

Our impact 2021



Leonard
Cheshire 

Contents



**This is an
interactive document**

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Introduction

It was with immense pride that I joined Leonard Cheshire as CEO in February 2021.

Before joining the team, I had huge respect for the difference this organisation makes to the lives of people with disabilities. My mum was a nurse at a Leonard Cheshire service, so my family has a heartfelt connection to this diverse and wonderful organisation.

The past year has been a year like no other. As with many organisations, the pandemic tested us in ways that could never have been anticipated. Many of our staff were at the frontline in the battle against Covid-19, keeping people safe, continuing to deliver essential support and working under immense challenges.

Whether it is enabling children with disabilities to receive an education, supporting people with disabilities into work, or empowering individuals to have greater choice, control and independence in their lives, Leonard Cheshire's impact around the world is immense and continues to grow.



As a disabled woman, I know from first-hand experience that prejudice, discrimination and stigma still present daily barriers to people with disabilities around the world.

While there has been progress, young people with disabilities growing up today still face many of the challenges I did in being able to live the life they want.

435,645

**In total we reached
435,645 people and
organisations**

People with disabilities are impatient for change and an equal playing field. I want us to have an even bigger role making societal change a reality.

I am delighted to introduce this impact report, which provides a snapshot of the things we have achieved together and the stories of just some of the 435,645 people and organisations we reached over the past year.

None of this would have been possible without you – our amazing supporters, donors and partners. In a year that has been extremely challenging for all, your support has allowed us to adapt to change and continue to have a real impact on the lives of thousands of people with disabilities around the world.

I can't thank you enough and I'm looking forward to seeing how much more we can achieve together in 2021/22!

Dr Ruth Owen, OBE
Chief Executive

Our reach

What your support
has helped us to
achieve together

In total, we reached
435,645
people and organisations in
the UK, Africa and Asia



Our impact

86%

86% of participants reported increased social inclusion since being on our UK and international programmes¹

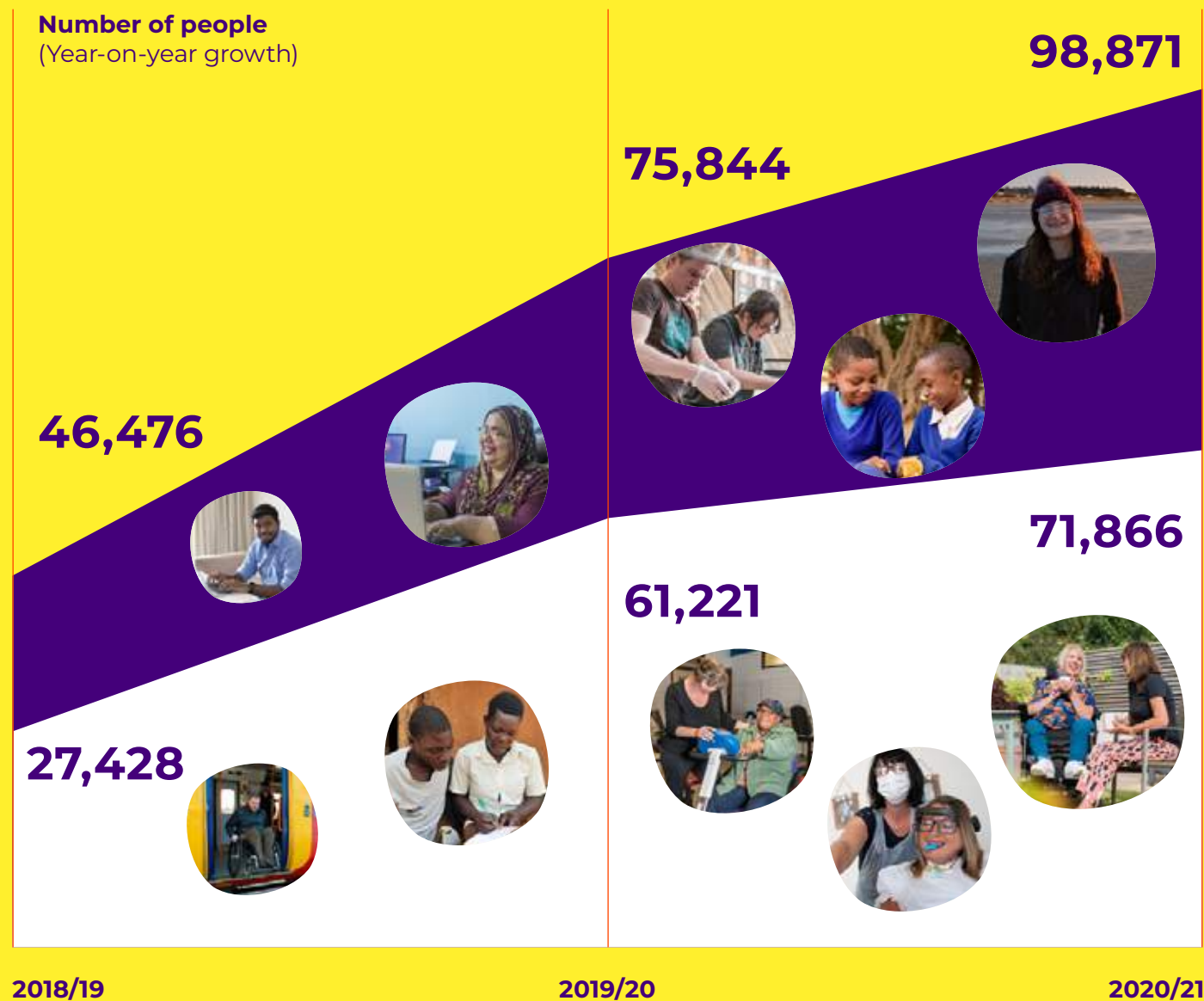
84%

84% of participants reported improved health and wellbeing since being on our UK programmes²

Our reach

Despite a challenging year, in 2020/21 we supported more people than ever before

- Total direct reach
- Direct reach – people with disabilities



Our reach

In total we reached
435,645 people and
organisations globally

Social media
views

37.3m

Reach to build support
and awareness

221,641

Indirect reach

115,133

Direct reach

98,871

Direct reach
– people with
disabilities

71,866

Media
opportunities
to see/hear

202m

Our influence

In 2020/21 we continued to partner with global actors such as the World Bank, UNESCO and International Labour Organization, as well as working to influence companies such as Microsoft, Apple and Google around accessibility and inclusivity.

Our influencing activities raised awareness with individuals, organisations and key decision-makers of the key issues that people with disabilities face and the need for inclusivity



21,759

individuals



1,357

organisations



666

key decision-makers

“Leonard Cheshire has been an excellent knowledge and technical partner on disability inclusion for the World Bank. Together, we have worked to advance knowledge on addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in the sectors of employment, education, and digital inclusion.”

Louise Cord
Global Director,
Social Sustainability and Inclusion
Global Practice, World Bank

Live

Supporting people with disabilities to live as independently as they choose



2,587

We support 2,587 people every day through our care services in the UK



2,936

We supported 2,936 disabled people to get active through our inclusive cycling, physical activity and dance programmes in the UK



15.5m

Our transport campaign reached 15.5 million people, with 64 stories placed in the media



It is estimated that people with disabilities represent at least 15% of the world's population – more than 1 billion individuals.³

Around the world, people with disabilities are still being excluded from opportunities in their communities, often resulting in isolation. The denial of access to key services and support can have a devastating impact on individuals and families.

Our life-changing social care work provides people with disabilities with the support they need to play a full and active part in their communities. At the same time, we work with governments, organisations of persons with disabilities and grass roots activists to remove barriers in society.

Our approach is based on promoting greater independence and choice. This includes introducing pioneering technology that is giving greater control to the people with disabilities we support, as well as driving forward improvements in care.

The highest rated provider

Leonard Cheshire remains the highest rated nursing care provider for people with disabilities in England, based on inspection findings by the Care Quality Commission. Across the UK, **92.6%** of our services are rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by regulators.

1,422

We supported 1,422 people with disabilities on our information, advice and guidance programmes in the UK

Our approach is based on promoting greater independence and choice

28,430

28,430 women with disabilities in West Africa now have access to life-saving contraception as a result of our intervention





Challenges and changes – our Covid-19 response

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that people with disabilities, including those who had to shield, felt more isolated than ever before. We adapted our work in innovative ways to ensure that we could continue to be there for people with disabilities during this time.

Our carers, nurses and support workers have been at the frontline in the battle against Covid-19. Many of the people living with us have underlying health conditions that increase the risks from contracting the virus. Getting our response wrong was unthinkable.

We launched two national fundraising appeals in 2020/21, and the amazing generosity of our supporters raised £900,000. This vital support helped to ensure we had the vast quantities of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) we needed to protect our staff and residents.

