Group

Educating healthcare professionals and empowering students

The Inclusion in Sports Group’s initiative has spread from regional to international – inspiring teams across England, Europe, Argentina and Canada. They meet weekly online to produce resources promoting mixed ability sports. The group educates healthcare professionals on including individuals with disabilities in decision-making and encourages them to refer clients to inclusive sports activities.

They also engage with SEND schools, empowering students to become trainers and inspiring them to try new sports.

“ They have changed their own and other people’s lives. They have met important people to showcase what they do. Having international contacts is really good. They cover lots of sports and are very inspiring to read about.”



Piangfan Angela Naksukpaiboon

GB Olympic archery champion

Having completed an archery beginner’s course in October 2021, just months later she started competitions in January 2022. She went on to win 23 awards, including national championships and top rankings. Piangfan has been juggling Ph.D. studies and training, aiming to become Olympic Champion for Great Britain. She’s a true inspiration.

“ I can see that this has taken a lot of determination and commitment.”



MacIntyre Dancers

Promoting physical, social, and emotional wellbeing

The MacIntyre Dancers, made up of trained dance leaders and artists, create an inclusive and welcoming dance environment. They aim to promote physical, social, and emotional wellbeing, especially for those facing challenges. The dancers aspire to support others in pursuing their dreams and breaking from conventional expectations.

“ I think it’s good what they are doing, being part of a team with amazing dances and being part of their local community.”



Abdul Hameed

Inspiring inclusivity in fitness and sports

Abdul’s personal experiences help others understand challenges faced by people with learning disabilities in accessing sports. Feedback from participants shows the impact of his work. Abdul is a role model for promoting fitness and health for people with learning disabilities.

“ His work is very important to help people get involved in sports.”



Ben Fai Lankshear

Inspirational professional athlete

Ben Fai is a professional cyclist and athlete. He has represented Great Britain in cycling at the Special Olympics twice, earning medals in both events. Ben also plays football, cricket, and practices martial arts. Additionally, he is a self-advocate and works in quality assurance for an advocacy group. Ben’s 22 medals showcase his dedication and serves as an inspiration for others.

“ He should be very proud, applying himself to all those different sports and representing his country.”

Congratulations to all our winners



Work and education

The Work and education category celebrates people who are volunteering, earning money, learning new things and sharing their experiences, expertise and knowledge. Finalists and winners in this category are building career and education pathways for more people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Judges



Stephen Lewis

“I’m a Disability Advocate, qualified football coach and one of Wales’ most recognised Disabled Footballers. It was fantastic to be a Leader and something I’m very proud of. I was honoured to be asked to be a judge and look forward to celebrating more of the talented people we have all around the UK.”



Hannah Butcher

“I was diagnosed with autism and ADHD as an adult, and won this award for leading within an organisation, and advocating for neurodivergent individuals in the wider industry. When I won it was very exciting, and I wanted to pay it back by being a judge and uncovering more amazing stories from incredible people!”



Finalists

Emma Fraser

Emma is a seasoned Quality Consultant, excelling in interviews and presentations. She mentors new recruits and chairs meetings. Emma spearheaded a project in late 2023 to improve daily record-keeping, involving other consultants and providing feedback to enhance training. She is an active member of Dimensions Council, skilled in leading discussions and ensuring meetings run smoothly. Emma’s leadership qualities shine through in all her endeavours.

“Emma is a force to be reckoned with. Her initiative and helpful attitude should be celebrated..”

Rebecca Pritchard

Rebecca excels at the Period Dignity job with Cardiff People First, providing free samples and education to people of all ages on menstruation. She courageously faces challenges presenting to audiences and is praised for her work.

“This is such an important topic for Rebecca to advocate on. Well done.”

Meeting Together Forum at Autism Together

The Meeting Together Forum discuss services, share ideas, and provide feedback. Members have the opportunity to question senior staff, discuss policies, and suggest guest speakers. The forum has helped improve members’ confidence and has had a positive impact on operations and services.

“I was very pleased to read about Meeting Together and their work bringing a fantastic service to their community. Well done to everyone, your work is very much needed.”

Ace Anglia’s Peer Educators

Meet our amazing peer educators. They help people feel confident about going to their annual health check appointments through interactive workshops and community outreach (including health professionals). Some are now Oliver McGowan trainers. They are constantly expanding their skills and knowledge.

“Reassured that this group is taking direct action in the community, enabling others to have healthier, supported lives.”

The Victoria and Stuart Project Research Assistants Team, Kingston University

This project was centred around creating a toolkit for support workers to help people with learning disabilities plan for the end of their lives. Their efforts are changing the narrative around death and dying for individuals with learning disabilities.

“This group are actively addressing a taboo and should be celebrated for their endeavours.”

Darren Smith

The nominator trained Darren, who is autistic and has two autistic sons, in the funeral industry. Despite stigma, he provides empathy and excels in stressful situations. He has admirable strength and the courage needed for his roles should be acknowledged. “He’s a learner I am proud of.”

