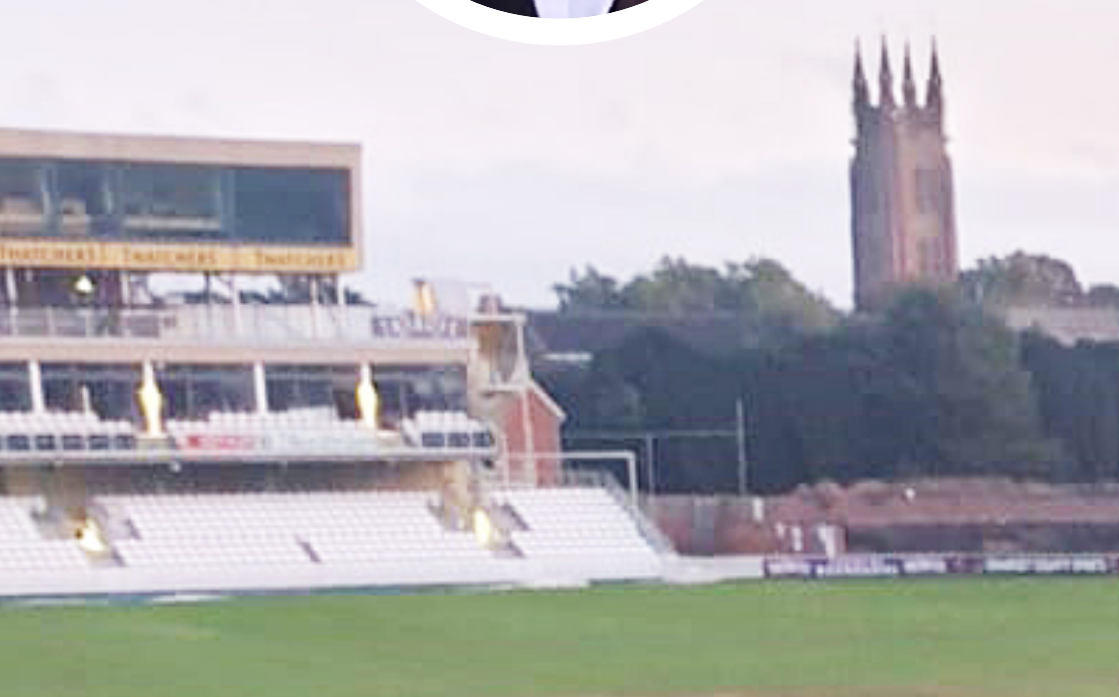


James Redwood

29 NOVEMBER 1974 – 14 NOVEMBER 2021



“ *It was an Honour and Privilege to support James who after three years became like a family member to me.*

BRIAN COURT, SUPPORT WORKER

“ *Supporting James was like riding a rollercoaster, Fun at times and Scary at times but I always got back in line to ride the Rollercoaster again.*

NATHAN DEACON, SUPPORT WORKER

“ *Supporting James was the most enjoyable and challenging job I've ever had, James meant a lot to me and was a big part of my life, I've lost a true friend.*

PAUL PALMER, SUPPORT WORKER

“ *Supporting James was like spending time with a best a friend. James was a funny, outgoing, caring and loving man who always managed to put a smile on my face. I will forever remember the last two and a half years and all the fun times we shared. I miss you greatly, Fly high my friend.*

ANDREW MALCOLM, TEAM LEADER

James Redwood

29 NOVEMBER 1974 – 14 NOVEMBER 2021

We called him *'Mr Wonderful'*



We loved James from the moment we set eyes on him. Like many people we support, he'd been through so much in his life and this pulled on our heart strings. It's hard to describe exactly why James made such an impact on us, he was warm, had a strong sense of loyalty and justice but it was more than that – he was just wonderful to be around. That's why we called him Mr Wonderful.

We used the name Mr Wonderful to tell James' story and help others understand how to support people who have been traumatised by the mental health system. A couple of weeks before he died, he was even mentioned in parliament in a debate about demonstrating that people who have survived the mental health system can go

on to live rich lives in their communities and his story under the 'name' Mr W is recorded forever in Hansard, the official record of parliament.

James and his family became part of our family here at Beyond Limits and we are devastated to lose him. The following story was written by (James' mum) about James' life and it is a beautiful tribute to a wonderful man. May he rest in peace.



James' Story

WRITTEN BY HIS MUM

Life before Beyond Limits

James was born at lunchtime on 29th November 1974. He was the most perfect birth of my three children. I looked at him in the hospital and he was beautiful. A Redwood through and through, just like his father. He was so easy, he was a sleepy baby, he gurgled, he slept a lot, and he didn't progress well. I took him to the doctor and was told he was "*a mild allergic infant*". That was the first label he ever had.