At the same time, we lobbied MPs and Ministers in the UK to call for additional support for the disability sector, access to testing, and the prioritisation of vaccine rollout to people with disabilities and care staff.

We took the difficult but essential step to close our care services to visitors before the national lockdown, but we continued to support residents to keep in touch with families and friends remotely. We invested in new equipment and infection control, later adapting facilities so that indoor visits could resume safely.

Because of the measures we put in place and the dedication of staff, our overall infection levels across our services were kept low and our overall response has been commended by regulators.

£900k

Our two emergency fundraising appeals raised £900K

Extending Covid-19 testing

People with disabilities between the ages of 18-65 represent one third of social care users.⁴ At the beginning of the pandemic, we wrote to 50 English MPs with a Leonard Cheshire service in their constituency to raise our concerns that care homes for people with disabilities were unable to access Covid-19 tests.

Laura Trott, MP for Sevenoaks and Swanley, raised this with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This intervention led to testing being made available to care homes in all adult settings, including those with residents with disabilities. This was a vital step in helping us further support the people who live in our services as well as our frontline staff.

"I was deeply concerned to hear about the challenges the Leonard Cheshire service at Chipstead Lake was facing in accessing testing kits. I hope this will provide much needed support to staff and residents, as well as the 6,000 similar care homes across the country, and I pay tribute to the staff who do such an incredible job every day."

Laura Trott

MP for Sevenoaks and Swanley

Bringing everyone together

"The main skill I learnt during this period was how to keep doing what we do in a different way. Everyone was seeing their loved ones during lockdown – with family support we made sure people had access to a Smart TV or an iPad. This helped us maintain precious relationships between volunteers and people who live with us.

We also made sure we offered options where people could

connect to their community, such as online dance sessions. Many people here cycled the Great Wall of China! We did this using adapted bikes in Cheltenham and static bikes in our home.

This period has taught me how much it matters to have everyone with connections to our home come together."

Lesley Gamm

Service Manager,
Gloucestershire House



Delivering hope in Northern Ireland

In January 2020, we worked with partners to open a pioneering specialist rehabilitation service in Belfast for people with alcohol-related brain injury. It is the first dedicated service of its kind in Northern Ireland and has been transforming lives over the past year.

The effects of long-term alcohol consumption can be devastating, taking away a person's independence and ability to perform normal day-to-day activities. Our team assists people towards improving memory and mental health, rebuilding lost skills, gaining independence and maintaining abstinence.

In March 2021 we staged a virtual conference on alcohol-related brain injury which brought together leading figures in neurorehabilitation, addiction, mental health and homelessness. Around 220 people from across the UK attended.

"Raymond has made incredible progress and this has made a huge difference to our lives. Prior to going to the unit, he didn't really speak and would just shrug his shoulders and not communicate. That was one of the hardest things to see. But he's transformed because of the expert care he has received, and we now hope that he will again be able to live a normal life."

Lynne
relative



Our team assists people towards improving memory and mental health, rebuilding lost skills, gaining independence and maintaining abstinence

Transforming lives through technology

In today's world of smart homes, gaming and computing, new technologies are emerging that will change the way we live, work and communicate with each other. Such technologies have the potential to revolutionise the lives of the people we support. The pandemic has accelerated progress in this area, with so many of us relying on technology to communicate like never before.

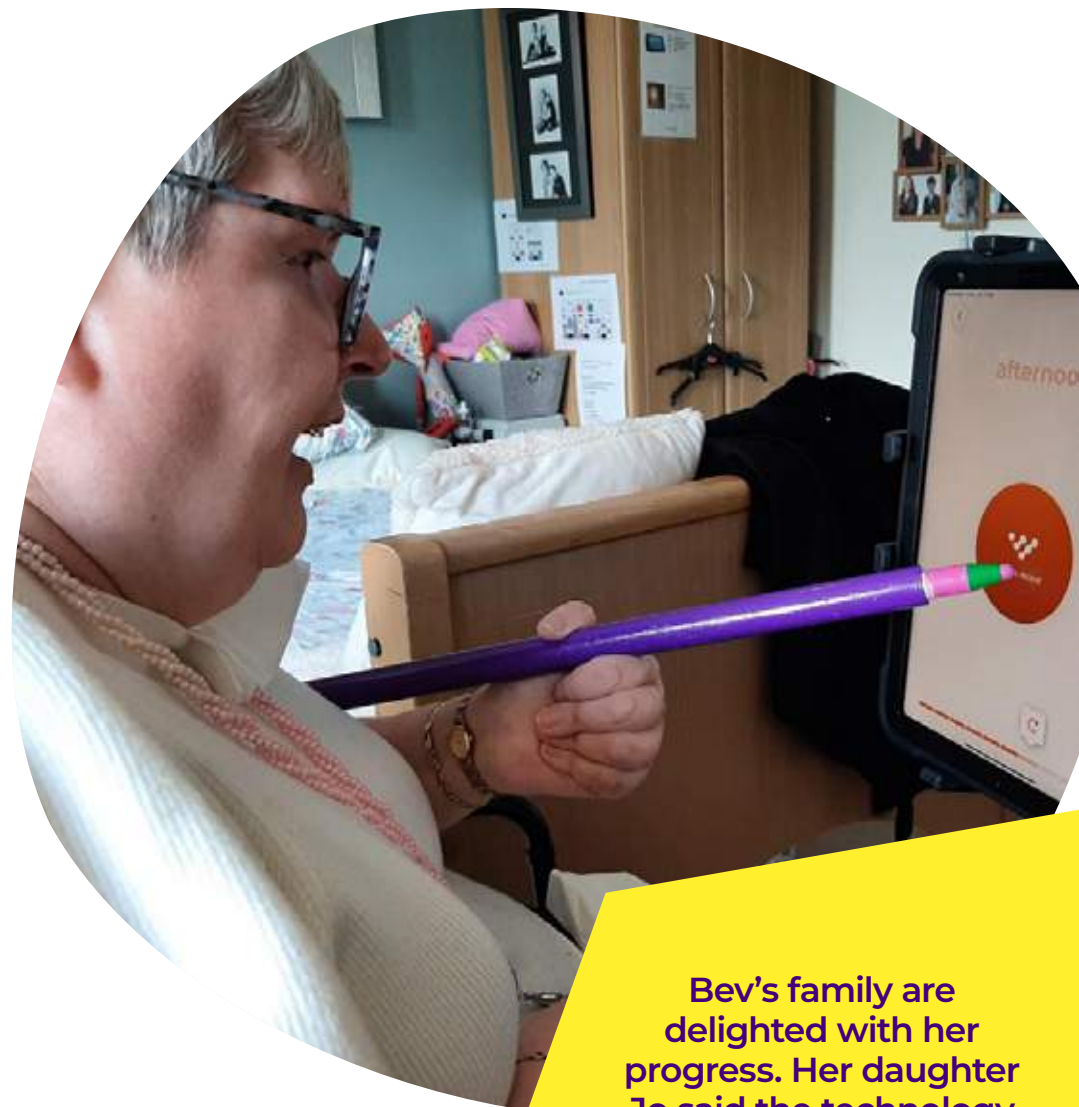
At our Hill House service in Sandbach, we're in the second year of an exciting three-year assistive technology project, generously funded by the Denise Coates Foundation. We're introducing residents and staff to new technologies that are transforming their day to day lives – leading to increased confidence, greater independence, and wider social inclusion.

Bev's story – technology has been a revelation

Bev is one of the 24 residents at Hill House who has been benefitting from innovative technology. Following a stroke, she has limited mobility and cannot always make herself easily understood. Our team has been working with Bev to identify the best new assistive technologies to help her communicate.

For Bev, we were fortunate to be amongst the first people in Europe to trial some ground-breaking software, VoiceITT. The VoiceITT app runs on an iPad and allows people with unfamiliar speech to not only have often used phrases repeated in clearer speech but also allows Bev to voice control an Alexa device to play music, operate her Smart TV, and control heating and lighting. With Bev's feedback, the developers have been able to make amendments and have since published the app on the app store for general availability.

Bev is also able to access her iPad via a specially adapted stylus to read electronic books and to independently video call her family, which was a big priority for her.



Bev's family are delighted with her progress. Her daughter Jo said the technology has "given her independence like never before."

A close-up photograph of a man with dark skin and a beard, wearing a white button-down shirt. He is looking down at a green smartphone he is holding with both hands. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

We influenced a big breakthrough with Google that will make Android products more user-friendly

A breakthrough with Google

We're not only exploring the potential of technology to transform our care services, we're also acting as thought leaders and advocates of sustainable and inclusive solutions. Our Director of Assistive Technology sits on advisory panels for Microsoft, Apple, Google and the UK Government, and plays a key role in ensuring that inclusivity is prioritised when developing new technologies.

