

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY ABILITY...

Challenging stigma associated with
learning disabilities through creative writing



Welcome to Let me tell you about my ability...

We are thrilled to be able to share with you a very special second issue of *Let me tell you about my Ability*. This issue has been written, edited, photographed, and coordinated in its entirety by women as a heartfelt tribute to women with learning disability (LD) on International Women's Day.

Even to this day many women with LD continue to experience direct and indirect victimisation, disadvantage, abuse and discrimination. Tragically, history tells a dark and profoundly shameful story at the hand of the infamous Eugenics movement. Over two decades (1920s –1940s) hundreds of thousands of women with LD were robbed of their right to motherhood through forced sterilisation. Even today women with LD continue to fight hard for their rightful roles as gendered women and mothers.

In my nearly two decades of clinical practice I have had the great privilege of meeting many inspiring women who happen to have LD. Listening to their harrowing stories I am repeatedly left with an all-consuming oppressive feeling of sadness and indignation at the sheer injustice and disregard that these courageous women have been subjected for such a long time. Society (which we all make up together) has got it wrong so many times, often failing to recognise and treasure the unique gifts and wisdom women with LD give back and contribute to society.

Over the years I have been struck by the infinite resilience of women with LD and even in times of adversity they often find a way to offer boundless compassion towards others. I have witnessed these incredible women fighting with all their might in pursuit of the right to live their lives according to their values. All of these with an admirable gift for sincerity and the spontaneity to laugh with open abandon, to be truly present and to soak in, and generously share every last drop of joyfulness that comes their way. I feel so fortunate and deeply grateful to do the job I do.

This second edition of *Let me tell you about my Ability* is a celebration of the attributes that women with LD possess in abundance: bravery, tenacity, generosity, and resilience amongst many others. A chance to highlight and reflect on the rights of women with LD and the gifts of wisdom they offer to those who are lucky enough to have them in their lives.

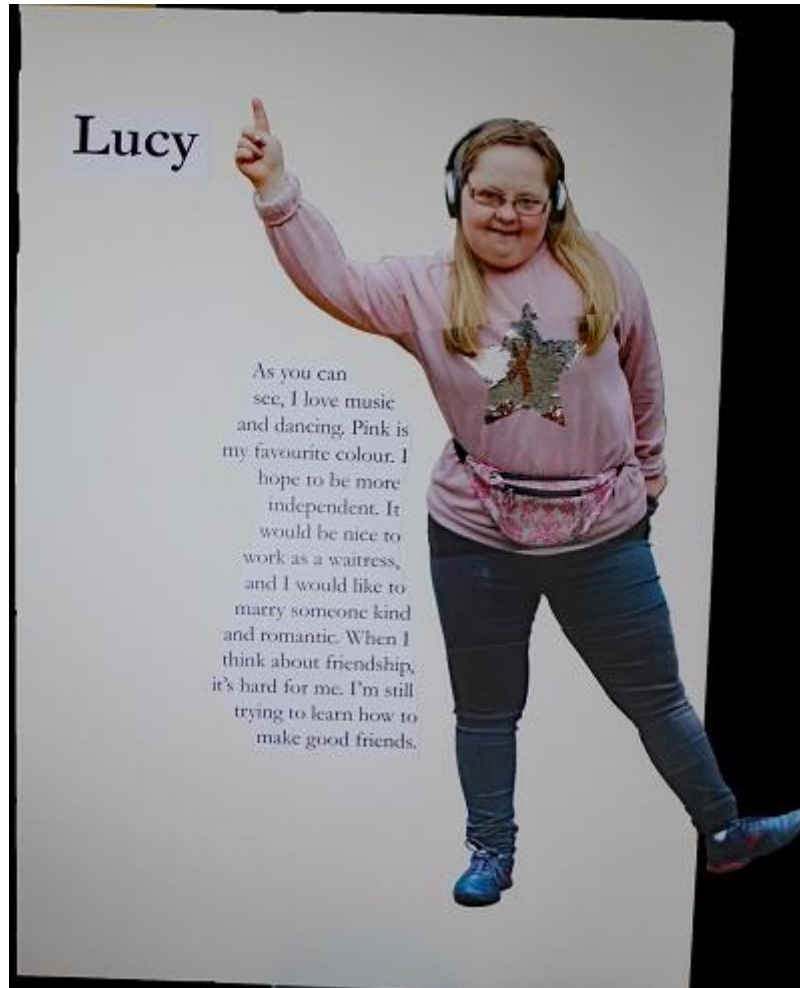
We are immensely grateful and honoured to have collaborated with two separate projects to produce this issue. A beautiful project by East Kent Mencap - Lucy Edematie (writer), Sarah Wyld (photographer), and Rachel Connelly from POW! Thanet, who coordinated the project to celebrate women with LD on Women's Day 2021, which unfortunately could not take place due to the pandemic. We are humbled to offer East Kent Mencap and the inspirational women in their project a deserving platform to celebrate women with LD all over the world.