When James was 11 months I fell downstairs with him. He screamed and screamed, a neighbour took me to the hospital and we discovered he'd compressed his bottom vertebrae. From that time onwards he was always in the playpen if I wasn't there. Gradually we noticed him doing things like positioning himself near speakers. He loved music. He would do anything to make a rhythm and I would give him cake tins.

He had his vaccinations at the normal time and the night he was vaccinated it sounded like we had a wild animal in the house. He screamed and arched his back. I saw the Dr the next day who said it was a "*bad lot*" and did not give James his whooping cough vaccine as a result.

When he had his baby hearing tests he didn't react. The nurse said he was okay, but he wasn't. We paid for hearing tests and he got grommets fitted. His speech was poor. His appetite was fantastic. He wasn't badly behaved he'd take things apart so he could hear them.

When James started primary school he found reception difficult and the assistant head took him under her wing. I used to go to school with him until a teacher complained to her Union that I was taking her job away. My attendance stopped then.

By the age of seven, James was really struggling at school. School advised I get him 'checked over'. He got moved to a unit for people with disabilities and he was treated appallingly by pupils who were "*alright*". For example he was slammed against a tree by his genitals and had a broken football post rammed into his side. The bullying was wicked and by age of 10 he was at special school. We went to Lyme Regis when he was seven. I said I was going to "*spend a penny*". When I got back he asked me what I had bought.

At parents evening I was told, by James teacher, that my son was spoiled and undisciplined. He was withdrawn from that class. The teacher phoned to apologise. We've never accepted that apology. James was transported to school by taxi every day. It was 12 miles. Unlike us, he accepted everything. James was resilient.

Leaving school James did work experience with a building company. He was bullied and tormented.

By the time he was 15 James had wet the bed every night of his life. On the morning of his 15th birthday we gave him a brand-new bed. He came home. He saw it. I said "*happy birthday my*

son". He said *"mum you've not put any waterproof sheets in"*. I said *"you don't need that now you're 15"*. He's never needed it since.

James went to college for short time. He was accused of smashing windows. He denied that. James had learned to mistrust people who said he'd done something he hadn't.

James problems increased when he left school and went to work. Life became unstructured. James started to get the attention of the fire service between the ages of 14 to 15. He'd say there was a fire somewhere and then wait for the fire service to arrive. He's always had an interest in emergency services but things started to get out of hand.

He learned to drive with his sister's instructor. His lessons took longer than most and he was tested by specialist examiner in Yeovil. When the examiner arrived at the car he opened the door for her. He passed first time. He has an incredible aptitude for maps. Wherever he is in the country he knows where he is.

James worked at Safeway's for a while. He drove there. The manager was excellent and other staff weren't aware that James was different.

James first fell in love on holiday in Spain. The woman he loved didn't live close by and so he'd drive to see her and she'd come to stay with us. After James fell in love she wrote to him to say she wanted friends but not a partner. He felt rejected and created a bomb scare as a way of managing his distress. He got arrested, went to court and was put on bail. There were multiple fire service related issues over this time. When James finally called the bomb squad he was sectioned as a means to avoid prison. We weren't to know that this simple life event,

losing your first love, was the catalyst to institutionalised life for James. It ended up in years of going in and out of psychiatric intensive care units.

All around the same time, James' Grandad died and our family dog and two cats died within 19 days of one another. James was distressed and went over the hill, set light to a barn and then knocked on a farmers house to say "*I am very sorry, I've lit a barn. Can you call the fire brigade?*" He left there and set fire to a car. When he came home, didn't smell of anything, he just said goodnight normally and went to work the next day.

The bomb scare issue went to Crown Court. We knew it was serious. My daughter went to Court with us and James wasn't there. My husband had been talking to the solicitor and the solicitor advised that the Courts would look dismally on what James had done and that they expected a long sentence. I was terrified. The Judge was cold. He heard two minutes of the case and said "*this man must go to a secure hospital on an indefinite hospital order*". (Section 37/41). It's the worst thing he could have done. The bottom of my world fell out. My husband started fighting for my son then and he's continued to fight for 25 years.

The secure hospital was away from home and a long way away to visit. It was there that his dad and I had our first experience of sitting, with our son in a painted brick room . He lived there for 4 years and in all that time we never saw his ward or his room. He didn't leave the hospital grounds for 18 months. Instead he was allowed into the grounds for 15 minutes, in sight of the ward even if we were with him.