We influenced a big breakthrough with Google that will make Android products more user-friendly. We've been fighting for a more comprehensive cross-platform experience, in particular for touchscreen devices to have generalised gestures recognisable by all. Android devices are more problematic because manufacturers can add alternative interfaces to their products. Through our work with Google, a range of gestures and controls have now been built into the general platform. This means users can define them in ways that are most helpful to them or are most recognisable.



For many people with disabilities, projects like 'Road to me' in Wandsworth are a lifeline

2,936

We supported 2,936 people with disabilities to get active through our inclusive cycling, physical activity and dance programmes in the UK

Keeping people active

According to Sport England, people with disabilities are twice as likely to be physically inactive compared to those without disabilities.

This issue came into sharp focus during the pandemic, when many organised activities and exercise facilities had to close their doors, making it even harder for people with disabilities to find ways to keep active.

Wherever possible, we quickly adapted our programmes to provide support online – and in 2020/21 we supported 2,936 people with disabilities to get active through our inclusive cycling, physical activity and dance programmes in the UK.

Road to me – a lifeline for people with disabilities

For many people with disabilities, projects like 'Road to me' in Wandsworth are a lifeline. Through this project, funded by Sport England, we support people with recently acquired disabilities whose physical activities have been interrupted. Our aim is to reduce the likelihood of them needing to access health services again in the future. We work closely with them for six months, developing an individual action plan centred around becoming healthier and more active.

In March 2020 we had to pause all face-to-face activity due to Covid-19. During lockdown, we maintained the same quality of support by checking-in on our clients regularly by phone and holding weekly group Zoom sessions to reduce isolation. We came up with a wide range of tips for keeping active at home, including suggestions for alternatives to exercising without gym equipment and online group exercise sessions.

Christine's story – having someone to talk to

Christine is one of the people we supported during lockdown. She told us what this support has meant to her:

“In April 2020 I ended up in hospital after having a second stroke. Since coming home I have worked hard to regain my skills, and the team from Leonard Cheshire has really supported me with this.

They phoned me every week since the beginning of lockdown. They sent me an exercise programme, with one of the team demonstrating the moves, which made it so easy to follow. At the start of lockdown, I wore size 18 but am now down to a size 12. As well as the weekly Zoom keep fit class, they invited me to join weekly discussion groups, which has widened my social circle.

One of the biggest benefits of the team calling me has been that it reminds me that there are people out there that I can talk to. It helps to keep me sane knowing that if I am feeling low, or just want a chat, I'm welcome to give them a call.”

“It helps to keep me sane knowing that if I am feeling low I'm welcome to give them a call.”

Christine

Road to Me participant



Strictly Cymru – the show must go on

The challenges of the pandemic were not enough to stop the glitz and glamour of Strictly Cymru. Our pan-disability dance competition was back with all the drama of before but in a brand-new digital format, drawing participants from all over Wales.

Over 230 people took part in the heats, receiving training from an inclusive dance specialist. With Covid-19 disrupting face-to-face support, the nine final acts received one-to-one online coaching, with classrooms, bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms becoming virtual dance floors.

We streamed the final live on Facebook and six-year-old Inga, the youngest competitor, was among the winners with her Frozen-inspired routine. With a dance full of energy, smiles and spins she captivated the audience and judges, becoming overall winner in the wheelchair user category.

For those taking part, Strictly Cymru has been a massive confidence boost, improving physical and mental wellbeing. Since starting to dance, both Inga's strength and her confidence have come on in leaps and bounds, so much so she was able to practice some moves out of her wheelchair.

“When the pandemic started we thought Strictly Cymru would have to stop, but thanks to doing the lessons online, everything was possible. I can only imagine how important it was for other competitors who had the motivation to keep on dancing and that feeling of being part of a community.”

Inga's Dad

A big thank you

Thanks to everyone who helped make Strictly Cymru possible, including Paradance UK, the Simon Gibson Charitable Trust, the David Solomons Charitable Trust and Bridgend County Borough Council.

Keep dancing!

Strictly Cymru has been a massive confidence boost, improving physical and mental wellbeing



Providing information, advice and guidance

Access to reliable information enables people to make informed choices. Our Information, Advice and Guidance programmes provide bespoke and specialised information to people with disabilities. Through this support we have helped people to better manage their finances, receive the right benefits and find suitable housing – as well as providing advice on a range of other issues. During the pandemic, we have adapted so that our face-to-face services can be delivered remotely.

Our programmes are funded by Hertfordshire, Southwark and Derbyshire County Councils. We also work in partnership with the Bank Workers Charity to provide independent and confidential information, advice and guidance and mentoring support to bank workers who have a disability or who care for a family member with a disability.

N's story – providing support when it's needed the most

N is one of the people we have supported through our Bank Workers Charity partnership. This is her story.

"I was suffering from domestic abuse at the hands of my partner and his mother without realising it. I was having anxiety and panic attacks and felt very vulnerable and isolated.

I was referred to Leonard Cheshire, which changed my life. My advisor supported me through benefits and housing advice, which gave me the confidence to act and change my situation for myself and my child. My advisor constantly kept in touch and supported me through every step of the way.

1,422

We supported 1,422 people with disabilities on our information, advice and guidance programmes in the UK

The advice I received from Leonard Cheshire helped me immensely in moving away from abuse. Without the support, I would have never taken this bold step.

I am a changed person now. I feel at peace, more confident and empowered to act should a situation arise in future where I must make strong decisions and rely on myself."

"The advice I received from Leonard Cheshire helped me immensely in moving away from abuse. Without the support, I would have never taken this bold step."





A rail network for all

41% of stations in Britain don't have step-free access. So, we're campaigning alongside others to make rail travel accessible. Without significant progress, the system won't be accessible until 2070.

The support we received from donors last year enabled us to commission research to form an economic case for accessible rail in the UK. Findings revealed more than 50,000 people with disabilities could get jobs if Britain had an accessible rail system. Only 2% of current transport capital investment would be needed to create step-free access to platform level across the rail network – the equivalent of just a single year of spending on High Speed 2.

Parliamentarians have shown support for the campaign and have taken a range of actions. Labour's Shadow Minister for Rail, along with three other Labour MPs, tabled our parliamentary questions and quoted our research to the Secretary of State for Transport on accessible rail. Baroness Grey-Thompson also referenced our research when speaking in the House of Lords in a debate on the Queen's speech.

"It would be much easier for me to work if transport was accessible. When I hear how little money it would cost to make stations accessible, it's frustrating. It could make such an impact on people's lives."

Emma, Birmingham

15.5m

Our transport campaign reached 15.5 million people, with 64 stories placed in the media

5,000

Since 2019, nearly 5,000 people have supported our transport campaign

Improving healthcare access for women with disabilities

Getting access to vital healthcare can be a huge barrier for people with disabilities in low and middle-income countries.

In countries like Sierra Leone, where maternal mortality rates are high, access to services like family planning and contraception can be life-saving.

In West and Central Africa, we are the disability partner for MSI Reproductive Choices on the Women's Integrated Sexual Health programme (WISH). This hugely important programme aims to reach people who may not have access to these essential services, including people living in poverty, young women and women with disabilities.

We've been working successfully to challenge stigma around sex and disability, and ensure that the planning and delivery of sexual and reproductive health services are disability inclusive. The proportion of clients with disabilities has risen hugely since we came on board as a partner, meaning that thousands more women with disabilities have access to life-saving contraception and vital healthcare advice.

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, which funds the programme, recognised our work on disability inclusion as outstanding. They have put WISH forward as an example of disability inclusive programming and showcased our work substantially in the Global Disability Summit.



“Working closely with Leonard Cheshire, MSI is now better equipped to respond to clients with disabilities and to consider how activities, services and communications can be adapted to better reach those clients and ensure respectful and comprehensive support.”

Caroline Guinard
WISH Director,
MSI Reproductive Choices

28,430

28,430 women with disabilities in West Africa now have access to life-saving contraception

Supporting young activists to bring about change

Young people with disabilities are powerful advocates for change. We work with them to bring about change in their communities, tackle the issues that matter to them most and hold governments to account.

In 2020/21, with funding from the Act for Change Fund, we launched our new 'Change Makers' advocacy and campaigning programme for young people with disabilities in Belfast, Manchester, Glasgow and Swansea.

The participants are already making an impact. One example is an online petition launched by the Glasgow Change Makers, calling for improved wheelchair accessibility on public transport. So far, they've gathered over 2,000 signatures.

The group met with the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport to argue their case and they were very receptive to the group's ideas. We hope that the Change Makers will be able to play a key part in an accessibility working group this coming year – watch this space!

“So many times in the media I see reporters investigating an issue facing young people, but not listening or misinterpreting what we're saying. Having young people report on the issues affecting us makes it more relatable, and our views are properly represented and heard.”

