

## NEW WRITING

# Web resources from Common Knowledge (CKUK) make learning fun for everyone

Jackie Stewart



Jackie Stewart has worked for Common Knowledge since 2007 and is one of a small team that develops Common Knowledge's projects. Jackie's background is in publishing and complementary health. She helped to establish CK Click

online magazine with colleagues and people with learning difficulties. Now Jackie works across the organisation helping to raise awareness of Common Knowledge's work.

### Summary

Glasgow-based Common Knowledge share their experiences of working with people with learning difficulties over 10 years to make the internet more accessible for everyone.

**Please note:** All photos are reproduced here with kind permission from Common Knowledge.

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### Introduction

***Our resources are only as good as the talented people with learning difficulties who work with us***

CKUK (Common Knowledge) is a voluntary organisation based in Glasgow that provides

online learning, accessible information and social networking for people with learning difficulties.

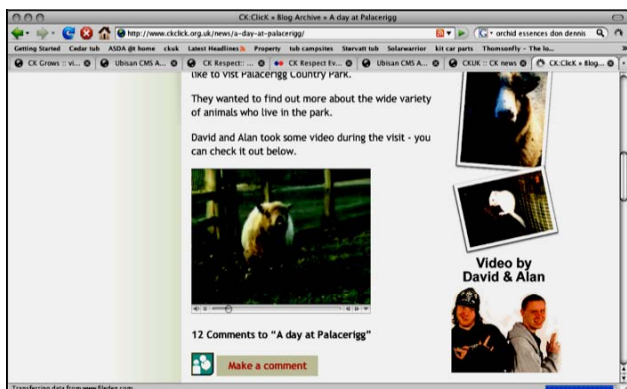
We have been working to make the internet accessible for everyone for over 10 years. We do this by working closely with people with learning difficulties. We ask them what information they need and how they want to see that information, and we involve them in every part of the process so that it is genuinely what they want and not what we think they want.



### Being heard

A lot of information about life is not accessible for people with learning difficulties and their families. We do not think that is fair so we make information accessible, fun and engaging without being patronizing. We use professional photographs of real-life situations instead of babyish cartoons. We use video and audio so that people can watch and hear. This means that

you don't need to be able to read to enjoy our website. We make quizzes and games so that everyone can learn in a fun way on our website.



Our website: [www.ckuk.org.uk](http://www.ckuk.org.uk)

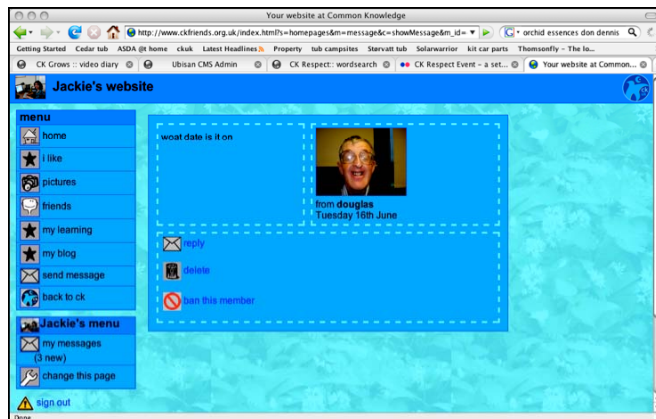
This is the gateway to all of CKUK's learning and information. From here you can:

- make friends on our social networking site **CK Friends** (for over 16s only)
- visit our online magazine **CK Click**
- try out the games and quizzes on **CK Learn**
- learn about sex and relationships with **CK Sex Talk**
- learn about bullying and hate crime with **CK Respect**
- learn vocational skills with **CK Works**, **CK Pose** and **CK Grows**



### CK Friends

**CK Friends** is a unique social networking site designed to connect people who have learning difficulties to both old friends and new ones. Many people with learning difficulties are denied the opportunities to make friends that other people take from granted. Making friends at work, college, evening class, or pub is not so easy if you do not have support or opportunities to do these things.

