

From a Lion to a Guinness World Record holder

Jack is a very lively, very confident seven year old.



Diagnosed with high functioning autism and sensory processing disorder, aged three, it was a real struggle to get Jack to participate in any activities outside of the house. Jack's behaviour, when he was first diagnosed, could best be described as unpredictable. If he was anxious or stressed, he would stop at nothing to escape the situation. Meltdowns were frequent and exhausting. He was excluded from multiple nurseries before the age of four and school was nothing short of a disaster. After a matter of weeks, I elected to home school.

Unable to make or maintain friendships, his life was increasingly isolated – and isolating for me too, as his main carer. Until his diagnosis (and, for quite some time afterwards), I felt quite lost trying to deal with Jack's behaviour. All of the strategies parents usually suggest (the naughty step, rewards and treats) simply did not work with Jack.

So when I stumbled on a leaflet suggesting skiing for autistic children, I was intrigued. Not particularly hopeful, but definitely intrigued. I had no reason to believe Jack would enjoy it (and a million reasons to believe he would not!), but it was too good an opportunity to ignore. Here was an activity geared towards an autistic child. I took the leaflet and called the number. It turned out to be one of the best calls I've ever made.

The company I called was Snowbility who have an understanding that each autistic child is different and has different needs. They also have an appreciation that autistic children can respond positively to skiing. There are no mutterings about bad behaviour. No criticisms about parenting; just an understanding.

I have to admit, until that call I had never considered skiing as a possible recreation for Jack; quite surprising given some of the hair-brained things I have considered! But from the moment Jack hit the slopes, he adored it.



Jack has been skiing for several years now and the benefits are enormous. Of course, he has learned to ski, which in itself is amazing. Especially for Jack, who is unable to access many sports; team sports, for instance, remain beyond his reach right now.

Some of the results are tangible. He has, for example, won a Blue Peter badge for skiing.



And he's become a Record Breaker!



Other results are less easily quantified. For Jack has not only learned to ski, he has learned some invaluable life lessons too. His independence, confidence and self-awareness have all been boosted by skiing.

The effect this has had on his personality is just amazing. I truly do not believe that Jack would be the happy, outgoing and confident child he is if he had not found an activity he truly enjoys.

I believe snow sports are ideal for autistic children, who may have social and communication issues. Skiing is a social activity, but without the need for 'team' rules. For Jack, and for our family, it's perfect!



If you would like to find out how Snowbility can help you or would like to book a taster session, please contact Richard Fetherston on 07713 888199 or at Richard@snowbility.co.uk.