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So back in 1994 when I arrived in hull, I got myself a part time job and that part time job was with whole mencap. The local charity. Yes. Working with people with a learning disability and actually we did a lot of media activities with those people too. And I suppose looking back over the last 25 years of my time and how that job was actually a real delight. It's probably one of the nicest little jobs I've ever had to run alongside by photography career. Kerrie White is sitting opposite, good to have you in the studio. Thank you for inviting me. No, you were heavily involved with mencap locally.

[00:39](#)

So I, I first of all would just like to say I was with mencap for seven years. Um, I covered the areas of the Humber and the northeast, um, under the lifestyles and work directorate. I also did a little bit of advocacy within that and kind of link to the, the local kind of learning disability partnership board. Um, for me, I am a, it was quite sad that, um, a decision had been made that we were looking at kind of fears redundancy and um, the, the, the service is no longer being within this area. Um, so for me, um, I am a very much a, a kind of positive person. Um, I like to spend time with individuals and kind of find out what it is that they want. Everything that I've done over the last seven years, it's been very much built on code delivery codesign. Um, and there's no point in having a service unless you've actually got your individuals behind you and helping you kind of drive that service forward. Yeah,

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let's just be clear, cause not everyone will really understand what code delivery and designers

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delivery. Really for me it's not tokenistic. It's, it's about actually listening to the individuals that you're working with. Um, I um, have always really valued and I've learned lots. Um, I would never call myself an expert in the learning disability failed at all. And what I would say is I'm a very passionate person. He has good listening ears and, um, I like to kind of sit down with individuals, ask them where they're at, meet them where they're at, and actually check some of their solutions and some of their ideas in terms of how they would like to move forward in their lives. Um, and work with them on high. We put a plan together to kind of progress that.

[02:17](#)

What attracted you to learning disability then in the first place?

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So learning disability, I think for me, I've always been around individuals with learning disability and my mom, bless her, she, she's no longer with us, but um, she was always a kind of community nurse. She had a job where she worked with individuals with learning disabilities. So, um, I was introduced quite early on, um, to individuals. We even got her a holiday teal codea. Um, and it was absolutely, um, uh, fantastic kind of opening for us as, as kinda while I was a young teen at the stage. And, um, what was really nice for me was to actually see that kind of community aspect of getting EIT and these, these individuals. Um, the ones who went on holiday were absolutely fantastic and they pub and club like the best of them. Um, you know, that their views and their, their, their

kind of wants, um, you know, they were able to kind of speak with their voice and say, okay, I'd like to do this today, that today, the other today.

[03:16](#)

Um, it was very much led by them. Um, and I think it is so, so important. You can learn a lot and through that kind of process of just spend time with somebody. For me, I've always been passionate about helping individuals find their voice and the influence was a big, you know, big phrase when I was doing that, that sort of, yeah. And, and I think I'm following on from that. I mean I went on to do social work, social policy. Um, I kind of, I guess was really trying to work out my, um, kind of career path. But I really kind of come home when I joined man cup seven years ago. Um, and that really kind of inspired me because the work that we've done in the last kind of seven years has been very much community based, very much kind of connect and, and getting people kind of progressed into meaningful activity and paid employment.

[04:08](#)

And for me that was true integration, truer inclusion. But there's a lot of, um, young people who really are seeking to kind of move and transition into paid employment. I think the way that we do employee engagement has to be relooked at, you know, none of this 'cold calling giz a job'. Um, type approach needs to, to happen. We need to look at different ways of truer integration. I think the best, best way to go by that is, um, to make our guys present and, and in the community. And I'm not making that too stifled and to set up, um, but, but do an elements of kind of matching but more natural opportunities. So, you know, have in mind a particular project and particular project and name ability. I see. What does ICT stand for? Okay. So, um, when we kind of heard that men cup would be no more and I'm not one to rest on my laurels, I thought, okay, we need to move quick here.

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We need to look at, um, how we remain, um, present and visible within the locality because that is very much what I felt, um, in the discussions that I've had for the people that we supported, that they want and spoke with parents, spoke with partners and um, we have no come up with a bit of a new name that will drive us forward. So, um, we are hoping to set up ice ability which will be a charity and have charity status. I'll be honest, and this is all very new to me, but I'm willing to give it a good go. And um, I certainly want to say I've tried, um, because I can see the need and the demand in the area. I, um, again, it's a pretty cool name. Everybody keeps telling me it's a cool name and it is and I, what does I stand for?