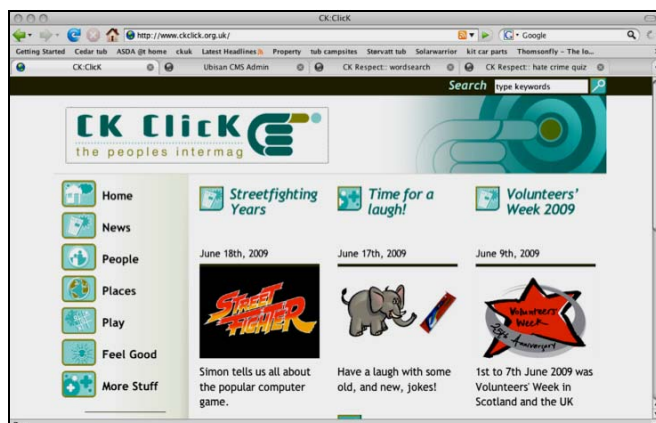


### Jackie's website

We worked closely with people with learning difficulties to find a way to help them sustain social connections. Long before *Facebook* and *Bebo* became commonplace, CKUK set up **CK Friends** as a safe and accessible online meeting place for people over 16 with learning difficulties.

We make sure it is safe by checking everyone who joins and we have rules to make sure everyone treats other members with respect. With over 1,000 members, it is one of the most popular services we offer. Members tell us that they use it 3 to 4 times a week.

People with learning difficulties are at the heart of everything we do. When we decided to set up an online magazine for people with learning difficulties ([www.ckclick.org.uk](http://www.ckclick.org.uk)), we didn't sit in an office writing articles we wanted to write. We set up groups in colleges and with provider organizations to find out what people with learning difficulties wanted from a magazine.



### CK Click

They told us that they did not want us to write the magazine; they wanted to write it themselves. And what is more, it was not just to

be a magazine with words and pictures, it was to be an accessible multi-media magazine that looked more like TV than a paper magazine. So we set up groups to support people to write their own articles.



### Making videos, taking pictures

When they told us they wanted to conduct their own interviews, make their own videos, take their own photographs and record their own audio we said yes. **CK Click** has been live online for almost 2 years with articles on everything from fashion to politics, relationships to work, music to TV, sport to current affairs.



### CKUK winning awards

People are saying really good things about CK Click:

*Fabulous to see all the pictures. Great magazine – great writers – great future.*

Pat McCann, Tutor, Cumbernauld College

*This is a really good website. Very easy to read. A lot of good information.*

John Higgins, Tutor, Ayrshire

*Getting an article on the magazine is really exciting – we have worked hard to think of interesting things to write about and really enjoyed doing the voice-overs with the headphones – although it was a bit scary to start with and funny to hear your own voice back.*

Theresa Kerr, Support Worker, Key Writers Dumfries

*I feel good seeing my story published.*

Paul, Learner, Cumbernauld College

*Thank you for publishing our story. It was exciting to watch it on the smart board. Thank you for your support.*

Linda, Learner, Cumbernauld College

The internet industry is impressed too. **CKUK** was awarded the **Nominet Best Practice Challenge 2008 Internet for All Award**. Nominet praised **CKUK** for tackling the digital divide faced by people with learning difficulties. They were particularly impressed with the learning about life that is offered in **CK Learn**. There is accessible information, games, quizzes and learning on subjects like death, sex, relationships, politics and money that can't be found anywhere else.

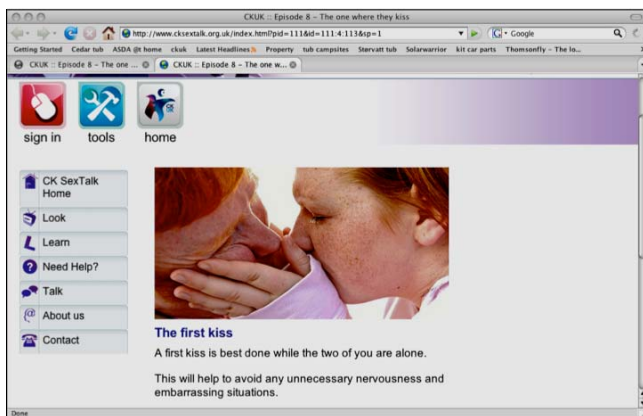


### Tackling the digital divide

**CKUK's** resources are constantly changing and evolving thanks to a combination of technological advances and feedback from the people who use our site. So now we are making

interactive online photo-stories, quizzes, games and word searches an integral part of our learning materials. This requires specialist web development working closely with people with learning difficulties, staff who support them, a scriptwriter, director, photographer, actors and website designers. It's the kind of creative challenge we thrive on.