We went to visit on Christmas Day. In all the years James has been in hospital (24 of them on and off) we have always seen him Christmas Day. That year we ate sandwiches in a layby

for Christmas lunch. The hospital was my first experience of cruelty in hospital settings. James was supported by a man who was retired from the army. He was big and strong (busting out of his buttons) and wore black shiny boots. I once watched him talk to a woman patient and say *"if you don't shut your bloody mouth up, I will shut it for you"*. I couldn't say anything. How could I report it? My son was in this man's care and I was scared about what would happen to him if I did.

I became more accustomed to cruelty over time. Once, in a psychiatric intensive care unit, James had a carer who also worked as a nightclub bouncer. Once he took James to the bottom of the corridor and said that he'd take James somewhere no one could see what he'd do to him. In the same place a different staff member would swear at and threaten James. He was afraid of these people.

I talked to a member of staff I trusted and asked why he didn't blow the whistle. They don't listen to parents, they band together so I thought a whistleblower might have more impact. The staff member said *"Mrs R, I can't. I have a wife and two children"*. We put in a complaint but the staff member involved just went off the ward and straight back on again. James saw a lot of stuff. In one hospital he saw a woman floored, injected and slapped in the face. He accepted the flooring and the injection but couldn't understand the slapping. We involved the police. Staff said it hadn't happened. It was their word against his, so nothing happened.

There was a tribunal at the hospital. The judge listened to James and said *"he shows no compassion, take him away"*. I tried to explain about Autism / Aspergers. It was clear the judge didn't understand. The Responsible Medical Officer said *"don't talk*

to me about Aspergers, 80% of men have it". I realised everyone around James saw him as an arsonist, and were unwilling to accept it's more complicated than that. It's about distress and abandonment. This tribunal was attended by a retired psychiatrist. He offered a chance to us to say something. I said "*I can't believe how you can treat a man with so much negativity*". I realised then that treatment was all about reports. It's focussed on the "*wrong*" things. A negative focus isn't helpful. You have to build on strength. The independent psychiatrist agreed with me and talked to the Judge about James needing positivity and hope. He said he needed to get out of hospital quickly. They moved him to an open house, closer to home as a result of the Independent Psychiatrist's empathy and common sense.

James was moved from hospital to hospital. Each hospital had rules and its own way of doing things. James had to get used to all of them. I recall one local one where as we arrived for his admission we were faced with a sign over the door. There were signs and notices everywhere saying "*don't do this and don't do that*". I couldn't even take it all in. One of the hospitals he went to was deemed by the Senior Medical Officer and the Home Office to be not fit for purpose. I was there once when James was delivered his dinner on a tray by what I thought was a member of staff until James told me the man didn't work there. He was a friend of a staff member. Another member of staff had scars all up his arms and advised me it was from his own self injury.

James wasn't in hospital for the whole 24 years. Once he went to live in a flat. It didn't work out because one of James' house mates laid into him. James was removed back to a psychiatric intensive care unit as a result. In another community placement things seemed to be going successfully. James had a keyworker.

They said he was attracted to her, but I think he just trusted her. They took him to see the local football team. On the journey the coach passed the other team's supporters. James was calling out to them. He was told to sit down and be quiet and when he wouldn't he was man handled. So, when the coach got back he ran away. He remembered where his keyworker lived and ran to the local pub where she drank. The pub owner phoned the keyworker and she phoned the "home" to say where he was. He got arrested and was taken to the police station. The support staff there said I needed his permission to talk to James. I was his mum, I went to help but the support staff pulled rank and said I could do nothing as he was the support worker. James was again returned to the psychiatric intensive care unit.

James tried living in a cottage we owned supported on a one to one. The support organisation were strong on "*independence*". It translated to James having to do everything himself whilst staff watched the tele. They didn't understand James and didn't have a clue about Autism. I batched cooked for James because he was expected to do everything and couldn't. That failed on my 60th birthday. A friend passed James' house on the way home from my party. James had been to the party and returned home fine, but our passing friend saw James sitting outside of his own house across the road in a chair. James couldn't tell us why. He started running away regularly and ended up recalled to hospital. I think it broke down due to staff shortages.

A new member of staff started. He was 6ft 7 and James was afraid of him so I called the organisation to explain that. They responded by saying they had no staff and James had to come home to live. The company owner wrote to say that James was getting more difficult and that there was "*interference from*

James parents” and that his dad was bad for James mental health. They said they didn’t have enough staff and James was recalled to hospital because there was nowhere else for him to go.

One of the worst places James went was a hospital with a huge iron gate. He was supposed to be “*stepping down*”, but he was anything but. Everything was locked from reception onwards. The noise in that place was unbearable. They didn’t have a seclusion room so told us that when James got anxious the plan was for eight people to hold him down. They said they doubted it would come to that because they would occupy him. He was admitted and was there for six months. During his time there he was unmanageable, violent, spitting, urinating in corners and spreading excrement. He tore the place to pieces. The Police virtually lived there. He ended up in Court for 16 charges of assault.

