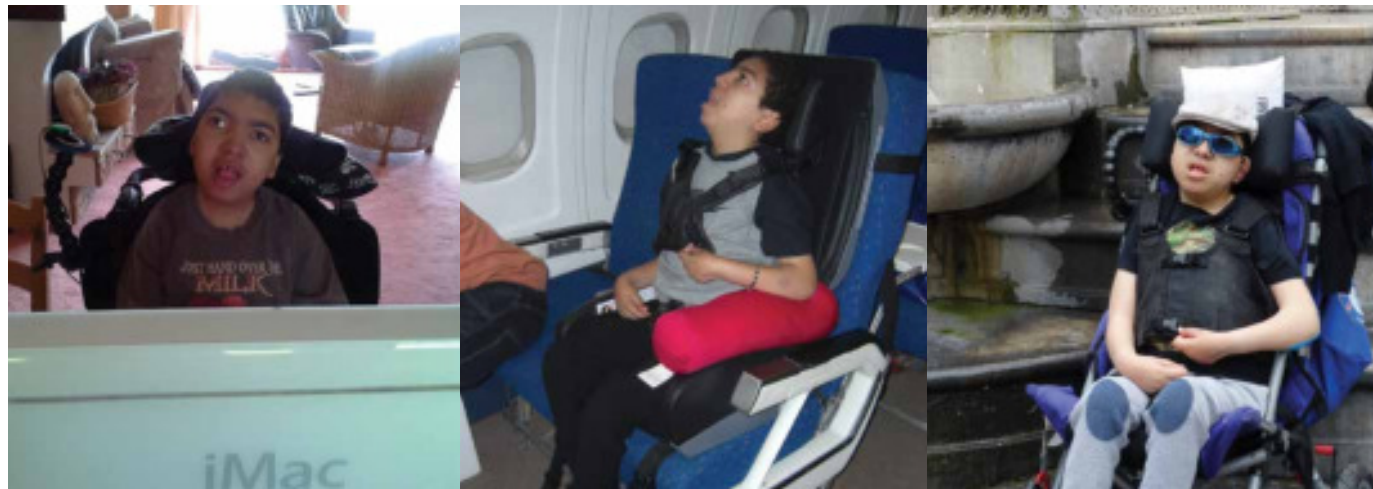


DRIVING LIFE FORWARD

AFTER OVER 20 YEARS IN HIS FIELD ROGER DAKIN AND HIS TEAM AT THE SMILE CENTRE UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGE OF FINDING ANSWERS TO PHYSICAL PROBLEMS ON A DAILY BASIS. ACHIEVING THE FULLEST POTENTIAL OF INDIVIDUALS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE DRIVING AIM OF SMILE



After over 20 years in his field Roger Dakin and his team at The Smile Centre understand the challenge of finding answers to physical problems on a daily basis. Achieving the fullest potential of individuals has always been the driving aim of Smile.

Finding the determination to create a full life takes great imagination and drive from both the individual and more vitally the support team around them.

Freddie Stanley is a prime example of a young man with a tremendous team of family and supporters making a difference and carving out a productive future for him despite his physical limitations.

When Roger first met Freddie he heard the story of his birth from his mother Sonia.

'If he lives, your child is likely to be a vegetable,' the Paediatric Consultant told Sonia, 24 hours after Freddie's dramatic entrance into the world. Looking at her son, lying in an incubator struggling

for life, the word 'vegetable' was more shocking than the actual message he was attempting to deliver of the damage done during Freddie's delivery.

13 years on and, far from being a vegetable, Freddie is a vibrant, strong young man, with a steely will and a thirst for all that life has to offer. With the great positive energy of his mother, 'Team Freddie' has seen his move into one of Smile's Smart Mustangs.

In 2009 an ITC specialist came to visit Freddie at his home and enquired as to whether he had ever tried using a SMART chair. Sonia recalls being bemused and unsure of how this severely disabled boy was expected, with little movement, no speech and limited sight to operate an electric wheelchair? Gently she persuaded Sonia to consent to a trial session and this marked a turning point in their lives.

From the moment he was hoisted onto the 'Smile Platform' he immediately found his inner Lewis

Hamilton. Watching him motor about the school hall with the biggest grin on his face, Sonia turned away and wept. She wondered if it was perhaps a fluke, that perhaps he didn't really understand the cause and affect and that what she was witnessing was simply beginners luck. It was only after watching him come to a perfect rest alongside the Occupational Therapist as requested, then with perfect comedic timing hit the head switch and zoomed off again laughing just as the therapist leant over to attach the hoist, that Sonia says that she 'finally got it!'