Arthur
Change Makers participant

Change Makers builds on the success of our '2030 and Counting' programme in Kenya, Zambia and the Philippines, which was funded by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa. Through this programme, we supported nearly 80 young people to become 'citizen reporters'. We built their confidence and skills by training them to use their mobile phones to powerfully capture experiences – filming and recording in real-time the challenges faced by young people with disabilities.

We also provided the citizen reporters with a platform to advocate for their rights with key policy and decision makers, influencing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, a set of global goals relating to poverty and inequality agreed by the UN to be met by 2030.

“2030 and Counting enhanced my knowledge and skills and exposed me to the challenges faced by my fellow youths with disabilities. After my time on the programme, I decided to set up a youth-led disability organisation, promoting issues around disability and human rights.”

Ian
2030 and Counting participant





Isabella's story – achieving dreams in Papua New Guinea

Isabella took part in an earlier Leonard Cheshire youth leadership programme, Young Voices. Since then, Isabella is very proud to have become the first person with a disability to graduate with a Bachelor's Degree in Law from her university in Papua New Guinea. She was admitted to the Bar as a certified lawyer in January 2021. She told us how Young Voices was instrumental in giving her the confidence to speak out about disability and fulfil her potential:

“Young Voices really shaped me into being the best version of myself that I am today. Having the opportunity to speak to different people at different events really made me want to be a youth advocate. It made me want to challenge injustices and fight for a more accessible society.

My goal now is to become a human rights lawyer so that I can advocate more for people with disabilities, so they can achieve their dreams and fulfil the vision they have for themselves.”

“Young Voices really shaped me into being the best version of myself that I am today.”

Isabella

Looking to the future

“The pandemic has drawn our teams together to increase an already strong focus on the delivery of high quality care and support. We have seen greatly increased use of technology to maintain contact with the people we support right across the organisation. Looking to the future, we will build on the lessons learnt during the pandemic and draw on the potential of new technologies to transform our services and programmes – giving the people we support more independence than ever before.”

Hugh Fenn

Managing Director – UK Community Services

▶ **Steve, a resident at our Gloucestershire House service**



Learn

Providing life-changing opportunities through education



11,023

We supported 11,023 children with disabilities to get an education in India and across Africa



2,916

We trained 2,916 teachers, government representatives, members of organisations of persons with disabilities and other key players on inclusive education



3,426

We trained 3,426 parents and male mentors on inclusive education



Education has the power to transform lives, creating positive futures for individuals, families and communities.

For people with disabilities in low and middle-income countries education can be particularly empowering in tackling poverty and isolation.

Too many young people with disabilities are still denied the fundamental right of an education. At least half of the world's 65 million school age children with disabilities do not have a school place.⁵ Girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to missing out, with boys prioritised for school places due to gender bias.

The support we receive from our donors means we can work with schools, government officials, communities and children and their families to ensure that no child is denied the life-changing opportunities that education brings.

Skills training and other opportunities are also out of reach for many people with disabilities. This can mean they are held back from fulfilling their ambitions or having positive experiences with others in their community.

Our learning and skills development programmes in the UK can be a lifeline for people with disabilities, transforming lives and widening horizons.

11,023

We supported 11,023 children with disabilities to get an education in India and across Africa

2,916

We trained 2,916 teachers, government representatives, members of organisations of persons with disabilities and other key players on inclusive education

2,249

We supported 2,249 people with disabilities through our Can Do skills development programme in the UK



Challenges and changes – our Covid-19 response

The pandemic had an enormous impact on learning and access to education. With schools and catch-up centres closed as Covid-19 cases increased, it was vital we adapted our support for vulnerable children.

More than 1.5 billion learners worldwide were affected by school and university closures.⁶ Before the pandemic, children with disabilities were already more likely to be out of school, and the crisis only exacerbated this.

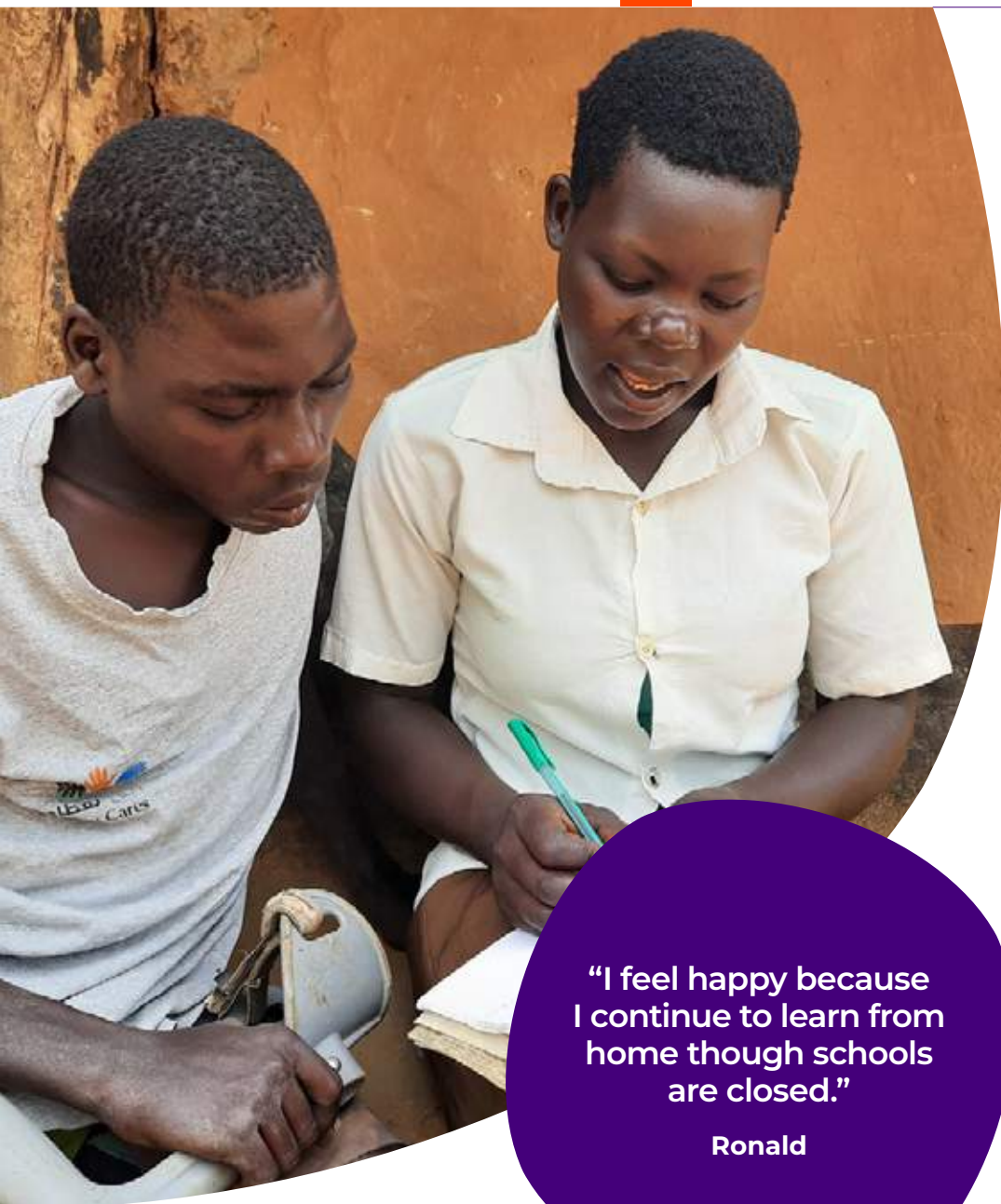
We explored innovative and alternative approaches to address these challenges, using locally accessible technology where possible. Many of the children we support through our inclusive education programme do not have access to computers or smartphones, so we came up with a range of creative solutions to ensure no one was left behind.

Examples included supporting students at home in Kenya with phone calls and text messages; developing a Covid-19 resource pack for parents to support children with disabilities to learn at home; developing and delivering remote teacher training; and working with governments and organisations of persons with disabilities to send out vital messaging and support.

In the UK, people with disabilities were also hit hard by the effects of the pandemic, with a wide range of services disrupted. During 2020/21, we prioritised ensuring our learning and skills development programmes like Can Do could continue to provide support to young people with disabilities when it was needed most.

We came up with a range of creative solutions to ensure no one was left behind





**"I feel happy because
I continue to learn from
home though schools
are closed."**

Ronald

Keeping connected in lockdown – supporting students in Uganda

Through our inclusive education project in Uganda, funded by Dubai Cares, we have supported more than 500 children with disabilities to go to school in the remote district of Amolatar.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, all learning institutions in Uganda closed down indefinitely. Our project team had to adapt quickly to ensure children with disabilities still got the support they needed to keep on learning.

Our team rapidly got to work distributing learning materials across Amolatar District, including materials for children with visual impairments in both braille and large print. The team worked with council leaders and parents to share the materials and spoke to parents about how they could support their children with learning until schools opened again.

