

International Wheelchair Day - 1 March - wheelchair skills in schools

Tuesday 21 February, 2023

After 16 years of using a wheelchair and experiencing the life changing difference that came from learning wheelchair skills, Pete Donnelly set up The Wheelchair Skills College with the vision that every wheelchair user gets access to these vital life skills that can build confidence and independence.

More than just a 'nice to have', Pete tells us that he believes that wheelchair skills are a human right "Everyone has the right to liberty and by not teaching the skills that mean people can be independent, we are withholding that freedom of choice and control".

Pete has been working with schools over the last year to make sure that young wheelchair users have the skills they need to realise their potential and raise their aspirations in an inaccessible world.

One of the schools shares the impact for a student when he learnt how to open doors from his wheelchair "His little face just lit up. I could see the confidence in him knowing that he could start to be that little bit more independent."

"I think he sat a little bit taller because of that. Following on from that session when he learned how to open doors, he now using that when he moves around the school. It's made a big impact within his day-to-day life".

Through the positive outcomes seen in the wheelchair skills sessions that have been delivered in schools so far, Pete tells us there is a long way to go and is working with children, parents and teachers to develop a more in-depth training programme to support young wheelchair users.

On 1st March for International Wheelchair Day, Pete will be delivering a series of workshops at Marjorie McClure School in Chislehurst, Bromley aimed at raising awareness of wheelchair skills.

Workshops will follow the theme of "Bringing the wheelchair community together" and cover wheelchair skills sessions, wheelchair games, classroom lifestyle sessions and opportunities for children and teachers who don't use wheelchairs to join in as well.

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