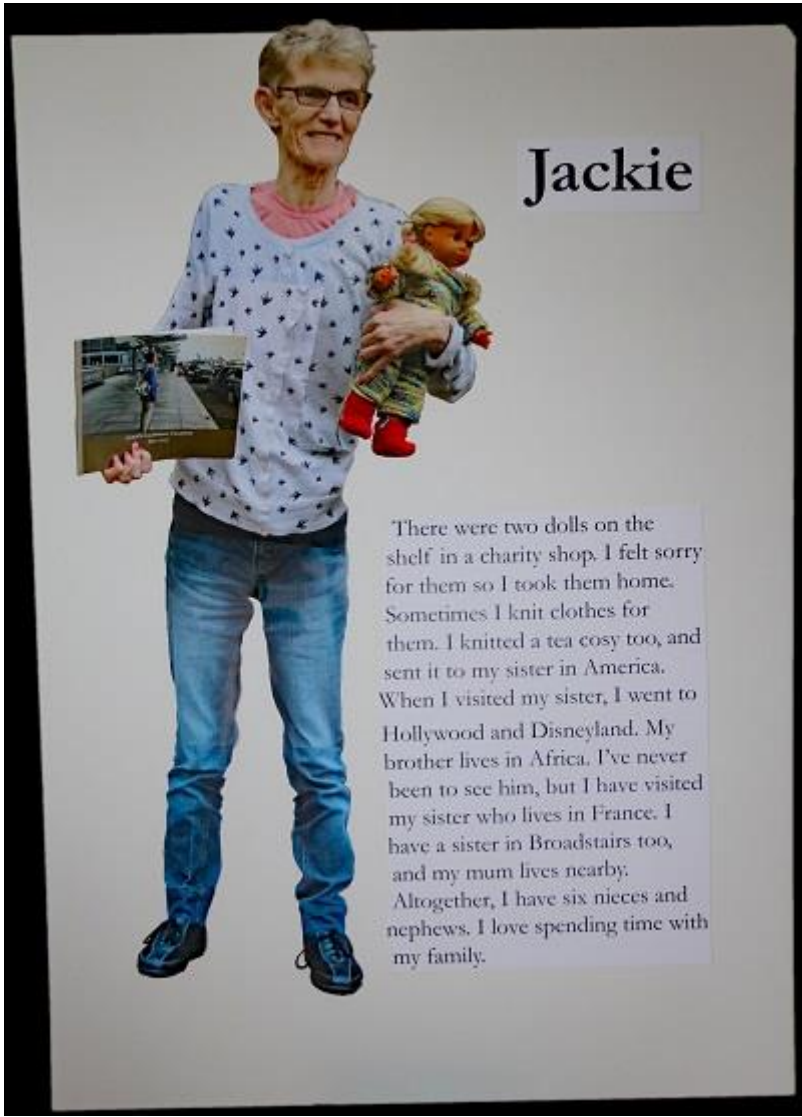
We are also hugely appreciative to Iris Kleinberg and Kate Theodore, and the inspirational mothers with LD who co-produced *The true story of mothers with LD: We CAN do it!* for letting us include one

of the many moving testimonials and poems from their publication.