17-year-old Ronald carried on learning from home with support from his father and older sister. The learning materials we provided helped Ronald to stay engaged with his studies. He said: "I feel happy because I continue to learn from home though schools are closed. This has been possible because of the learning materials given to me."

500

Our inclusive education project in Uganda has supported more than 500 children with disabilities to go to school

A model approach to inclusive education

We have been pioneering inclusive education models in Africa and Asia since 2008, supporting a total of **49,496 children with disabilities** to get an education to date.

Over the years we have developed and honed our delivery model, innovating and adapting to ensure that every child we support reaches their full potential. Every inclusive education project we run now includes the same six key elements: Individual assessment and support; Teacher training; Creating an accessible learning environment; Community-wide awareness-raising; Policy change; and Child-to-child activities.

49,496

Since 2008 we have supported 49,496 children with disabilities to get an education in Africa and Asia

Our inclusive education model



Julia and Valentina's story – forming friendships

Child-to-child clubs are a key element of all our inclusive education projects. The clubs encourage children with and without disabilities to socialise and support each other. They also offer a great environment to learn more about disability inclusion and the importance of equal rights for all children.

In Tanzania, our inclusive education project, funded by Comic Relief, has been life-changing for Julia and Valentina. Their friendship started to blossom after we introduced child-to-child clubs to their school. Before the project started, they hadn't really got to know each other, despite being classmates.

Stigma and misconceptions around disability had made it hard for Julia, who has a disability, to make friends at school.

Since attending the child-to-child club, Julia and Valentina have become close friends. They now do their homework together and play together outside of school. Julia is very bright and helps Valentina academically. And Valentina makes sure Julia is included in school activities.

Their friendship has also shown the rest of the community the importance of inclusion, and that children with disabilities should not be left out.

“The child-to-child club meant I could interact with other children and get more friends. This makes me feel happy and comfortable, something which was not possible before.”

Julia

“Other children were laughing at me because I was a friend of Julia. However, as time went on through the child-to-child clubs, all the children in the club love to play and help Julia.”

Valentina

88%

88% of children with disabilities reported greater self-confidence since being part of our inclusive education project in Tanzania⁷



Moi's story – changing attitudes in the community

Parent support groups and other community projects help create support networks and raise awareness of disability in the wider community. One of our more innovative initiatives in this area is our male mentor programme.

When our Girls' Education Challenge project started out in Kenya, the team observed that almost all of those caring for children with disabilities were women, and most of the people attending meetings and training for the project were also women.

As a result, we put in place our male mentor programme to address patriarchal norms and reduce stigma in the community. Fathers of girls with disabilities are trained as male mentors, who then sensitise other men on the rights and needs of girls with disabilities.

Moi has been able to start changing attitudes in his community after training to be a male mentor. He comes from a community with serious gender inequality and high rates of Female Genital Mutilation.

Thanks to Moi's efforts, households are abandoning outdated attitudes and harmful practices. The result is a new future for local women and girls and a healthier role for men and fathers.

Moi says: "It is the responsibility of those with the knowledge like the male mentors to enlighten the rest of the community and practise what they preach."

3,426

In 2020/21 we trained 3,426 parents and male mentors on inclusive education

The Orbit Reader – a simple device that makes a big difference

We are supporting schools to expand the use of innovative low-cost assistive technology for learners with disabilities. One example is the Orbit Reader, a lightweight device that pupils use to read and take notes in Braille. The notes can then be converted back to electronic print for the teacher to read and grade.

In Kenya, we partnered with eKitabu to train 75 teachers on how to use and support visually impaired and blind students with Orbit Readers.

Marydith has a visual impairment, and her teacher Pauline has been supporting her to use the technology in class. The Orbit Reader has greatly improved Marydith's learning progress – she can now read and write without straining her eyes. This helps her to succeed in class and stay at the same level as her classmates.



A global influencer on inclusive education

We have increased government awareness of inclusive education in several countries, and we have worked at a global level to provide evidence, research and advice on inclusive education systems, to support and guide policy implementation.

As the pandemic amplified inequalities in education, we joined the Global Education Coalition launched by UNESCO in May 2020 – a platform for collaboration and exchange to protect the right to education during this unprecedented disruption and beyond. This multi-sector Coalition brought together 175 institutional partners from the UN, civil society, academia and the private sector.

As governments across the world sought to get education systems back on track during the pandemic, we co-organised a webinar focusing on the challenges faced by girls with disabilities.

Our webinar, attended by around 1,000 people, amplified the experiences, learnings and recommendations from a diverse range of organisations and expertise, with the shared goal of ensuring that girls with disabilities do not become even more marginalised in education.

We've also shared our models with the Global Education Coalition on distance learning and blended training so that teachers are equipped to respond to the widest range of diversity in classrooms.

21,759

Our influencing activities have reached 21,759 individuals



In November 2020, we partnered with UNESCO and the Portuguese Ministry of Education to co-host an international symposium on ensuring the right to quality inclusive education for people with disabilities. The online event was attended by 400 key education stakeholders, including senior representatives from a range of UN and donor agencies, education ministry representatives and youth with disabilities, who shared their own perspectives on how to ensure quality inclusive education for all.

One of the key themes was addressing violence and bullying against learners with disabilities. Through a new partnership with UNESCO, we are looking at the scale of these issues, and carrying out a research project in five countries in East and Southern Africa. The research will be published in late 2021 with the aim of making schools safer places for learners with disabilities.

In many cases, our activities have led to further outcomes such as decision-makers developing increasingly inclusive policies and practices

Influencing national policy in South Sudan

As well as influencing at a global level, we work with key national and local decision-makers, increasing awareness that implementing inclusive education is a legal and policy obligation. In many cases, our activities have led to further outcomes such as decision-makers developing increasingly inclusive policies and practices.

One example of this is in South Sudan, where we are the specialist disability partner on the Girls' Education programme. We delivered awareness raising and capacity building workshops to influence programme partners to embed standardised questions on disability⁸ in the national school registration tool and education census. This means from now on the Ministry of Education will recognise more impairment types, which will better inform planning and access to education for children with disabilities. They currently only have data for 6,000 children with disabilities in school. However, we predict an actual number closer to 145,000 when all disabilities are included.

We also influenced the review and development of the inclusive education policy in South Sudan, working with partners to ensure the policy is closely aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Following this, we supported the Government to produce an implementation plan for the roll out of the policy.

Through close collaboration with the South Sudan Union of Persons with Disabilities, we strengthened the Government's recognition of the important role of disability activists and champions as partners in changing the discourse around disability. We also trained radio broadcasters on disability awareness, ensuring young people with disabilities were interviewed on local and national radio stations. This brought a powerful message to the public that everyone has a right to education in their local schools and raised awareness of the important role that the Government and communities have in making that right a reality.



Our Can Do programme – a lifeline for young people

Through our Can Do programme, we enable young people with disabilities across the UK to learn new skills and build their confidence with community-based volunteering opportunities.

Can Do has been a lifeline for young people during the pandemic. We adapted quickly in response to the lockdown and have developed and refined virtual delivery of the programme. Online sessions have ranged from stand-up comedy to cheerleading, dance, wellbeing and poetry.

In 2020/21 we received £3m for Can Do from the Covid-19 Support Fund, supported by the Association of British Insurers. This amazing grant will enable us to run our award-winning programme for the next three years, expanding it to additional locations across the UK.

2,249

We supported 2,249 people with disabilities through our Can Do programme in the UK

“Doing Can Do has definitely changed me. I know for a fact that I can get a job, and it has helped me gain more confidence, more independence, getting me to socialise more with different people.”

Morgan,
Can Do summer sessions participant

92%

92% of Can Do participants reported an improvement in their health and wellbeing, feeling good about themselves and seeing a positive difference in their lives⁹

83%

83% of Can Do participants reported increased social inclusion¹⁰



Connecting with the community – from a distance

Mikaela Campbell is a Can Do Coordinator from Conwy. She explained how one of her Can Do groups found a way to support their local community from a distance during the pandemic:

“After a long period of school closures due to Covid-19, we were finally in a position to get our Can Do group going at Ysgol Tir Morfa, a community special school in Wales, in October 2020. I met with the group weekly over Microsoft Teams. This particular group was very enthusiastic about making a difference and helping the community.

Neither I nor the school had embarked on such a hands-on virtual project before. Still, somehow, we managed to sew and tie-dye pillowcase bags for NHS staff at a local hospital. The staff use the bags to put their uniform in and wash after each shift to minimise cross-contamination.

We included treats like chocolates and handcrafted cards in the bags, and the NHS staff were blown away by how fantastic they looked.

We also teamed up with Souper Sunday Rhyl, who provide free meals for homeless people every week – packing Christmas boxes full of items that they would find helpful during the winter months.

