

Aideen Blackborough

My Lived Experience of Cerebral Palsy



Early Diagnosis and High Expectations

My name is Aideen and I have Cerebral Palsy, a physical disability I have had since birth. It was caused by an injury to my brain around the time I was born, which affects my mobility, co-ordination and speech.

As a young child, my parents noticed that I was slower to meet some physical milestones. I was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at the age of four. While I had physical challenges, my parents were confident in my intellectual ability and strongly believed I should attend a mainstream school. At the time, the local authority felt my needs would be better met in a specialist setting. After many difficult discussions, my parents successfully argued for a mainstream placement, supported by a one-to-one teaching assistant.

Education, Independence and Challenging Assumptions

They were right. Cerebral Palsy did not limit me academically. I continued to thrive through secondary school, achieving seven GCSEs. Wanting to develop independence alongside my studies, I later attended Hereward College, a residential college for disabled students, where I completed my A-Levels while building independent living skills.

I then went on to Oxford Brookes University, graduating in 2006 with a BA (Hons) in Business Management. During my degree, I completed a year-long work placement, which highlighted a new challenge — despite strong qualifications, many employers questioned my abilities because of my disability. Eventually, I secured a role supporting disabled people into employment, helping to break down the very barriers I had encountered myself.

Family Life and Professional Purpose

Despite some bleak predictions about my future when I was young, I am now married and have two sons. My life reflects what is possible when expectations are high and barriers are addressed, rather than when disability is seen as a limitation.

Today, I am a self-employed Disability Awareness Speaker and Trainer, working with schools to support meaningful conversations about disability and inclusion. I am passionate about children learning about disability from an early age — because understanding, not fear or assumption, is what creates more inclusive schools and communities.

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