

The smile on Lawrence's face says it all



Joanna is a single mum who looks after her nine-year-old daughter Bethan and her nephew Lawrence, also aged nine. Lawrence's parents died when he was three years old and Joanna took responsibility for his care and became his legal guardian shortly afterwards.

Lawrence has Phelan-McDermid Syndrome – a debilitating condition that means he is unable to talk or walk and has to be fed through a tube. Lawrence has only recently learnt to sit up and he requires 24-hour care and attention. Joanna was previously in employment but she now acts as a full-time carer for Lawrence. She hopes that both of the children will excel at what they want to be, which in Bethan's case means a career as a vet.

“Don't hesitate, go for it and apply for a grant. You won't regret it.”

Joanna



Limited access, limited opportunities

Prior to the award of their grant the family used the local library to get online. Bethan, who also had internet access at school, used this time to help with her schoolwork and play games, while Joanna would research information on Phelan-McDermid Syndrome. These visits were really difficult given Lawrence's condition and the family could achieve very little because of a 30-minute time limit on using the library's computers.

Joanna knew that home access to a computer would help improve Bethan's learning, but she was particularly keen to get one for Lawrence – believing that it would help to stimulate him and provide access to the same resources as other children. Joanna already had internet access but she couldn't afford to buy a new computer. Although she didn't think it was a disadvantage to the children, since getting online “things have got a bit easier”. The family chose a laptop because Bethan preferred them to an e-Notebook and the bigger screen would be easier for Lawrence to use.

School points the way to a world of information

Joanna heard about the Home Access programme through Lawrence's school. Keen to learn more, she attended an event organised by the school that included an information session and a demonstration of what can be achieved with a Home Access package.

“The demo was really good. I'd heard about a lot of the stuff, but hadn't actually seen it!”

Joanna

Joanna found the Home Access application form really easy to complete because the questions were simple to understand and answer. She received her approval and grant card very quickly and placed an order for a computer within a week of doing so. The staff in the shop were a great help and took the time to explain what packages were available and the main differences between them. The family received their computer a week after ordering them.

‘The Big Bang’ sparks a heart-warming reaction

Home Access has made a huge difference to Joanna and her family. She uses the computer about three times a week to research Lawrence's condition and to store family photos. Bethan uses the computer to research information and play games “nearly every day”. Lawrence mainly uses it at the weekends and seems to be responding brilliantly. “I'd never seen Lawrence on a computer before. It is so lovely to see him enjoying himself. He smiles a lot when he is using his favourite programme ‘The Big Bang.’”