[05:58](#)

Well for me, it's involve, collaborates and empire and the three streams of support that we hope to deliver on Welby employment advocacy and that kind of social inclusion ice ability. It's a cool name. The guys, um, really loved the name. They've been involved in the name and the logo and we I'm imagining a wrap. Yeah. Oh No. There, there, there's also been a little bit of a little bit of a Kinda wrap moment yo VIP. Um, and you know, and anybody who's met me and certainly anybody who who, um, will have come into touch with, um, kind of services that have been provided before, hopefully. And I would like to thank, and I'm, I'm quite proud to say this, they will have felt like a VIP, um, because

that's how we do want people to fail at, whether that be a learner, a parent, a partner. Um, and that is some of the feedback that we've got. You know, he's a coach, um, you know, his lesson and, and a yeah, Yo VIP collaborate and lesson ice ice ability than Dun Dun, Dun.

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Well, it's the, the day to day or week to week going to look like and to feel like for, for the young people and others that you're going to be supporting another on these particular sectors that you're going to be trying to help young people to access.

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Yes. So for me, um, a big part of this kind of set up is to kind of roll on and ensure that we don't lose track and from the good work that has been built so far now the work that we've really kind of focused on and, and kind of channeled has been a rind. Um, well closing the gap really after the number of young people actually moving into paid and sustainable work. Um, I think, um, we need to increase the numbers and moving into to work, but we also need to look at that kind of journey to the workplace. Um, again, I think employer engagement, the way we do employer engagement needs to change. Um, yes, we can, um, I guess give advice and guidance to employers as to how they can make things easily accessible. Make application forms easier. Yeah,

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that's actually true. For any young person applying for job, isn't it, not just those with learning disabilities.

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I think any kind of reasonable adjustment or anything you that you would put in, um, to assessed those, um, who may have perhaps some differences and their learning abilities I think, um, is helpful to all. I as a, as a an individual find it really, really helpful when some things and kind of pictorial form easy read. My goodness, if you ever tried to read a big policy documents sometimes skip that and go straight to the easy read and you get all the information you need.

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There was a software package back when I was working for mencap and I then did some freelance work with, uh, a center called the learning center,

[08:56](#)

which metal are with them building back then. And we used the package call widgets. I thought, well, we referred to it as widgets. I'm not sure that was the official name, which it still exist. And I think, you know, certainly in a lot of the kind of skills, um, they will look certainly for children with disabilities, they'll look to use the Mac towns, the weekends, um, kind of everything kind of pictorial. But I think for me, part of the work that we will do will not just be work with the young people, but work, work with the young people to actually educate some of the employers, bust some of the myths and actually have some more relaxed conversations with employers because I think employers are absolutely petrified. Sometimes they're like, Ooh, what does this mean for us all in disability law? Oh, um, you know, and that's where they kind of take a step back.

[09:43](#)

Whereas I say, you know, it isn't about giz a job and you know, we want, um, 12 placements in your establishment for the next 12 months or 12 years. And we don't want employers to feel it a bind. We want employers to actually make informed choices, understand the benefits of, of having an individual with a learning disability and or differences in their workplace and, and just how beneficial that can be to their overall culture. Um, you know, some of our guys are the most reliable, honest, I say on us sometimes very honest. Um, but sometimes there's employers. We need to hear that. We need to hear that on this day. Um, and we need to have that different tech and we need the diversity within the workplace to, to make the workplace come to life. But we don't want to frighten employers away. Um, a lot of kind of reasonable adjustments are low cost.

[10:34](#)

You know, it's just thinking about perhaps some flexible working, thinking about the, the workspace that people are in. Also, um, you know, just making sure for Elliot, for example, um, young chap who we supported into cleaning role, it's very, very important for him to have organization and planning and, and just to know where his equipment, his to do his job. Um, and nobody best touches stuff because you know, um, that that is so, so important to him. And, and actually with his autism and everything else, he has to kind of know and have some, well, I have some reassurance that when he comes into our clinic goes nts workspace and his little cleaning cupboard, that everything has its place. In addition to that, I guess it would be also the mentorship, um, which we should be providing to every new member of, of, of, of a team or anything, you know, whether that's a person with a learning disability or not, I think we should do that match really.