The Judge said “*I want to know why this man hasn’t been before the Court in 20 years and has ended up here twice in two months*”. As it transpired his medication had been really messed up. The local Responsible Medical Officer was so shocked by James’ appearance when he visited him he stayed with him all evening. I ended up at a meeting screaming at the Director and Responsible Medical Officer for the hospital. We were trying to plan for James’ future but I asked “*do you realise you are killing my son*”.

James was brought into the meeting. I watched in disbelief as they cleared the end of the room explaining that James would “*go mad and throw everything*” otherwise. I was numb. He came into the room and looked like someone who’d been subjected to torture. He was walking like he had shackles on his arms and

legs. His head hung forward and he tried to raise it but couldn't. He was yellow. He said "*don't worry about me mum, this is my life, this is who I am*". They were profound words. I don't remember anything about what happened that day after that. I don't even remember coming home. That place served notice on James. They said they couldn't handle him any more.

He moved to another hospital almost overnight. We had no time to see him. We knew nothing about the new hospital they were moving him to and it was over 200 miles away. We asked if he could take his Walkman and his tele but were told he'd be sitting in a room with nothing because he was going to medium secure. He was moved in what James called "*a riot van*" with an overnight bag and three strangers. When he got there they had to buy underwear. He lost almost £700 worth of belongings. The day after he moved James called me to say he wanted to put a complaint in about a worker who used to accompany him to see a horse. James said that the worker had told James that if he didn't behave himself he would "*put tubes down [James] neck so that he'd have to lie in a hospital bed and never be able to talk to mum and dad again*".

It didn't take the new hospital long to sort James out. They had an excellent psychiatrist who said immediately that James' pulse was dangerously high and that he'd been given so much medication he was a "*blue light*" case.

My husband worked relentlessly with the Home Office to get my son's section lifted. It took 10 years. I sometimes wonder why me, why us. Many years ago an elderly woman said to me "*it's you because the Lord knew you could cope*". That's kept me going. It's seen me through.

Life with Beyond Limits

Life has changed for James.

I have absolute faith in the Beyond Limits team and so does my husband. They seem to be leading the plan and support for James which is new for us. We remain, of course, scared that James will get sectioned again for small misdemeanours, but no one would believe what Beyond Limits do. We've told James they are his second family. James is getting his life back.

The other week we went to a local seaside. We were getting food and said we'd sit outside. We were waiting for a table to come vacant. Two people got up and we knew them. James was so proud to tell them he has a new life, a new house, new support staff and he's not under section. We were out walking recently and a retired painter and decorator was up a ladder. He came down when he saw us to shake James hand and congratulate him.

Beyond Limits is different to the providers we have experienced before.

They listen to James.

They don't dose him up.

They don't lock him up.

They love him like we do. They've said from the start "*we need to get to know each other and there will be mistakes*". They accept they are learning and they put mistakes right. There was an error in James' money one day. We don't know if James thought he had more than he did, but rather than let it become an issue they made good the difference between what was in there and what James thought he had.

They nip everything in the bud.

When he gets upset now he is temporarily recalled to hospital. There's a pattern to it and they've worked hard to understand the pattern. Instead of things running off the rails they tell James he's getting upset, they nip it in the bud and he knows once he's calmer he is coming home.

They are generous. The last hospital lost 3 of James' watches. It was winding James up. Beyond Limits put the money into James account for the watches whilst they resolved the issue with the hospital.

They solve problems. There were some staffing issues recently that couldn't be sorted at short notice so James came home to stay. They texted him to thank him for his patience and understanding and sent him a voucher to buy himself something. These may seem like small things but they are massive to James and massive to us.

They hug him.

The Chief Executive has gone into his house and directly supported him. She said it "*enriched her life*". It was an unbelievably unselfish act.

My husband is vocal. He's one of the most determined people that the authorities, Home Office, National Health Service Ombudsman have come across. He advocates for our son. Doreen, the CEO, can challenge him.

Nothing escapes their attention. Everything they do is centred on getting it right for James.

They respect him.

They don't cover things up.

They never say “*we are going to do this*”. We work it out together. They build trust through taking action.

They do what they say they will.

They don't hurt James. They've never touched him other than to hug him. They can be firm if he's got something wrong, but they don't blame or bully him, they reward and encourage him. They don't pester James. They don't “*routine*” him. They don't ‘make’ him if he doesn't want to. They match staff to him. They listen to him, laugh with him and they love him.

I don't know how much more I can say to put the difference between Beyond Limits and other providers in a nutshell. Beyond Limits are like I am and I am his mum.



