

Duncan Irvine

My life story



1959 - I was born in Glasgow

I have cerebral palsy due to the umbilical cord being around my neck twice at birth. My disability means that I cannot walk or speak.

I grew up in our family home in Glasgow, we were 3 floors up in a tenement block and I had to be carried up and down the stairs. I had to use gestures and hand signals to communicate with people.

School

I attended Coresford Boarding School where I was lucky that my family lived five minutes away and I went home every night to them.

I felt that the education system neglected me as they assumed that because I could not talk then I couldn't learn which is not true. The only positive about school was meeting other people.

Childhood



I was the youngest of 4 children and we lived with our parents who would take us on holidays to our grandparents just outside Inverness.

Adulthood



I lived at home until I was 20 years old when I moved to Braidwood Care home for 6 years. I did not enjoy my time here as I was in a manual wheelchair and had very little independence.

I moved to Upper Springlands when I was 26 years old which was my first step to independence. I then got an electric wheelchair which meant that I could go anywhere I wanted. At this point to communicate I used a board with pictures on it which I pointed to. This has since changed as I now have a pathfinder which is a computer with pictures on it that I can touch and it will speak the words for me. I attended college for 2 years to learn how to use the pictures on the pathfinder. Using the pathfinder I can communicate on the phone and Skype.



Board that I pointed to



My computer that speaks for me

Now that I could get around on my own in my electric wheelchair and communicate with people with my pathfinder I moved to my own flat just outside the centre of Perth. My flat has very few adaptations to it which include an electric door which I can open and some grab rails to help me stand up.

I feel that life has improved for me. Today I have control of my own life with personal assistants and I lead a fairly independent life. Years ago I had to rely on others to get out now I can go out when I choose and be part of the community, not segregated.

Interests and Work



I like to play backgammon, boccia, chess, cards, listen to music, going to the pub, going to comedy shows, cinema and theatre. I have won medals when competing at boccia including a gold medal in Australia.



I have climbed Ben Nevis and been on holiday crewing a tall ship. I have worked in Capability shops as well as helping the police at Safe Taysiders which educates children.

Life Now



I like living in Perth, it is quite wheelchair friendly and has got better over the years.

When I lived in Upper Springlands I went to visit a friend in PRI, I stopped at the fire station on the way to make sure that I was on the right road. I bet you cannot guess what happened next?!

The fireman phoned Upper Springlands and told them that **ONE OF THEIR WHEELCHAIRS HAD ESCAPED!**

I could not believe what I was hearing. Thankfully things are better these days.

There is a lot to do in Perth and over the years I have developed relationships with staff in certain pubs who will assist me with things I need such as a drink and toilet to ensure that I can be social.

I would still like to see a change in people's attitudes towards those of us with a disability, people need to realise that I am human and my brain works perfectly well.