[11:31](#)

Let's not get bogged dying and politically correct kind of, well, I can't say this and I can't say that, you know, if we could create some nervousness, it does create a nervousness and, and that's why I'll never ever professed to be an expert. I can still set and you know, sometimes just in my natural talk and things and then go, oh, was that the right thing to say? My dear goodness. You know, and I, I, I've, I've been in this role for a long, long time. Um, but I think as long as we're honest and as long as we can, um, you know, perhaps ask the individual themselves what, what it is that they would, um, kind of like in, in terms of the terms, you know, do they say that they live with autism, um, or perhaps if they have another condition, do they want to describe it as um, a disability and, or difficulty, you know, hot.

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How did they want is an opportunity. Yeah. Yeah. Hi. Hi. Hi. Would they describe themselves? And I think it really is by asking that question. I have seen such a variant and with many of the young people that that have kind of worked with. Um, yes. You know, you could go away and you can do your research and I think employers do, some really good employers will go away and read all about autism, um, and apparently all about autism and you know, they won't necessarily have very good eye contact. I have got a number of individuals with autism. He actually, the eye contact is probably better than meal. Um, you know, they really do own it. Um, so I think let's not kind of put labels on, on

individuals, but create opportunities, you know, so that we can move away from the fact sheet of, of conditions, but actually meet with the individual themselves and go from there.

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So what conversations have you had with potential employers? I'm very, very fortunate. I would say, um, in, in, um, the role that I've been in. Um, we've built many, many good partnerships with, um, the as does the costa coffees, um, you know, the tescos, et cetera. So, you know, all the big kind of retail chains, which has been fabulous. Um, and again, we are keen for those kind of relationships to, to kind of continue. But I would say, again, the thing that I'm most proud of is that, um, we developed a partnership with the [inaudible] group. My social group had an absolutely fantastic reputation. Anyway. So when we sat down as a team to do or employer engagement strategy, we said to ourselves, okay, we need to do a bit of a hit list as to who's, who's really doing kind of standard stuff at the minute in the community.

[14:17](#)

Um, because I think, I think, you know, that way we could perhaps synergize, we could align and we could possibly, um, you know, look to, to work a really good partnership. So we approached, um, and it was quite organic really. We had a young girl who was interested in doing a little bit of work. She didn't want to do long hours or anything. She was just quite happy to maybe look at maybe five, um, permitted work. And she was coming in to visit us at our premises, um, which just so happened to be owned by the Sewell Group. And as it turned out, um, the, the cleaner, um, who they had, um, couldn't turn him for one reason or another. So we took it as an opportunity to actually, um, get in touch with them and say, oh, well, we know who would be absolutely ideal.

[15:07](#)

We always, always liked to put proof in our pudding, because I'm sure these companies get approached time and time again. Oh, you know, our guys are wonderful. Our guys could do a wonderful job. So we will always say, look, you know, let us kind of show you. We will fully support this young, young lady to start the, the, the kind of job, the role. Um, and um, we will even support in the induction and the support and the, that they're kind of training or anything you need us today. We'll be right there alongside her to help her. Um, and, um, that's kind of where the partnership began really as soon as they seen her working in action. Um, no sinner when she did or kind of work trial very quickly moved to paid employment, which was absolutely fantastic, actually sort of opened the door for more.

[15:52](#)

She has my goodness. So within this partnership, and again, I have to note, this is an award winning partnership. Um, that's how far it's come. It's actually, it was recognized nationally as an award winning partnership. We won an award for impact on society and with the BIA IFM and they have since had a name change. So that is institute of workplace and Facilities Management. Um, so basically, um, we, we went forward, went to London, won the award, was up against the big boys, Skanska and Nj. Um, we won for our partnership. And um, in that partnership it was really recognized the center Jay and the alignment that we had. Um, as a company with the sole grip, we had kinda endeavored

and set out to support as many young people as possible to move towards paid employment. So in that first year of the project, um, it was, we had secured for paid jobs at that point for individuals.

