

I Can! ...now communicate with others.

“I was diagnosed with Autism at 3. Said my first word at 5. Made my first verbal request aged 7.

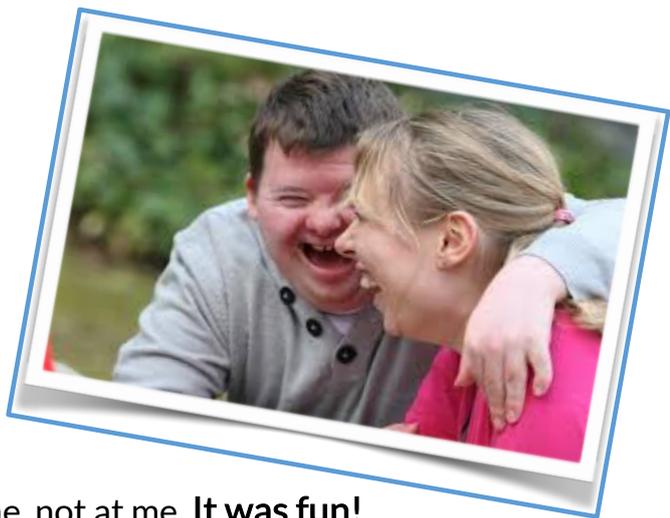
I think in pictures and symbols then convert them to words.

When people talk to me I have pictures in my head to understand what people are saying. It's very confusing. I can use basic sign language too. But people around me didn't always use my communication methods so I learnt bad behaviour; to get people's attention I would push or shove them. To say I was hungry I would bite my arm. If I had a headache, I would bang my head.

I have had many schools, care providers and support. All with different ideas, and their own ways of doing things. One would use photos and another symbols. It's very frustrating to keep changing to suit other people. **No one adopted my ways.** I grew up scared; I didn't want to try and communicate or go out and meet new people, and be expected to do things their way.

Everything changed when I started my job at The Care Division.

They told me to use what worked for me. They used sign language and encouraged me to teach people around me a new sign every week to build my confidence.



They talked with me, not at me. It was fun!

They saw the times I struggled or when I was not feeling well as I do after a seizure and supported me. They helped me develop a keyring of symbols to have with me in case I had a seizure, so people outside work can understand me too.

I understand my communication needs, and am not scared or embarrassed. I do sometimes still shout or walk off if I am anxious but it's not very often. I know I can do lots of things but that it's OK to also to ask for help too.

I love my job, I have a purpose now and that's a very nice feeling to have.”