

darts



Blog

Ben's Mum tells us what The Point means to them

All Aboard!

I have been coming to The Point with my son Ben for as long as I can remember. Even before that, I brought our two older children as toddlers in the pushchair – striding down from Thorne Road so they could get creative and messy at sessions designed for early years.

Ben is 16 now, and although he is non-verbal and moves around in a wheelchair due to a brain injury just before he was two, he has an understanding and knowledge of the world around him. My husband Jeff and I have always strived to feed this knowledge and understanding and not let barriers get in the way of Ben having the same opportunities as other young people his age. We are absolutely determined that he has his own purpose in life, just as others do.

We know how important it is for Ben to have the same access to activities as his older siblings and we look for solutions rather than to think of everything as a challenge.

We enjoy doing things as a family. We fundraised to buy a wheelchair bike so we can go out cycling together. We go to Escape at Castleford to use their accessible skiing equipment. We've been accessible surfing in Wales, been on toboggan wheelchairs through the snow, and – when Ben was at his mainstream primary school – I went on residential with him and we were strapped together and abseiled down a rockface!

Ben is very clear about what he likes – 'yes' is one of his few words. He enjoys gardening, crafting and creating and we get involved in as much as we can, such as the squirrel we're currently making for a Harvest Festival event.

It has definitely become harder as Ben has grown older. He has now left the local mainstream school so misses out on a huge social life that came with that, such as friends calling round to chat and play. It's so important for Ben to mix with peers and engage in different social activities so that he's not just around adults all the time. We also need to plan our activity

around locations where there is a Changing Places facility – this is absolutely essential and means that accessible activity can be harder to find.

As Ben has grown up and we have been coming to The Point for creative workshops and events, the building has got better and better. As well as there being a lift and viewing platform over the mezzanine, there's also a Changing Places and more open reception area.

It's such a relaxed and inclusive space where we feel comfortable and welcomed.

The creative events just ground you. The activities bring you back to what's important for your hands and for your mind - we have all got creativity within us. darts sessions encourage parents and carers to come too and share experiences. We support Ben to make his own artwork, hand over hand, following his lead. All of the marks are Ben's, he makes all the decisions and the outcome is his own. Jeff came to The Point for the first time with Ben for a workshop last Christmas. He had a brilliant time and hasn't stopped talking about it since!

The world that you have created at The Point is fantastic. The opportunities that darts staff and artists have provided over the years has given us so much as a family.

All of the staff are incredibly patient – which is so important for Disabled young people – and really understand the needs of children with disabilities and those experiencing mental ill health.

For anyone who hasn't heard of darts or The Point and wants to know why these All Aboard sessions are a positive thing for Doncaster, I'd say that there aren't many places in the area where access is this good. The service that the artists provide is excellent and the opportunity to get together and socialise with peers is wonderful.

The Point is one of the most beneficial places with the most beneficial events I can think of. I can't sing its praises highly enough!

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