[16:50](#)

The number is now gone to six because we're still working on that. Um, and luckily for me, unfortunately for me though, they're keen to, you know, work with ice ability, I'm going forward as opposed to what was previously mencep, um, partnership, you know, in that first year. Also they give 30 young people an opportunity to come in and to get to know their culture. Um, and we did various different kind of little events throughout the year. They come in and, um, basically supported us to deliver on employability training. Um, and vice versa. We weren't dating. We did learning disability awareness training with our staff teams. We did events together, we did podcasts together, we did a radio together. And, um, W W we even, and this is, this is the bit where I said we have to change our tact on, um, employer engagement. Um, we even as part of that partnership, um, take full, full

[17:49](#)

kind of awareness as to the importance of create more relaxed environments for people to connect with, uh, uh, a kind of grip of young people with learning disabilities. Um, so we ended up going to at the rugby, which was absolutely fantastic. So we got some of the silver group staff who we knew absolutely loved the rugby. Um, and we've got some young people who perhaps had not maybe experience alive rugby match. They'd only ever seen it on telly and hold 25 years and I've never been to a rugby while. You're going to have to go, then we're going to set it up. So you're going to have to go and you can do the podcast. But it was, it was, um, really fantastic because again, it's, you know, yes, you can take somebody into your room and go, hello, this is, and this person has autism and Dah, Dah, Dah, Dah.

[18:32](#)

But, and it was such a much more natural environment. You know what I mean? Hey, this is such and such from Suhail. He loves rugby. Hey, this is such and such from, you know, um, our programs and they love rugby, but I've never been Tlif match to actually go in. We got to meet the players, we've got to get photographs. It was just absolutely a real terrorist. No, it's all cool. No, we, yeah, we were kind of front seats and we had their kind of meet and greets are the players and stuff. And that's such an experience for our guys. I think, you know, that's magical. But the staff who actually went that night, the seal staff, he actually went that night where were quite taken aback I think. And um, you know, they had a thoroughly enjoyable night, um, and it wasn't forced and it wasn't, um, you know, this is like, you know, training.

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It kind of was training for all of us, but, but, but in a nice more relaxed environment. We also went to, yeah, we did get the executive box for whole set again. And that was lovely. Um, and we actually took for all those young people who were involved in the partnership that got us the award when, um, we, uh, took them along and we also took em, Elliot's mum and dad because Elliot's mom joined us to go and pick up the award in London. So she came to the fancy day and an la had got, um, an opportunity to get us Tux on, but his dad didn't

get an opportunity to kind of celebrate with us. So to make it up, Tim, as is an avid whole city player, um, we've got them the executive board. So I think, I think that was more than a way to make that little bit of family work.

[20:10](#)

Yes, absolutely. Is Ice going to be working with families of people with learning disability as much? So I s I stability is really going to work with adults with learning disabilities and or differences. Um, I say differences, I'm coining the term differences because um, many of the individuals that we work with don't want to identify with learning disability. They may have autism, aspergers ADHD, um, some dyslexia, some dyspraxia. Um, so this is the kind of term that differently abled. I think that's it. And I think, um, you know, I always do when I do LDA training, I'll always say, um, can everybody in the room please stand up if you are differently abled, um, on, it's interesting to see, but everybody should be standing up in that room as far as I'm concerned because we're all different labels. You know, we've all got great strengths.

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Um, and hopefully ace ability, we'll work with adults, um, predominantly of working age, eating plus. Um, and we are there to really hopefully dry the strengths of individuals. But also hopefully there to connect people to their communities more than anything. A suitability. We w we had a bit of a giggle because they're separate. Good to go with a stability, it's a cool name. Let's do it. Yo Vap, ace, ace ability. It just happened to work. Um, and then in addition to that we said, oh, what, what job title should be have. Um, hence where my job title came about Ai. He said, oh, I want to be a CEO with a time. I'm for a day. It was a childhood dream night. Uh, I didn't see myself as a, a kind of executive tape. So, um, at said that to the young people and I said, well, while you're a very enthusiastic carry, um, and I do get that law, you're very enthusiastic, Kerrie, you're very passionate.

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So I said all, I think it should just call myself chief [inaudible] meant officer, why not? And because I say we don't employ or engage, we don't partner engage. For me it's about enthuse and life's tough enough. And I think when you're, when you're trying to engage with people and connect people to your cause, to your mission, um, by God, you've got to be enthusiastic. You've got to really let your passion kind of drive. Yes, there's always a time for seriousness and there's always a time for kind of calm and collective. But like I said to the young people, if, if I was to put a name to it, um, I would like that to be fun. I think in, in every day, there must be an element of fun. Work's work and plays play. But if we can combine the two, we'll have a better day.

[22:57](#)

Previous roles, it's all been employment coordinators, advocates, um, you know, me time people and that do social bits. So I said, we're going to have to come up with the title of covers it all really, because that's the thing I want to cover it all, you know, employment advocacy and, um, social opportunities because I believe all three can actually really compliment one another. The, the, the kind of thing that has come back is happiness advocates. So without sounding like a band, um, uh, my, my kind of rule is going to be a chief enthusiasm officer and the happiness advocates for once a work. I know I sound like a band, doesn't it?