Happy International Women's Day, and thank you for reading,

Aggie Moreno-Lopez





Jackie

There were two dolls on the shelf in a charity shop. I felt sorry for them so I took them home. Sometimes I knit clothes for them. I knitted a tea cosy too, and sent it to my sister in America. When I visited my sister, I went to Hollywood and Disneyland. My brother lives in Africa. I've never been to see him, but I have visited my sister who lives in France. I have a sister in Broadstairs too, and my mum lives nearby. Altogether, I have six nieces and nephews. I love spending time with my family.

Joyce

I painted for many years - this is one of mine. I'm over eighty now. I've visited Cyprus, Italy, Jersey, Yorkshire and Devon - lots of places. I met the mayor of Rocamadour in France, where I was made an honorary citizen.



A few years ago I went up in a glider with an instructor - I'd always wanted to do that. I've been on several boat trips too. I love boats. I wouldn't climb a mountain though - too risky.



Vanessa

I've always loved entertaining people, making them laugh, cheering them up, because we need to be happy in this life - not miserable. I'm a spokesperson for the Treat Me Well campaign, representing the South East. We visit hospitals to check that they have everything in place for people with learning disabilities. I want to make things better for our community and for our hospitals. I like living life to the full and being lively. And if we can change things better for the world, do it. That's what we've got our voices for.

Rosie

All dogs have lovely faces. I love their faces. Poppy is on the lead. I'm holding Daisy. There's a cooking course I do, which I like because you get to do things that you don't do at home. I like lasagne and toad in the hole. My sister makes a really good carbonara and I love it. I have a cinema buddy and I also make tapestries. It was hard at first, but I like doing it - it keeps me busy. I like to keep busy I do.