The project was a great distraction for everyone during the very strange and unpredictable times of a global pandemic. We found a way to channel our energy into helping others whilst learning new skills and connecting with our community in a positive way – and all from a distance.”

“Our project has taught me to be more sociable and open with people. It’s given me the confidence that I’ve never actually found myself. I’m proud of myself for getting stuck into something.”

Dylan
Can Do participant





Owen's story – from self-doubt to self-confidence

For many of the people taking part in our programmes, their first experience with Leonard Cheshire is by no means their last. What may start out as a one-off project can develop into a life-changing experience. We work with people on an individual basis, providing opportunities for them to learn and grow wherever possible.

Owen is someone who has really developed during his journey with us. Owen is 23 and has cerebral palsy. He first got involved with Leonard Cheshire through our Can Do programme in Southampton, which is funded by Comic Relief and the #iwill Fund.¹¹ He then went on to volunteer at our Fryers House residential home.

Owen has been steadily building his skills while volunteering and has now moved into a Volunteer Coordinator Assistant role, supporting us to coordinate all our other amazing volunteers. He's also started an online focus group for people with disabilities to campaign on improved access and other local issues. He has big plans for the group and is hoping they will be able to achieve some real change for the community.

"Before my Leonard Cheshire days I used to be a very quiet mouse. Now I've learnt things, I've got loads of independence and confidence. It's given me a massive boost. I feel like a completely different person now from when I started. It can help you in all sorts of different ways and give you all sorts of different opportunities."

Owen

"The thousands of people who volunteer for us are invaluable and put simply, we would not be the charity we are without them."

Dr Ruth Owen OBE
Chief Executive, Leonard Cheshire

4,000

In 2020/21 our work was supported by 4,000 amazing volunteers

Unlocking the digital world

Just 54% of people with disabilities in the UK have access to a computer for personal use,¹² and 15% have never used the internet.¹³ Our digital inclusion programmes support people with disabilities with equipment and training to access the digital world.

Access to technology can be life-changing, unlocking activities and experiences that were previously impossible – like communicating with family and friends, or taking part in online education opportunities and employment.

1,727

We supported 1,727 people through our digital inclusion programmes in the UK

Virtual ways of life are the new norm due to Covid-19 – intensifying digital inequalities and making digital inclusion even more vital. We responded by making sure we could support clients remotely wherever possible, and helping them to stay connected during lockdown.

In 2020/21 we supported 1,727 people with disabilities with equipment and training to access the digital world through our digital inclusion programmes in the UK. We also established five new Discover IT centres, bringing the total number to 35. Meanwhile, 62 of our residential services were supported with new accessible IT equipment and training.

96%

96% of customers reported increased social inclusion since being on our digital inclusion programmes¹⁴





Technology has been life-changing for Natalie...

Technology has helped Natalie rebuild her confidence and stay connected with friends and family. Natalie, who lives on her own and uses a wheelchair, received an Amazon Alexa and digital training from our digital inclusion programme. "I could not have done lockdown without Alexa," says Natalie. "It would have been really lonely without it to be honest. Alexa stopped me going into a dark place."

She now uses Alexa for everything from calling friends, listening to music, quizzes and meditation to learning new languages. Her confidence has grown in leaps and bounds: "Leonard Cheshire's digital inclusion programme has helped me to be more expressive and learn different ways to do things. Technology can make you more independent. When we started I was so nervous – I kept saying I can't do it. Now I'm doing three languages and arts and crafts. It's life-changing. It does change you that much."

...and has opened up a new world for Andrew

New technology has been just as life-changing for Andrew, who has macular degeneration, a visual impairment. A befriending organisation in Dumfries & Galloway put Andrew in contact with us when the lockdown was starting to impact on his wellbeing.

Our Go Digital programme provided Andrew with an iPad and weekly support sessions from a dedicated digital buddy to help him explore the accessibility features, such as magnification and voice control. He now has regular

Zoom chats with a support group, emails friends, studies maps of favourite places, and keeps in touch with developments in his local area.

Being able to connect with others has made a world of difference to Andrew: "At the beginning of the pandemic, I lost confidence, I didn't want to go out or speak to other people. I realised my world was getting smaller and I needed to take care of my mental health. The support I've received and the iPad have opened up my world and my mind. It's given me more confidence. I feel included and happy to chat with other people again."



Looking to the future

“Our deep connections with communities and well-established models of support helped us to adapt rapidly during the pandemic.

Looking to the future we are now well-positioned to continue building on the best practices that have emerged in terms of delivery and innovation. Strengthened documentation, learning and research approaches will enable us to share best practice more widely and build on our reputation as a global influencer on inclusive approaches to education and learning.”

Sunanda Mavillapalli

Global Head of Programmes
and Technical Assistance

► **Vickles, a pupil at
Ng'ong'onha Primary
School, Tanzania**



Work

Supporting people with disabilities to access meaningful employment and fulfilling careers



22,152

We supported 22,152 people with disabilities to seek employment in the UK, Africa and Asia



3,401

We trained 3,401 government representatives, employers, members of organisations of persons with disabilities and other key players on inclusive employment



45m

We reached almost 45 million people through our 'Locked out of the labour market' report and media activities



Globally, people with disabilities are around twice as likely to be unemployed as those without disabilities.¹⁵

All too often people with disabilities are unable to get on the career ladder or fulfil their ambitions. This means they are denied the confidence and independence that being able to support yourself and your family financially can bring.

Our UK and international employment programmes support people with disabilities throughout their journey towards sustainable employment. We provide careers advice, training, work experience, paid internships, support to become self-employed and in-work assistance.

Despite some progress in attitudes, many employers lack an understanding of disability, with 24% of employers saying they are less likely to employ a person with a disability.¹⁶

That's why we also work with employers to improve their understanding of disability and inclusion and create more sustainable employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

22,152

We supported 22,152 people with disabilities to seek employment in the UK, Africa and Asia

3,401

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Challenges and changes – our Covid-19 response

Challenges faced by people with disabilities have been exacerbated during the pandemic, including chronic unemployment – just over half of people with disabilities in the UK (54%) are employed, compared with 82% of those without disabilities.¹⁷

In 2020/21, we changed the way we delivered our support, finding innovative ways to ensure our employment services and programmes remained available in virtual form. We also made sure vulnerable individuals taking part in our programmes were adequately supported throughout the pandemic.

During the Covid-19 crisis, we also worked to influence government policies and practice. This included advocating for access to employment opportunities and support for people with disabilities.

Avoiding a jobs crisis for people with disabilities

In Autumn 2020, we warned the UK Government through our employment campaign that action was urgently needed to avoid a jobs crisis for people with disabilities.

Young people were particularly at risk. We called for a series of measures to ensure that national plans for economic recovery after the pandemic were inclusive.

We gave evidence to the UK's Work and Pensions Select Committee on the disability employment gap, sharing the findings of our '[Locked out of the labour market](#)' research.

Our research showed 7 in 10 people with disabilities who were employed in March 2020 had lost income, been furloughed or faced unemployment.

The research also revealed that 42% of employers were discouraged from hiring job applicants with disabilities due to concerns around supporting them properly during the pandemic.

We set out our own '[Plan for Jobs for disabled people](#)' and sent it to Members of Parliament, responding to the Government's Plan for Jobs which mentioned disability only once.

After sending out our report we met with Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Women and Equalities, Wera Hobhouse MP. Drawing on our policy calls, she campaigned for the Government to introduce targeted measures to address the barriers people with disabilities face when accessing employment.



45m

We reached almost 45 million people through our '[Locked out of the labour market](#)' report and media activities

Adapting our delivery model in the UK

We run a range of employment programmes that provide people with disabilities with the support they need on their journey towards employment, whether it's offering specialist careers advice, access to the latest tech or matching people to their perfect job.

The pandemic meant that we had to adapt the delivery models of our UK employment programmes almost overnight, with face-to-face support no longer possible and huge changes in the job market.

1,591

We supported 1,591 people with disabilities to seek employment in the UK

Change still works virtually

Through our Change Works programme, we provided one-to-one support and specialist advice to people with disabilities seeking employment in London. From March 2020, we shifted all client meetings and employability workshops to phone calls and virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom – working with clients to increase their confidence using these tools.

Many of those we supported over the past year were clinically extremely vulnerable and could not seek employment due to their disabilities or health conditions. Where this was the case, we changed our focus from securing employment opportunities to making sure vulnerable individuals were adequately supported and that their wellbeing was maintained.

For those that could, and still wanted to, secure employment, we continued to look for opportunities in the sectors that were employing. We filled vacancies for key workers in care homes and retail, often arranging Covid tests for employees so that they could start work.

“Before joining the project I had applied for approximately 100 jobs online. I felt very deflated and unemployable. Now my confidence has gone through the roof – I feel I can achieve anything. I used to always think my dyslexia held me back. Now I embrace it and believe anything is possible.”

