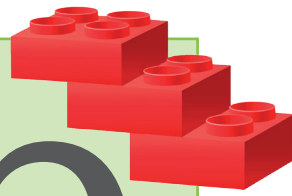


# link-up

West Midlands



**July 2014 Disabled People's User-Led Organisation Newsletter**

Welcome to the first issue of the West Midlands regional Link Up newsletter. This is going to be a regional newsletter to let you know what other DPULO's are doing within the West Midlands and keep everyone informed of what's going on.



## **Rachael Johnston DPULO Young Ambassador**

Hi, I'm Rachael and I'm one of six Young DPULO Ambassadors. I was nominated for the role because of my dedication and commitment to engaging with young people and allowing young disabled people to have a voice.

I have a mental health issue which is still not recognised by many as a impairment. this is something I want to be able to change and be able to get people to recognise mental health.

In my experience of working with young people many have said they wanted to know more about unseen impairments, especially mental health as it was becoming a major topic in so many schools.

I set up "the Journey Back to Life", a not for profit organisation, which has allowed

me to open up and talk about my experience with mental health but also look at giving workshops around body image and body confidence.

I had the opportunity to work with my mentor Lynne Turnbull, CEO of Cheshire Centre for Independent Living, after being asked if I would be the face of [Fulfilling Potential - Making it Happen](#). It was great to see that unseen impairments were being taken as seriously as seen impairments.

It's been great working and getting to know Lynne. Last year I was given the opportunity to have a stall for the Journey Back to Life at the Cheshire Independent Living Awareness Day and am looking forward to taking part in the day again on the 22nd August 2014

My experience of meeting DPULOs and attending events as been really good, and has opened my eyes to how each DPULO operates differently in helping disabled people and their friends and family.

I think it's important to be able to give young disabled people a voice as they are the next generation, if they are not aware of DPULOs then the great work which they do will disappear.

I really hope you enjoy the newsletter, which we trust will keep you up to date with what is happening throughout the West Midlands!

## Have your say...

Please share what challenges you face as a DPULO. How have you overcome them? Is there a question you need advice on, or just let us know what you would like to see in the future issues, email [odi.businessperformance@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:odi.businessperformance@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)



**Above:** Louise Hunt, left, at **ecd p**

### Future Focus at **ecd p**

Working in partnership with DPULO Ambassador Louise Hunt to shape a better tomorrow for young disabled people in Essex

One of our greatest values at **ecd p** is making the voices of disabled people heard and ensuring that decisions concerning disability are not made without the input of disabled people.

Supported by Paralympic tennis player and DPULO Ambassador Louise Hunt, **ecd p** ran a series of focus groups in January and February 2014 to discover the experiences and opinions of young disabled people. We wanted to forge a

network of people that could offer support to each other from their shared lived experience. These were the Future Focus groups.

Louise Hunt attended many of the groups and shared her experience and expertise with the focus groups and helped collect valuable insight from attendees.

The Future Focus groups allowed opinions to be collected from key disability groups including physical disabilities, sensory impairments, mental health, and learning disabilities.

William Snagge, Director of Policy and Development at **ecd p** said, 'there was an excellent turn out at all the events delivered and we've had lots of positive conversations. The experiences and opinions that attendees shared have given us real insight into the everyday experiences of young disabled people in Essex. This has enabled us to identify some key issues.'

**ecd p** is now ensuring that Future Focus research helps to shape services available to young people locally for the future. The full Future Focus report is available at [ecd p.org.uk](http://ecd p.org.uk) and participants from the groups met recently for a peer led social evening.

The whole initiative is a great example of how individuals can provide real input into regional and national services and policies - and work together to address local needs and personal aspirations.

### Useful Links

Remember to Link us on Facebook !

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Young-DPULO-Ambassadors/446601028760890?fref=ts>

And follow us on Twitter ! <https://twitter.com/DPULOAmbassador>

Coming Soon:

**Young Ambassadors's Community Challenge**