6 years later, he has a SMART chair at home and it is the greatest source of independence in his life. Finally he can go where he wants, when he wants. Far from being a 'toy' it has proved to be a necessity, a symbol of his status as a normal teenager.

Sonia says: 'Sure he spent lots of time sitting in hallways looking around, we have now come to understand that he was learning what hallways look like,

since his only experience prior to that was being pushed through the hall to his destination. Sometimes the hallway was his destination, it gave him a sense of how the dining room connects to the family room and as a result how he connected to his environment.'

Today, with the same focus to fully engage with the world Freddie has his sights set on experiencing all he can for himself and in destinations far beyond the hallway. A recent trip to Budapest was a tremendous success and the architectural drama of the city Sonia believes particularly appealed to Freddie with his limited sight. Travel with someone in a wheelchair is a challenge but with the help of a good airline, hotel staff and a motivated family member, the challenges can be overcome and the inspiration and stimulation that travel can provide both the individual and their families can be enormous.

Fresh from his adventure along the Danube and another planned for next year to Scotland in search of the Loch Ness Monster, Freddie has now been inspired to design his own brand of clothing, specifically for those with physical limitations. Engaging with his own free time and his future, Sonia and Freddie are working with Natasha Ramjoorawon and other specialists to help bring a unique and much needed fashion line out onto the market. With focus on the comfort and feel of 'stretchy' textiles and the intelligent use of zips and fastenings in designs directly from the experiences of those who use them, they combine a keen eye to the latest catwalks and sharpest dressers with the practical insight of a team in the know.

Using his SMILE SMART chair at home, along with all the specific adaptations that The Smile Centre have provided, Freddie is now able to research ideas, follow the latest football and Formula 1 news and design a fashion range.

'From day one, I was amazed at the patience of Roger from Smile,' says Sonia. 'Nothing was too much trouble, no adaptation was impossible and they seemed to have all the time in the world to make sure they got it right. Freddie is a motorcar addict so his smart chair called a Mustang has been 'pimped' to within an inch of its life and now resembles a top-of-the-range sports car. His chair has definitely been the driving force in maximising his mobility and improving the quality of his life.'

In order for individuals like Freddie to build a future for themselves and their families, they need to find the right help and support. Roger Dakin and his team at Smile Smart Technology, specialise in assessment and training for those in powerchairs or those hoping to move into one and are the original developers and manufacturers of SMART technology for powerchairs. Smile also provide the switches, mounts and controls that can transform the ability of an individual, allowing them to communicate and mobilise themselves to their maximum potential.

Working alongside therapists and charities, Smile provide mounts as framework for a whole host of communication devices from those such as eye gaze recognition technology to iPhones, and using years of experience of finding solutions Smile also supply an array of switching to allow individuals to control their movement and communication devices with perhaps just their big toe or the suck of a straw.

The transformation that the right technology can make to the quality of a person's life cannot be underestimated. An enormous amount of Smile's time and resources are spent on R&D as there are a never ending array of problems to overcome and new solutions to find. Roger's driving force is always to find a solution to any

problem. Believing that Britain could be said to have lagged behind the more advanced methodology and research methods of Europe and the US, much of Smile's work is to encourage industry and therapists to keep up to date with thinking and not to entrench themselves in past theories. At the present time, The Smile Centre would encourage anyone who finds themselves in the same situation as Sonia to reach out and look for solutions themselves to help push the market forward.

Having fun is an enormous incentive. Smile uses technology to enable stimulation and interaction with our modern world so that progressive integration can become a reality for those with physical limitations.

Roger Dakin says that he 'is always looking to find the spark' in the eyes of those he meets for the first time. That spark is his catalyst to prove that the individual, despite what has previously been believed of them, deserves the chance to try. His training and unique ability to draw out the best in his client's potential is proven by his almost 100% success rate.

Roger and his team's methods along with their renowned energy and vision have quietly helped to transform the lives of many families like Freddie and Sonia's and are now looking forward to a time when this unique combination of technology and methodology, that they recently termed 'Kinology' are seen as the acknowledged developmental solution to living a full life from the earliest possible age if you come into the world like Freddie.

Roger Dakin of Smile Smart Technology and Freddie Stanley

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