

Spotlight on Jonathan Bryan

Jonathan Bryan was the winner of the 2018 Young Person of the Year Award at the Shine a Light Awards.

At 12 years old, Jonathan Bryan from Wiltshire has achieved more than most people do in a lifetime. He is an active campaigner for education reform, a poet, a film-maker, a soon-to-be-published author – and all this in spite of significant personal difficulties.

Jonathan suffers with severe cerebral palsy, is quadriplegic, oxygen-dependent, and also non-verbal. At the age of four, on entering the education system, he was labelled as having profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), and educated with a largely sensory curriculum.

Recognising greater cognitive abilities within him, Jonathan's family removed him from school for a few hours a week, when his mother taught him to read. Thanks to this, and his use of a low-tech eye gaze system (an e-tran frame), his communication and academic skills flourished. Now in mainstream secondary school, Jonathan has caught up with his able-bodied peers.

Jonathan strongly believes that he is not the only child labelled with PMLD who can communicate effectively, and learn to read and write. This belief has compelled him to establish his *Teach Us Too* campaign, urging professionals to recognise the unlocked potential of their pupils, and not to teach to labels. His blog is regularly updated, and can be visited at www.eyecantalk.net.

Jonathan's documentary, *Locked-in Boy*, was recently broadcast on CBBC, and in the last 12 months alone he has published an article in The Guardian, created a short film about the dangers of assuming incompetence based on labels, and signed a publishing deal for an upcoming autobiography, *Eye Can Write*.

He has also presented speeches at the House of Lords, the *Communication Matters* Conference in Leeds, and the *PMLD: Raising the Bar* Conference in Manchester. In May, Jonathan received the inaugural Diana Legacy Award for his campaigning efforts, presented by princes William and Harry.

The Shine a Light judges were bowled over by Jonathan's extraordinary drive to improve the lives of other disadvantaged children in education, particularly those labelled with PMLD.

Jonathan Douglas, Director at National Literacy Trust said, "Jonathan has made incredible progress to have achieved so much at such a young age. His dedication to ensuring all voices are heard, and championing this important cause through his *Teach Us Too* campaign is just fantastic."

Jonathan Middleditch, a previous Shine a Light Young *Person of the Year Award* winner agreed, adding that "Jonathan engenders respect for disabled people, raising public awareness away from politics."

For further information about the 2018 Shine a Light Awards visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk and follow us on Twitter #awards_SAL