It's absolutely fantastic. But I think really for me, um, what I will say about, because we've talked about logos with some of the young people we've talked about, do we go with kind of an ice, um, almost like an iceberg get it whether they've ever heard of the human iceberg theory, but from a, I believe all behavior has meaning.

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And I think as, as, as people, we should always just step back, take time, reflect and really think about, um, you know, why people do kind of behave in the way that they do. Um, because I think that makes us better. Can you reflectors understanders of people? I'm more human. Um, if we just take a step back, sometimes the uncertainty that served me well in all the work that I've done in terms of whether it be connecting with the young people were kind of support our, are connecting with partners or come connect. And with even funders. Um, I always try to remember that. That always kind of guides me. The other kind of logo that would looked at was ice cubes, you know, and no, one of the things I was really, and this is, this is, this is how I kind of things go with wood.

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We'd start with some of the young people started doing some designs. Um, and I definitely think we're going to go for ice kid. It's just largely because actually, um, one of the young people said something that really sparked something in me. This is refreshing, you know, so again, they're very solution focused and yes, men cup is going. However, at the fact that you're going to be willing to try to set something up and hopefully have us help you is refreshing. And I thought I s is refreshing. It's spoke to your mom actually. And she said, Oh, I like ice cube. She said, and she said, you know, when you met my son, he was a hard, like a hard like, uh, um, ice kid. Everything was, you know, so hard and life was hard. It was hard. And it was an an and it was all, everything was boxed. You can, we do this and you can only do that. And um, everything was very rigid, she said, but then you've come into his life and she said, and slowly with the right environment, she said things that kinda melted. And I got into its flow and he's in a flow in life. So again, it's, you know, sorry, at the same, it's really art. Hey, doesn't it already 40, but it, but, and to have a mom's description, just to be a stone, a logo was, it blew me away.

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Well, this has been a really refreshing conversation. Genuinely, um, how is, this is all about finding solutions to problems. We will recognize that there are problems, but there are always solutions to those problems. And you're finding the solutions. And I can see you're going to make a huge difference in the people you're working with. So how can people get in touch with you? How can people follow what you're going to be doing?

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So, um, we have a Twitter page. So that is ice ability at Humber o one and o one was put there for a reason because we do hope to be number one. Um, you know, start with big dreams.

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Sorry. I really do hope you keep in touch to, it would be lovely to come and meet some of the people you're working with at some point. Oh definitely.



Some of them have podcasting experience, kept them in the studio and let's, let's hear what they think about it. I think c e

[26:50](#)

definitely. Um, it would be really, really good as I say. Okay. So a couple of things that ice am ability are going to be involved in ease on 23rd of May, we are looking to um, well host to cohost with the Silk Road. Um, and I WFM north, which is the institute of work and Facilities Management, um, our diversity and inclusion event. So that will take place in the afternoon. So watch this space cause details will be coming out of them. Right. Some fabulous speakers to include some of our young people. So, you know, I'm definitely not an event to be missed. Um, in addition to that, we've also been invited along to a CIPD work festival this year and to be held in June and there's going to be many, many HR professionals in the room and I cannot wear it, um, for our young people to actually give their journeys, their experiences.

[27:43](#)

Um, so those HR professionals to help them learn. Um, again, um, my Hashtag for this year is very much honest conversations. Um, and I think the most honest conversations are the ones held by our guys. Um, so yes, I can't watch this space and I just like to do a big shout out to, um, the lead judge who has really made all these connections for us. That's Julie quarter since um, she, um, has her own kind of business and has been very involved in I WFM and certainly the award win for us and she is, um, she runs connected people.

[28:18](#)

Well, it's been very refreshing talk though, Kerrie, thanks so much for coming in. I'm sure we're going to be keeping in touch in the future. I really want to learn more about what you're doing. I want to get some of your, um, young people and others in the, in the podcast studio sometime in the future. Yes. So we can get, uh, things for you. We can say, oh, we can totally thing yo VIP for now. I suppose we've got to wrap it up. That was Kerrie White, chief enthusement officer for I.C.E. Ability. Thanks so much for coming in. This is what Hull Is This is all about sharing these positive stories that people like yourself, that making a difference. Thank you, Kerry. Thank you very much. Thank you.