

Video transcript: Bel's Story [Co-design Group Member]

Bel: I have competed nationally and internationally in both swimming and horse riding.

I live with autism, ADHD and anxiety.

I enjoy belonging in a community.

I like when I have like supportive people around and people that I can talk to and I love having the feeling of accomplishing goals and celebrating others who have accomplished goals as well.

I was unable to participate in school sports because they didn't necessarily have the resources to support me.

And there were just really big groups to where I just, I couldn't function because there were just so many people.

And the instructions were given to the whole group and I wasn't pulled aside and told, hey, we're going to do this, this and this.

Which meant I didn't know what was going on.

And they would give more like multiple instructions at a time, which meant I would remember the last instruction but forget the first.

I was pretty sad honestly because I never really got to participate properly.

I never got to be having fun with my friends because I just couldn't do it.

It just wasn't able to do it.

Yeah, having an invisible disability is a lot harder as well because I've learnt to mask my disability because I've been picked on for being different.

And then when I tell people that I am autistic, I worry that they don't, they won't believe me because they're like, well, you just, you look normal.

And it's like, I know because I've learnt to make myself look normal and it's so exhausting.

It is very exhausting a lot of the time.

I've had coaches and experiences where I've just felt like I belong and I can ask questions freely and I can tell them what I need without being judged or feeling like I'm being a burden.

The coaches at Verdis were absolutely amazing.

They asked me if I was all right quite often, which is what I needed.

They offered a place where I can decompress, they offered but they asked questions that they just made it possible for me to feel safe around them.

So they just, they believed in me and that made me believe in myself.

The club would have preferred to have me swimming 6 sessions a week but due to the fact that it was an indoor pool, which means it echoes and I'm very sensitive with my hearing, I was just unable to get there for six sessions.

So they were able to adapt to that.

So I was only doing 3 sessions a week.

With Pony Club, they had a rule which was they found out what group they were in on the day, which meant I was extremely anxious the whole time, not knowing who was in my group, what I was doing the first stop.

So we emailed them and we explained why I needed that.

So they would email it the day before and I would be able to process it easier and have less anxiety when I got there.

You wouldn't ask someone in a wheelchair to get up and walk up the stairs.

You know, it's just, that's not possible.

And that's basically the same thing as not providing my accommodations because as the person in the wheelchair, they can't stand up and get up those stairs.

Practically the same thing.

It's just a wall that we can't get past.

We are not doing this on purpose.

We don't want to be difficult.

We just have specific things that need to be in place that will help us do it.

And if those things aren't really in place, we can't really function properly.

I want them to be open to learning about my disability and understanding it as well being able to listen to my needs and actually do something about it.