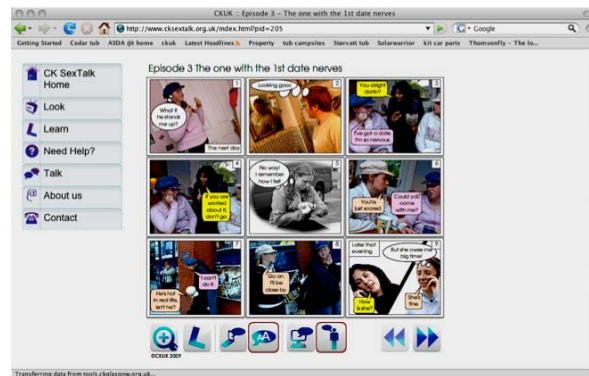
**CK Sex Talk** is a project funded by the *Big Lottery Young People's Fund* to provide information about sex and relationships for young people with learning difficulties aged 16-25. A group of young people at college in Glasgow told us what information they desperately needed but couldn't find anywhere else. They wanted to learn about keeping safe online, first dates, kissing, peer pressure, body image and all the insecurities of teenage life. They also wanted to learn about masturbation, sexually transmitted diseases, condoms and having sex. It was essential that this was approached with sensitivity, humour and a responsible approach to do the subject matter justice.



### The first kiss

The young people wanted to see an online photo-story where a relationship between two people with learning difficulties develops. They wanted to find out more about the issues raised in the photo-story and to find out where they could get help. We wanted to make sure that young people were at the heart of all the resources we developed so we used their ideas and concerns in scripts for the photo-stories. We auditioned for young actors with learning difficulties who would be filmed for the photo-stories. Their involvement brought the ideas to life. Now the photo-story has gone live online

along with learning materials about sex and relationships.



### Episode 3: The one with the 1st date nerves

Staff are impressed with **CK Sex Talk**:

*I'll definitely use the website at work, it looks fantastic. My daughter has a learning disability and I think it would be of particular use to her school because her classmates are 15/16 and asking lots of questions.*

Stephen Docherty, The Accord Centre

*I found Sex Talk a true inspiration – I think due to the fact that it was something kids wanted. It was funny, sensitively done and I can't wait to see the rest of it really. I think it'll be a great source of information to the people we support.*

Lynne Marcineck, Relationship Counsellor at Enable Scotland

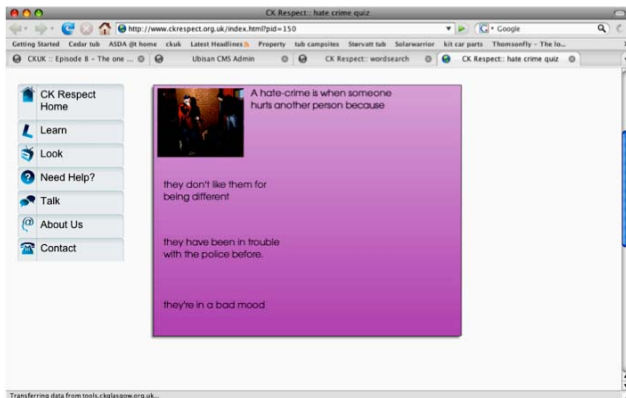
*I certainly will be using the CK Sex Talk Website with the people at my work. It was full of good humour and the language was so clear and simple yet they managed to get the story across.*

Josie Hughes, Summerston Resource Centre

You can explore it for yourself at [www.cksextalk.org.uk](http://www.cksextalk.org.uk).

Now we are using the same technology for **CK Respect**, our site that supports young people aged 16-25 to say no to bullying and hate-crime.

While 9 out of 10 people with a learning difficulty have been the target of bullying and hate-crime there is very little information about what you can do and where you can go for help after leaving school. **CK Respect** is making accessible information about bullying and hate-crime available online for everyone.



### CK Respect

A steering group of young people with learning difficulties are at the heart of **CK Respect**, deciding the direction of the project and offering training to their peers in colleges around Glasgow. They act out role-plays to help people to recognise bullying behaviour when it happens. They have helped to script scenarios where bullying or hate-crime happens and these are being developed into online photo-stories for the CK website. They have written a radio drama for the BBC and radio information commercials about bullying and hate-crime.



### Saying no to bullying

Quizzes, questionnaires, word searches, videos and other multi-media learning tools will be available on the **CK Respect** site by the time the project ends in September.

Young actors with learning difficulties, along with the steering group themselves, have acted

and posed for the photo-stories for **CK Respect**. They've worked closely with the Police, Victim Support and other service providers to make information as accessible as possible.



### Working together to make information accessible

And from this work, a new project has been born. **CK Pose** celebrates diversity and develops positive images of people with learning difficulties. The young people involved learn modelling and acting skills for **CKUK's** own photo-stories and are developing portfolios of images so that they can get modelling and acting work elsewhere.



