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[Home](#) > We're All Valued Equally

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When I discovered my little girl had learning disabilities I felt so lonely and isolated. As she grew up I became increasingly aware of the number of barriers – the education system, people’s attitudes, my own lack of confidence and wish to withdraw – that were resulting in her, like others with learning disabilities, becoming socially segregated.

Feeling called by God to do something about this, I co-founded WAVE (We’re All Valued Equally) as a movement for change. Ten years ago we set up The Challenge Group (pictured), a playgroup for babies/toddlers with additional needs and their parents – something I would love to have had when my daughter was a baby. We also have Wave Church, a monthly accessible service. And Wave Café is establishing itself as a place in our community where people **with and without** learning disabilities come to socialise and have fun together.

I truly believe that we become richer through celebrating and enjoying each other’s differences and diversity, which we may otherwise fear. If we spend time with one another and do things together then the barriers break down and we discover that we are made more whole. The Wave approach is that we do things **with and not for** each other. We carry an expectation that everyone has something of value to bring.

In the dictionary, 'wave' has several meanings that are relevant to our Wave. A wave is a simple, universally recognised sign of friendship - it leads to an engagement that uplifts both partners. A wave is also a powerful force that can break down barriers. And there is a Mexican wave, recruiting others through them seeing change in action, and that's what we want to do now.

Wave started with a group of amateurs- we're largely run by volunteers and we're still learning! However, we've seen heart-warming change as a result of our work and we simply want to share this with others who'd like to see more inclusive communities. **Wave for Change Day on 21st September** will be a very practical, interactive event where people with experience of 'doing things together' will share what they've learned with those who'd like to see more inclusion in their groups or communities ' playgroups/nurseries, sports/activity groups, church groups, the wider community (shops, restaurants etc). We'd love you to join us.

Wave has had a huge impact on our family through giving us places where we all can feel we belong, and my life has been transformed and enriched in a way I could not have imagined.

Written by Celia Webster, co-founder of WAVE. You can find out more about Wave and Wave for Change Day at wave-for-change.org.uk [1]

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Links

[1] <http://wave-for-change.org.uk/>