Change Works participant



Change 100 – embracing remote working

Change 100 is our flagship internship programme for talented students and recent graduates with disabilities. We were determined to find the best possible version of the scheme despite the pandemic, and we quickly realised that we needed to shift to fully remote delivery.

With employers having to make difficult decisions about their futures, unfortunately some planned internships were unable to go ahead. But we worked closely with employers so that, wherever possible, internships could still take place. Many of our partner organisations such as Greenpeace, National Lottery Heritage Fund and The National Gallery fully embraced remote working.

We also found new ways to keep supporting participants. We expanded our mentoring scheme, offering remote mentoring to high-scoring applicants who did not secure a placement. We also innovated with our Professional Development Programme, running remote sessions in two-hour blocks, across three consecutive days. Candidates found these much more accessible, with less information to digest in one go. The lack of pressure of being there in-person was also a positive for many. The changes meant attendance numbers were higher than in previous years.

We're so grateful to our 2020 partners and candidates for their participation, flexibility and resilience. The changes we put in place have shown real benefits already for interns and employers alike. Looking ahead, we already anticipate keeping several of these developments, and we're pleased that many partners who had to withdraw in 2020 are able to come onboard in 2021.



“Change 100 is a massive gamechanger. To have that extra support is the best thing.”

Catherine, Change 100 participant

97

We supported 97 people with disabilities into paid internship placements on our Change 100 programme

100%

100% of participants reported that their overall confidence and their confidence in the workplace had improved since being on Change 100¹⁸



Ray's story – thriving in the workplace

Ray took part in our Change 100 programme in Summer 2020, with an internship at the National Lottery Heritage Fund. They told us about their experience on the programme:

“I cannot adequately express how Change 100 has changed my life. I was fearful that my future employers would not understand the changes I would require due to my mental health conditions. But Change 100's monthly professional development sessions helped build my confidence around having a disability in the workplace.

While it would have been nice to have physically gone to my place of work, I actually found homeworking really beneficial. I learnt more about how I best work.

Without Change 100, I would have gone into the labour market not knowing about the adjustments I need and how to access them. I would have burnt myself out quickly and believed that it was because I was not good enough at the job. But my internship showed me that I am capable, and to my surprise, I thrive in the workplace.”

“My internship showed me that I am capable, and, to my surprise, I thrive in the workplace.”

Ray

Disability means business

As well as supporting people with disabilities to find work, we also help businesses become more inclusive. Organisations have a lot to gain from promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities. They can reach more customers, recruit from a wider talent pool, and gain a wealth of diverse perspectives, skills and experiences.

Our Training and Consultancy team continued to build on our previous successes, driving change in organisations to make quality jobs and services inclusive for people with disabilities. With the onset of the pandemic, we swiftly moved our services online, offering remote delivery using a range of digital platforms.

Recent clients have included Hyatt, CapGemini, and Ogilvy, as well as voluntary sector organisations such as Girlguiding.

We provide a bespoke approach to organisational change by gaining a detailed understanding of an organisation's priorities, culture and potential gaps. Tailored solutions have included training, e-learning development, focus group research, and policy development. We build skills, knowledge and awareness in managers, customer service and recruitment staff to remove barriers for people with disabilities at every level.

1,861

We delivered inclusion training to 1,861 employees at 142 organisations

We drive change in organisations to make quality jobs and services inclusive for people with disabilities



Disability confident advertising

The creative team at Ogilvy, a global advertising and marketing agency, approached our training and consultancy team for support to integrate inclusion into their campaign development, and ensure that disability is considered throughout their creative process.

Following our support, the team has shared with us that they now have a better understanding of how to tell an authentic story and recognise the importance of engaging with people with disabilities throughout the creative process.

They have committed to embedding the following learning throughout their wider practices:

- Where appropriate, ensure people with disabilities are a part of casting, not because of their disability, but because they fit the narrative.
- Don't portray people with disabilities as the 'hero' or from a sympathetic viewpoint.
- Technology cannot replace real-life experiences. Technology should enhance, not replace, experiences.

The creative team at Ogilvy feels that the partnership with Leonard Cheshire has given them an increased awareness of their own accountability, and they now feel equipped to play their own part in creating more inclusive brands.

Expedia partnership: Breaking down barriers to travel

Last year our Training and Consultancy team worked in partnership with Expedia Group to publish an evidence-based report, 'Breaking down barriers to travel.'



Travel plans may still be on hold for many, but the report makes the case for resuming activity in a more inclusive way after the pandemic. We hope that it will pave the way for many more inclusive options for travellers with disabilities, and for the travel industry to become world-leading in developing products and services that are truly accessible for all.

“Leonard Cheshire worked with us to truly elevate our inclusion agenda’s reach to a larger network and to encourage inclusivity in the travel industry at large. The team brings innovative ideas, strong project management, deeply personal story-telling, and global pan-disability expertise.”

Veronica Velazquez, Senior Global Inclusion & Diversity Manager, Expedia Group New York, USA and **Lauren von Stackelberg**, Global Head of Inclusion & Diversity, Expedia Group London, UK

Building sustainable livelihoods through economic inclusion

Our economic inclusion projects in Africa and Asia ensure people with disabilities receive the support they require to find employment or build a business, enabling them to earn a sustainable livelihood.

Preeti's story – finding a job at the right time

Preeti is a single parent who moved back in with her parents in Delhi after leaving an abusive partner. She wanted to support her family financially, but was worried that her lack of education and her mobility impairment might stop her from finding a job.

She found out about Leonard Cheshire's Inclusion 100 project through friends. The project, funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, promotes livelihoods opportunities for people with disabilities by offering them apprenticeship placements

through the Government of India's National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme.

After initial assessment and career counselling from our team, Preeti received skills training to prepare her for the job market and was introduced to different employment sectors that could be suitable for her. We supported her to attend an apprenticeship fair organised by Reliance India, and she was selected to become a retail store apprentice in March 2020. Following the successful completion of her apprenticeship, Preeti now has a permanent job with Reliance India as a retail associate.

Preeti says: "I am blessed to get this job at the right time. While many employees lost their job due to Covid-19 lockdown, I was able to find one."





Kanta's story – my journey to economic independence

Our three-year livelihoods project supporting women with disabilities in Northern Uganda, funded by the Foundation for a Just Society, ended this year. Since February 2018, we have supported 250 women to improve their livelihoods and increase household income through vocational training and by providing business skills and start up kits.

Kanta is one of the women who took part in the project. A single parent of four children, Kanta's chest and an arm were badly damaged when conflict raged through the country in the 1980s.

This meant she couldn't do many types of work. She couldn't see any way out of her situation and felt her community did not respect or value her. It was difficult to support the needs of herself and her family, let alone find the money for school fees.

But all this changed after joining the project. Being trained in tailoring, as well as receiving a sewing machine and materials, has transformed Kanta's life. She is able to support her family by making and selling well-designed table mats. And she is now treated with respect by the community. Their attitudes towards disability have really changed. Seeing Kanta being so creative has helped them to realise what people with disabilities can achieve, and the value they can bring to the community.

Kanta says: "I am an economically independent and self-reliant woman who can proudly take care of myself and my children's basic needs, courtesy of the project."



Innovating through digital inclusion

The pandemic may have turned many of our programmes upside down – but this challenged us to diversify and explore new possibilities for providing support. In particular, our innovations in digital inclusion have brought real benefits for many people with disabilities.

Being able to offer more of our services remotely has opened up opportunities to people who may have found travel or face-to-face support challenging.

“After doing the course I’m really confident. I feel empowered.”

Shilpe

Shilpe’s story – digital pathways to employment

Shilpe has been using our Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) programme’s Digital Employment Pathway in Bangladesh to access training and advice. Shilpe’s limited mobility has prevented her from accessing face-to-face training, guidance and events, but she can now do all this from home. For her, it is an invaluable resource. This is allowing her to take her first steps towards building a fulfilling career.

Shilpe signed up to our digital skills course, which has already delivered results. She is now working from home in a freelance capacity with a telemarketing company. The role is helping Shilpe to develop her skills further, unlocking additional possibilities for the future. “After doing the course I’m really confident. I feel empowered,” she says. “I am more independent now: I can do things independently.”

Technology is a game changer

Our Innovation to Inclusion programme (i2i), funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, has now completed its second year. We lead the delivery of i2i through a consortium of partners, including the International Labour Organization (ILO). Through the programme we are improving access to waged employment for people with disabilities in Kenya and Bangladesh. To date, we have created 1,365 job opportunities and supported 301 people into employment.

Following capacity building workshops and ongoing regular support meetings, organisations of persons with disabilities in these countries have developed and finalised national advocacy plans and are now ready to put them into action.