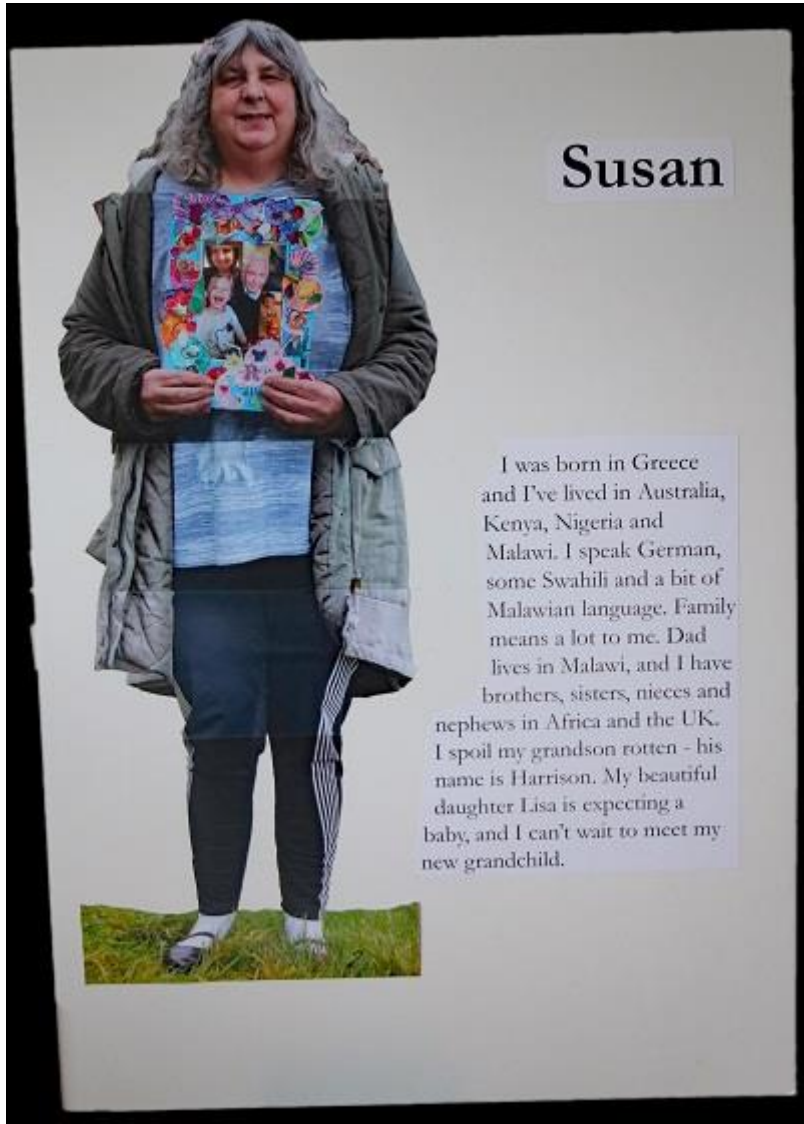
Christina

Keeping busy helps me stay positive - that's important to me. Because I like to give my time to others and help out when I can, I volunteer. I sometimes listen to music and play on the piano. I can't read music, but if I listen carefully to a note, I can pick it up. Drama and singing are a huge part of my life too. I do chorus numbers mainly, and I've also had some small speaking parts. What I'd love most of all is to play a main character. I like to look up to a bright future. I'd just like to get myself out there like everybody else.

Natasha

I'm on the members' committee at East Kent Mencap. Our job is to check that all of our members are happy with the services provided. Being on the committee has helped my confidence. It makes me proud, happy and excited. One day a week I work in a cafe - I like meeting people and doing the job well. I'm very good at bowling and I enjoy it. I also like laser quest, surfing, discos and the cinema. As time goes on, I'd like to have much more independence.





Susan

I was born in Greece and I've lived in Australia, Kenya, Nigeria and Malawi. I speak German, some Swahili and a bit of Malawian language. Family means a lot to me. Dad lives in Malawi, and I have brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews in Africa and the UK. I spoil my grandson rotten - his name is Harrison. My beautiful daughter Lisa is expecting a baby, and I can't wait to meet my new grandchild.



Nicola

I remember feeding a giraffe at Memphis zoo - they have very long tongues!
I love animals. For a while I was afraid to leave the house, but that's changed now. I take Buddy out every day. My flatmate and I like the cinema, meals out and we sometimes go on holiday. I've been to America, Wales, Scarborough, Weston-super-Mare and Cornwall; and I really want to visit Jersey.

Judgement Day

Past

Growing up was hard,
Especially living with my disability,
People judging me, calling me names,
I wanted to fight back and protest and say 'Hey I am here, I am human, just like you, you think I'm scared but I'm not, I'm probably stronger than you',
p.s. I wasn't born like this, my life changed when I was 2.

Now

Don't judge, just ask,
I'm not a monster, I don't bite,
I'm funny, I'm beautiful,
I have responsibilities,
I am a mum! And I just love to have fun.
Look in the mirror, everyone is different,
The world would be boring if we were all the same,
I can write, I can cook, I can sing, I can make things,
I can give birth,

My children all have their own minds and just like
their mum they love to have fun!

Future

I will love myself more,
I will talk to people about how I feel,
I will write more poems and songs,
I will continue to find happiness and peace,
I will help my children through their ups and downs,
They will follow my example.

Written by L

**Take a look at our
project information
sheet**

**Take a look at our
participant
information sheet**

**Take a look at our
easy read
participant sheet**

This project is coordinated by Aggie Moreno-Lopez, Alexis Ng, and Georgia Roach.

If you have lived experience of a learning disability and would like to submit a poem or piece of
artwork for a future publication, please contact us
at kmpt.mhld.communitypsychologyproject@nhs.net