



Spotlight on Gregor Gilmour

Gregor Gilmour from Bury was the winner of the Young Person of the Year 2017 Award at the Shine a Light Awards.

Gregor is 23 years old and has cerebral palsy and complex communication needs. He does not have verbal speech and uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to communicate. He uses a voice output communication aid that is mounted to his wheelchair, which he accesses by touch screen with the help of a key guard.

Gregor has used a variety of AAC systems throughout his life and has had to learn and re-learn different communication software and hardware over the years, which he has found hard and time consuming. It hasn't been easy for Gregor but he has been determined to overcome all obstacles with a big smile on his face including living with a physical disability, navigating the education system and maintaining a social life.

Since leaving full-time education, Gregor has mentored other young people who have communication difficulties and at 1Voice, a small national charity that provides networking and support to children who use AAC and their families, he helps to organise national meetings of AAC users.

Gregor has been a member of 1Voice since it was established in 2000 and became one of its first teenage role models. He has since gone on to become a volunteer and adult role model, and in 2016 he joined the board of 1Voice Trustees.

Outside of 1Voice, Gregor volunteers one day a week at Bridge College, Manchester, assisting in sessions for communication aid users. He also works with Leeds University to help educate and enlighten student nurses about AAC and volunteers at Manchester Metropolitan University on various AAC research projects.

Gregor also acts as an AAC mentor for Assistive Technology (AT) Therapy and travels all over the North West to support young AAC users. He even visits a mainstream school once a week to support an AAC user, which he organised himself after meeting the head teacher!

Despite all of this experience Gregor still feels his mentoring skills could improve and is currently undertaking a mentoring course so that he can effectively help more children and young people who use AAC. He is also attending college twice a week to study English at level 1 and IT at level 2.

Gregor is constantly raising the profile of SLCN at every opportunity. His fantastic sense of humour mixed with a passion to help others has resulted in him confidently sharing his own life experiences with other young adults with communication needs on how to overcome barriers and persevere with their communication systems.

He has empowered children and their families to have higher expectations of themselves and others, and to live life to the full, whatever their difficulties. He is a shining example of this sentiment and has become an inspirational role model for those of all ages.



Gregor Gilmour has been awarded the *Young Person of the Year Award* for being a true ambassador, role model and mentor. Despite being non-verbal, he has shown persistence in the pursuit of his goals, raised awareness of SLCN and become an inspiration to others.