



Shall we Go for a Walk ?

When I go for a walk
people look round at me.

Will you come too ?
Will you hold my hand ?

They look round at me.
There's something wrong.

Will you come too ?

Perhaps I'll put my ear-phones in
and play my music extra loud.

I am going for a walk.
What's wrong ?

Will you come too ?
Will you hold my hand ?

Rogan Wolf

Kim Wolf had Down's Syndrome. We often went out together. Some of the words and phrases above are Kim's own.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



On the Bench

I'm ready and aching to play in the match
but have to sit it through on the bench
never allowed to come down, join in.

Cliff

Cliff works for United Response in Kent. He suggested this is what it's like to have a learning disability.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



I Have...

I have a disability and a learning disability
I have also spina bifida
and I have a club foot
I have had seven operations on both feet
Sorry to have to tell you this
but I have to wear special pads
as I have incontinence problem
I have to bring a pad with me
each day
because I attend the hub
I know it is a bit embarrassing for me
but that's the way I am I'm afraid
but there is nothing they can do
to make me walk better
for me

Carol

Carol is supported by United Response. She wrote this for their "Postcards from the Edges" project.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



I Made a Picture

I made a picture
of a piano and an elephant.
The picture is me
playing the piano
thinking about elephants.

Aldean

Aldean is supported by United Response. He wrote this for their "Postcards from the Edges" project.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Other People

People are like apples or eggs.

They look

all right on the surface,

but you don't know

what's going on

inside.

Shiraz

Shiraz is supported by United Response. He wrote this for their "Postcards from the Edges" project.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Stig's Helmet

My favourite TV
programme is Top Gear.
The Stig has a talent
but hides behind his helmet.
I have lots of talents
but do not hide
behind my autism

Luke

Luke is supported by United Response. He wrote this for their "Postcards from the Edges" project.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Jimmy Two Bags comes Home

Meet Jimmy Two Bags.
How's it going, Jimmy ?
What are you up to ?

I'm just Jimmy
and I have two heads
and when I arrived

I had just two black
plastic bags to my name.
That's all. I must not be seen.

But now a few years later
Jimmy knows better. And we can see him
for these days he lives content

with one head on a whole body
in a whole house.

And when Jimmy goes away

for a visit or a break
he carries a whole suitcase
full of his own nice things.

Rogan Wolf

This poem was written following a talk with a United Response social care worker. The poem's subject is a real person, though Jimmy is not his true name. He once believed he had two heads.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.


United
Response
support that changes with you



The Beginning

They began with a house for 12 in the south
and a campaign by their new neighbours
for lamps to be installed
at all the street corners.
For the dark could no longer
be trusted. “Here in our darkness
strangers now will lurk
harbouring harm and poised to strike.”

What *is* this power
that makes the unseen so dangerous
and fills it with demons
which lunge from the deep ?

Soon the tide turned
and the demons drew back. The people
at the local Post Office
asked for training
in how to help a man prone to fits
while collecting his pension. As life
came good for the household
it came good for their neighbours too...

Rogan Wolf

*This poem refers to a conversation in which the beginnings of United Response were described.
United Response is a national organisation which supports people who have disabilities.*

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.


United
Response
support that changes with you



The Wooden Staircase in the Corner

The day begins with steps in the corner.
A dark wooden spiral, one step at a time.
A time to work, a time to make good.

You become someone here -
one step at a time.
It's trust and friend

and close listening here,
and safety -
no bullying.

It's being believed in
and helped to deliver
one step at a time.

Chris at the cash desk
in Café West refuses
to panic when a long queue

of customers is waiting to pay.
One at a time, he tells himself,
That's the way to get through.

One step at a time.

Rogan Wolf

This poem describes a catering project in York which offers employment to people with learning disabilities. There is a wooden staircase between the meeting room and kitchen. Café West is run for City of York Council workers.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Talking to Colin

I want to be on my own.

I want a house and a car

I want a computer.

I have Downs' Syndrome.

Sometimes the words

don't come out right.

It's my head, something is there,

said Dad, something is there

that's not quite right.

She said "you're an idiot, you're just lazy."

I went to special schools and I've seen

that some people need help.

They don't know, they just can't do it. But I can.

I want to be on my own.

with a house and a car.

I want a computer.

Rogan Wolf

This poem was written following a conversation with Colin, who is supported by United Response. The poem gives a true account of what was said, though Colin is not his real name.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Talking to Joanna

Joanna beams behind her glasses.
She laughs. “I’m the best chef in the world !”
“I’m amazing ! I’m in charge !
Friday is my day in the kitchen.
But when Monday comes,
Mum says, Upsa-daisy, up and out !”

There was a time when Joanna would chat all day
to *pretend* friends - chatter, chat, chat, chat.
But these days her friends are real
especially on a Friday
and her dreams of loneliness
have all drifted away,
those misty names
have lifted lightly away.

Rogan Wolf

This poem was written following a conversation with Joanna, who has Down’s Syndrome and is supported by United Response. The poem gives a true account of what was said, though Joanna is not her real name.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. “Hyphen-21” is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Talking to Sally

Sally sings karaoke
all on her own -
“Because of You”
her greatest hit.

Her Mum was listening in the audience
and Sally forgot herself and just let
the words come through.
“Because of You”
brought tears to their eyes.

And she works behind the scenes
at the magazine, helping
the words to flow.

And in drama she lets herself go
and there is so much more
that she might do.

Play it again, Sally -
“Because of You”
“Because of You.”