“Darren’s contributions in the funeral industry have had a fantastic impact. He’s broken down barriers and he should be very proud of himself and the challenges he has overcome.”

Work and education

Winners



Richard Redmond
Dedication and innovation in promoting health screenings

Richard has made exceptional contributions as a Health Check Champion in North Wales. He has shown dedication and innovation in promoting health screenings for people with learning disabilities. His advocacy work and public speaking have raised awareness and fostered positive change.

Richard is also a valued member of Conwy Connect, where he represents adults with learning disabilities at national meetings and runs a friendship walk. He shows commitment, leadership, and a passion for self-advocacy and human rights.

“Richard has provided really valuable work in the community and fostering positive change.”



Rory Hutton
Volunteers to inspire others

Rory is a young autistic man who shares his journey into paid employment as a Barista and the importance of volunteering in the community. He has spoken at conferences nationwide and at his former school’s careers week. Rory volunteers to inspire others with autism and learning disabilities in Warrington and beyond. He is a regional

reporter for Macintyre Magazine and leads a cycling social group for mental and physical well-being.

“I was very pleased to read about Rory’s journey to becoming a Barista. I can tell the positive impact Rory has and his commitment to helping others and highlight the positives about getting more people with autism into employment shows. Rory should be very proud of himself, I am very impressed.”



Chloe Creevy
Shaping a brighter future for individuals with disabilities

Chloe is an inspirational advocate for individuals with learning disabilities and autism. Her resilience and determination shine through in her roles, from training on relationships for a more inclusive community, helping with projects to empower individuals

and improve support services. Chloe’s personal hardships drive her commitment to empower others and create positive change. She is shaping a brighter future for individuals with disabilities in the UK, making her truly inspiring.

“Proud of Chloe, she has shown resilience and now shares her gift with others. She hasn’t let her early start define her.”



Laura Cantcliff
A role model for students

Laura tirelessly helps neurodivergent and disabled people with health, exercise, leisure, and services. She does all this through Autek CIC and freelance work. She is also

completing research on creative arts for neurodivergent individuals, and recently led theatre classes for young disabled people. Her work has inspired students to pursue careers in the arts, and she is a role model for them. Additionally, she has improved access for neurodivergent people at Autek, creating Makaton videos and providing support for disabled staff members. Her efforts have improved workplace interactions and productivity. She is also developing a documentary on anxiety in disabled individuals to improve understanding among service providers. This is just the beginning of her impactful career.

“Laura sounds very accomplished, and like me, she should remember to take some time for self-care too!”



Richard Campbell
A community hero that loves giving back

Richard, 68, is a dedicated volunteer at Severn Hospice and Bernardo’s. He rarely misses a shift as he so strongly believes in giving back to society. He recently completed a computer competency course and is always up for a challenge.

“A lot of warmth for Richard and his attitude to keep giving back. What a community hero!”

Congratulations to all our winners



Thank you and goodbye

Wow guys, we did it! I've spoken to so many of you in the lead up to this event and the honour of meeting you is immense. I've worked on the Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List since it started all the way back in 2018 and I can never quite believe how special it is each time. I'd like to take a moment to thank everyone who helps make it possible.

The Dimensions Marketing team – my esteemed colleagues. Each year they accept the hefty to-do lists and looming deadlines with patience and grace. They help make sure the Leaders' List is accessible for all and celebrated by many.

The Leaders' List partners – VODG and My Vote My Voice are strong pillars of support for these awards, and have championed the cause, provided invaluable expertise, and helped us all seize the opportunities that the List presents.

The nominators – A mighty force of individuals who never fail to amaze me with the quantity and quality of entries each year. Collaborating with you all is a privilege, and the networks we have developed are invaluable.

The judges – The people with the toughest job of all. Each year there are eight judges who have the impossible task of determining the winners. But they make it possible and the kind words they share about each entry add that personal touch for all finalists. Former winners themselves, they understand the anticipation and nerves that come with the waiting, making their insights all the more special.

Everybody who helped make this event a reality – I have been completely overwhelmed with the generosity of businesses and independent traders who have all helped make sure all our finalists and winners are celebrated to a level they deserve.

The finalists and winners – The VIPs, MVPs, stars, legends, hotshots...You are extraordinary people who are changing the world. Unfortunately, what you do so often goes unappreciated and even unnoticed by those outside your circle. It is an honour to share your stories and celebrate the incredible impact you are making on the world. You are all truly amazing, and you deserve to be recognised.

Thank you everyone for making the Learning Disability and Autism Leaders' List 2024 Awards possible. Let's see if we can make 2025 even bigger!



Sarah Walters,
Dimensions Campaigns Manager





Better Lives for More People

Dimensions supports adults with learning disabilities, autistic people, individuals with complex health or forensic needs, and those with a history of behaviours of distress.

The people we support and their families are at the heart of everything we do. We want every person we support to have a great, ordinary, active life as part of their local community.

Contact us to find out more:



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