### Learning acting skills

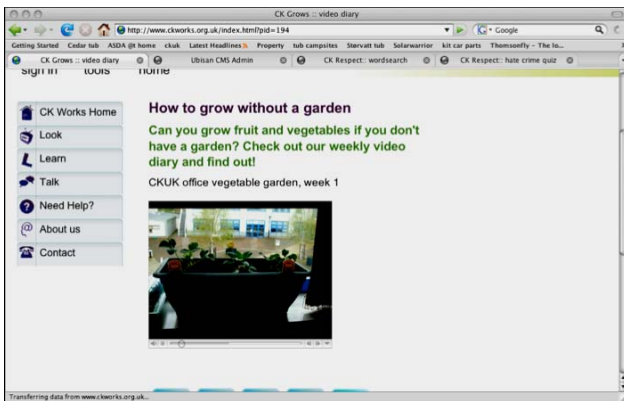
Images in magazines and the media do not celebrate the diversity of our population so **CK Pose** will try to change this. **CK Pose** is one of our projects that teaches work skills and raises aspirations for young people with learning difficulties. We also run **CK Works** which provides information about work, benefits and money.



### New skills for the garden

**CK Grows** is another vocational project, providing learning in gardening, growing and composting. All the learning from these projects will be available on our website to share with everyone. We will use all the technology that is so successful in our other projects like photo-stories, interactive quizzes and polls.

We use innovative, interactive approaches that promote both the self-confidence and self-belief of all the individuals who participate in our projects. People with learning difficulties are the heart of **CKUK's** work and none of this would be possible without their ideas and enthusiasm. Our resources are only as good as the talented people with learning difficulties who work with us.

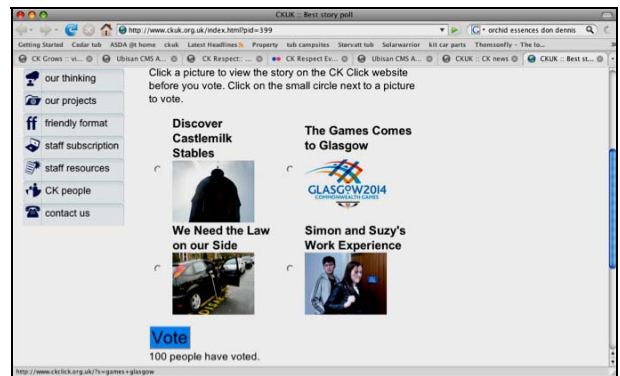


### How to grow without a garden

We want to encourage other organizations to include people with learning difficulties and deliver the best possible learning and information for them. We do not get any government funding so we rely on grants and self-generated income to be able to continue this work. We offer consultancy, training, online

information and publications to support other organisations to work as inclusively as we do.

If your organisation wants to provide information in an engaging, accessible style for online or print use, then **CKUK** can help. We can work with you and your target audience to develop information that makes sense and is easy to understand. We can edit your content, supply the graphics, develop an accessible layout for online or print, and ensure it is user-friendly by testing it in focus groups. It is called **© Friendly Format** and makes information accessible for everyone.



### Voting for the best story

**© Friendly Format** gets good feedback:

*Getting our packs friendly formatted has allowed us to offer our courses to groups of people who could not access them before.*

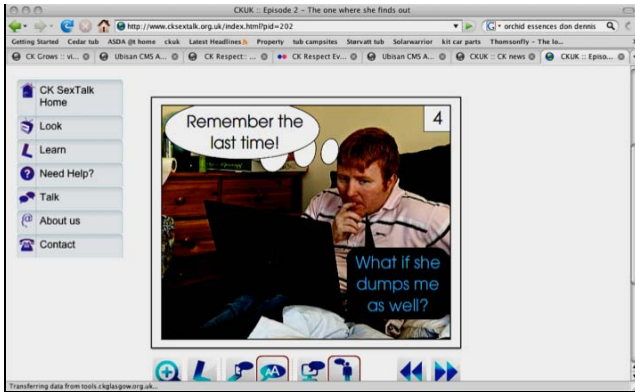
Castlemilk Stress Centre

*CKUK has helped us to rethink how we reach our service users.*

Equal Access

*It's not only people with learning difficulties that use it, staff are more likely to read the common knowledge version than the whole policy document.*

Glasgow Learning Disability Partnership



## Episode 2: The one where she finds out

We can help you to make your website more accessible, and develop photo-stories, quizzes and learning on your subject so that your audience can participate fully and learn with you.

At **CKUK**, our vision is:

**To work towards a society that fully includes people with learning difficulties and values diversity.**



**'We hope you will enjoy exploring our website.'**