Rogan Wolf

This poem was written following a conversation with Sally, who is supported by United Response. The poem gives a true account of what was said, though Sally is not her real name.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. “Hyphen-21” is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Well Met

Colin knows how hard his worker
William labored to help with forms
and other snags. It means there's someone
reliable behind him in the world
a safe bet.

And William allows Colin to stroke
his beard until William's had enough,
and then he says so, no hard feelings.

It's like family, the listening -
educated, comfortable,
close and well met.

Rogan Wolf

This poem was written following a day spent in a project for people with learning disabilities run by United Response. The poem records encounters between staff and client. Names have been disguised.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Components of Possibility

He said “There’s nothing else for me
in the world
except to work with people.

It’s their trust, their absolute need,

and a need on my part that grips me
to be worthy.

No messing, no side, no costume
nor disguise. We have to meet -
pain included.

I am trying to be clear.

The currency is wholesome here
and the air clean -
a healing oxygen.”

Rogan Wolf

This poem follows a conversation with a young care worker, employed by United Response.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. “Hyphen-21” is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



To the Social Care Worker

You serve as family and friend
as spur and shield
as guide and interpreter
between me and the world.

Rogan Wolf

*This poem was written following a day spent in a community project for people with learning disabilities,
run by United Response.*

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



A Father to his Son

(with Down's Syndrome)

Through you I proclaim
the glorious gift of the verb 'to be.'

Profound in simplicity; in simplicity profound.
Saying what you feel, being as you are,
wonderfully irreverent, irrelevant,
inappropriate, spontaneous,
topsy turvey, upside down.
vulnerable, perceptive, aware,
eager to communicate, willing to please.

Asking only for time to love and be loved
to understand and be understood.
Polarising the community -
for most, bringing out the very best
for others, incomprehension, fear.....

You wrecked my career, challenged my sanity,
opened my senses, restored my humanity.
shattered my expectations.....

Like the Almighty you defy definition.
Ultimately Our Eternal Mother and Father
says to you, to Jesus, and to all,
"My child, I never intended
that this should ever happen to you !
But welcome home !"

John Mclorinan

reproduced here by kind permission of the author and his family

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Kim and the Sea-Gulls

You broke clear.
I do not know
what drove
you to spirit yourself
away.

In search of
more room
you ended up
on a cliff edge.

Where further
could you escape to ?

Frail
and at risk
on that blustery high corner
you looked out
on miles of grey unrest
borderless peace

and took your clothes off.

I do not know what drove
you so to yield yourself
to the pure
flesh.

You felt pure

chill and turned
blue.

And the sea-gulls
turned
as if for prey

and swooped
on you,
mobbing.

Someone found
you there -
eye of a storm
of sea-gulls, blue
in a storm
of tears.

She brought you
safely home.

But I believe,
my dear,
that you
went seeking
storm
that day.

Rogan Wolf

Kim had Down's Syndrome. This incident took place when she was in her early teens.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.


United
Response
support that changes with you



The Morning Strain

Night after night our mum
scanned the swirls and creeping cracks

of the bedroom ceiling
for some saving answer

a sufficient plan
to ensure that
Kim would manage

once she had to live alone.
She found this :

“something’s sure
to turn up,

it always does.”
And this : “my duty plain

is to outlive her” -
thoughts which failed

to bring on sleep
or bear the morning strain.

Rogan Wolf

When Kim’s mum died, they were both receiving support at home. Kim died much later, well supported by Mencap.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. “Hyphen-21” is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Kim Dancing

(i)

What do we do with Kim ?
We fret. We fuss.
We owe this at least
to the love of our mother.
Kim says “you’re beautiful”
her wet lips pursed
for a kiss. She is
our hope, our claim to soul.
She says, “Cheeky monkey.”

(ii)

How can a poem portray in words
Kim’s delight in dancing ?

Mmm *duh*
 mmm *duhduh*
 mmm *duhduhduh*
Mmm *duhduh*
 mmm *duh*
 mmm *duh duhduh duhduhduh*
Mmm *duhduh*
 mmm *duhduh*
 mmm *duhduhduh duhduh duh...*

Rogan Wolf

Kim had Down’s Syndrome.. She died in 2012, aged 59.



Kim and the Nasty Woman

A “nasty woman”
waits for Kim in the hall.

Kim doesn’t know her
or what that shadowy
snarling means,
but her door stays open

conceding connection.
All evening Kim sits

in her room alone
staring out

at the Shapeless One.
Sometimes Kim

flinches, retreats
out of range

but soon returns
in thrall.

I said goodnight
shorting their circuit

opening their circle.
“You’re beautiful”

Kim said to me
and I replied

“It’s you who’s beautiful.”
She spurned my thought -

her mind gripped
by subject matter

far beyond
what love may reach.

Rogan Wolf

Kim had Down’s Syndrome. At the time this poem was written she was 57 years’ old.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. “Hyphen-21” is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you



Near the End of a Year of Death

In memory of my late sister Kim

All at once the wind
hurls thousands of fallen leaves
skywards from Hyde Park

The wind grabs hold of
a whole year's shed leaves and flings
them over Hyde Park

One moment sees the wind
sweep all this autumn's dead
leaves across Hyde Park

as if all the fallen
leaves of London are dancing
above Hyde Park

This sudden gust and
all the red leaves of London
heave up from Hyde Park

Rogan Wolf

Kim died a few months before this poem was written. Each of these five haiku describes the same moment in Hyde Park, London. Kim always loved a strong wind and would have liked to hear this poem read out very energetically.

Poems for...bridges to Learning Disability

<https://poemsforthewall.org>

Poems for...the wall is a Hyphen project. "Hyphen-21" is a company registered in Cardiff no.2925831. Registered Charity no.1040077.

**United
Response**
support that changes with you