We have partnered with the Federation of Kenya Employers and the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network to engage the

private sector and create inclusive employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We are finalising three new and accessible disability inclusion eLearning modules to provide companies with frameworks and guidelines for employing people with disabilities. The modules include practical information on legislation, reasonable accommodation and accessibility, and advice on creating more inclusive workplaces.

We have also been exploring how technology and innovation can be a game changer for people with disabilities when accessing employment. A key development this year has been the launch of online career portals.

We have partnered with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and recruitment specialist Fuzu in Kenya, and mainstream job site bdjobs.com in Bangladesh, to provide training and advice on how to make their sites accessible. So far over 140 employers have advertised jobs for people with disabilities through these portals.

The portals offer accessible and inclusive pathways to employment, through which people with disabilities can access training and advice, as well as search for jobs. The portals were used by 3,707 people with disabilities to seek employment in 2020/21, and we have delivered live or online soft skills and digital literacy training to more than 3,000 people.

3,707

Our accessible career portals in Kenya and Bangladesh were used by 3,707 people with disabilities to seek employment



Reaching the unreachable in India

Before the pandemic hit, we had already started our journey towards developing a virtual livelihoods resource centre – introducing a digital platform for job seekers with disabilities to search for jobs, access information and advice, and develop their skills through online training. This has enabled us to reach thousands of people who were previously unreachable, whether because of geographic location or because their disability prevented them from attending our centres in person.

Covid-19 has accelerated the pace of change, with more and more people working remotely and accessing services online. Since January 2021, 45,000 people across India have registered on our employability platform and have used the in-built self-assessment tool to sign up and access information, skills development training and employment opportunities.

To ensure that our support is inclusive and accessible to as many people as possible, we have also partnered with mainstream recruitment platforms, such as Youth Hub. We are providing them with disability inclusion training, and they are supporting young people with disabilities to build their profile, match with mentors and connect with potential employers.

45,000

45,000 people across India have registered on our employability platform

Finding jobs in a virtual world

In December 2020, we conducted a Virtual Apprenticeship Fair in India with a range of partners – the first ever event of its kind. The fair was conducted on the SkyFair online platform through which candidates seeking jobs could register and browse virtual stalls set up by companies. Each stall had details

about the companies along with the jobs for which the candidates could apply.

The fair was a great success, with 760 candidates and 57 employers taking part – and a total of 216 jobs on offer to date. We look forward to replicating similar events in the future.

216

216 jobs were offered following our Virtual Apprenticeship Fair in India





Virtual volunteering

In India, 30 volunteers from technology consultancy company Accenture developed and delivered training and mentoring to 100 people with disabilities, following training from Leonard Cheshire on accessible learning techniques. The interactive sessions were run via Skype. Modules included communications, computer programming and soft skills training.

“Even though the trainers were new to training a visually impaired person like me, they very much adapted to teaching with assistive technologies to help me better understand programming tools. The training gives me confidence a visually impaired person can become an efficient software engineer.”

Arunkumar, training participant

“We could sense the drive in each candidate in learning new concepts and that was the major reason behind the success of this initiative. It was a very knowledge-gaining session for us as well.”

Karthika, Accenture volunteer

The pilot has been extremely successful, with participants reporting improved confidence and skills – and the volunteers themselves also found it a valuable learning experience. Over the coming months we will be looking to build on the model further with new partners in Bangladesh and Kenya.

Changing the employment landscape for youth with disabilities

In Thailand, we are raising awareness of the issues affecting young people with disabilities as they enter the job market.

Through our Access to Employment project, in partnership with Disabilities Thailand and On Our Radar, we are training participants on storytelling and influencing skills. We are supporting them to share their experiences with key decision makers to bring about change in the employment landscape.

100%

100% of youth with disabilities taking part in our Access to Employment project reported an increase in their leadership skills¹⁹

JJ's story – employers can be flexible

JJ, who has Asperger's Syndrome and Autism, is one of the Lead Youth Advocates taking part in the Access to Employment project. This experience has given him the confidence and skills he needed to find the right job:

"In 2019, soon after I graduated, I had to disguise as a non-disabled person to get employed. But my employer raised their strictness which drove me to quit just before Covid-19 arrived in Thailand.

A reasonable adjustment for a person with Asperger's/Autism could be to provide access to a quiet room, flexible work times and frequent breaks. These will boost productivity instead of reducing it.

I finally got a better workplace at the start of 2021. A place where they understand Asperger's/Autism and are able to adapt to it. They let me carefully choose the work style I like the most.

The new workplace focuses on building Artificial Intelligence and I work as a user-interface engineer. I am able to work with flexible hours and I enjoy it. I am so grateful to Leonard Cheshire's project for supporting me to speak out and help me find employment."

"I am so grateful to Leonard Cheshire's project for supporting me to speak out and help me find employment."

JJ



Looking to the future

“The world of work is rapidly changing and the Covid-19 pandemic is accelerating the move to a digital economy. Albeit challenging, the current context presents an opportunity to build an inclusive future where people with disabilities have equal access to the labour market and participate fully in economic life.

Last year demonstrated the power of technology to transform the lives of people with disabilities. There are however limitations, as many of those we serve lack access to technology. Exploring how to use technology and innovation to serve the most vulnerable and marginalised will be a focus going forward.

Looking to the future, we are committed to deepening our engagement with people with disabilities to gather their invaluable insight. We will work with partners to ensure that Covid-19 recovery plans are inclusive and people with disabilities are not left behind.”

Sakunthala Mapa

Director of Innovation and UK Programme Delivery

▶ **Thangammal, employee at Accenture Chennai, India**



Our year at a glance



Our reach

What your support
has helped us to
achieve together

In total, we reached
435,645
people and organisations in
the UK, Africa and Asia



Our impact

86%

86% of participants reported increased social inclusion since being on our UK and international programmes²⁰

84%

84% of participants reported improved health and wellbeing since being on our UK programmes²¹

Live

Supporting people with disabilities to live as independently as they choose



2,587

We support 2,587 people every day through our care services in the UK



2,936

We supported 2,936 disabled people to get active through our inclusive cycling, physical activity and dance programmes in the UK



15.5m

Our transport campaign reached 15.5 million people, with 64 stories placed in the media



Learn

Providing life-changing opportunities through education



11,023

We supported 11,023 children with disabilities to get an education in India and across Africa



2,916

We trained 2,916 teachers, government representatives, members of organisations of persons with disabilities and other key players on inclusive education



3,426

We trained 3,426 parents and male mentors on inclusive education



Work

Supporting people with disabilities to access meaningful employment and fulfilling careers



22,152

We supported 22,152 people with disabilities to seek employment in the UK, Africa and Asia



3,401

We trained 3,401 government representatives, employers, members of organisations of persons with disabilities and other key players on inclusive employment



45m

We reached almost 45 million people through our 'Locked out of the labour market' report and media activities



Thank you

A huge thank you to all those supporters who have made donations to Leonard Cheshire in the last 12 months and to many others not listed, including those who wish to remain anonymous. We couldn't have done it without you!

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Endnotes

- 1 Sample: 1,246
- 2 Sample: 1,072
- 3 World Health Organization Report on Disability, 2011. www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability
- 4 Facts and Figures 2018: Disability in the United Kingdom. Papworth Trust 2018. www.papworthtrust.org.uk/about-us/publications/papworth-trust-disability-facts-and-figures-2018.pdf
- 5 The Learning Generation - The Education Commission Report, 2016. These data are based on lower- and middle-income countries, not global figures. Children were of primary and lower-secondary school age and are top-end estimates.
- 6 en.unesco.org/news/13-billion-learners-are-still-affected-school-university-closures-educational-institutions
- 7 Sample: 212
- 8 The Washington Group Questions
- 9 Sample: 570
- 10 Sample: 441
- 11 Can Do in Southampton was funded by Comic Relief, working in partnership with the #iwill Fund. The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £50 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. Comic Relief is acting as a match funder and awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund.
- 12 Ofcom, 2018. Access and Inclusion in 2018 – Consumers' experiences in communications markets. Ofcom, 2018. www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/132912/Access-and-Inclusion-report-2018.pdf
- 13 Internet Users Dataset. ONS 2020. www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/datasets/internetusers
- 14 Sample: 185
- 15 Disability and Development Report. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018. social.un.org/publications/UN-Flagship-Report-Disability-Final.pdf
- 16 Leonard Cheshire/ComRes 2018 Line manager survey. comresglobal.com/polls/leonard-cheshire-disability-employers-survey-w2/
- 17 Office for National Statistics, A08: Labour market status of disabled people – August 2020. www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08/current
Note: Figures are based on the definition of 'disability' as defined by the GSS Harmonised Standards levels and rates.
- 18 Sample: 25
- 19 Sample: 55
- 20 Sample: 1,246
- 21 Sample: 1,072

All reach and impact data is from the period April 2020 - March 2021.

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