



Andrew Impey

Public supporter

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When he was younger, Andrew Impey did not talk. Living with severe autism, he used sign language to communicate, finding conversation too overwhelming. Then he discovered the fire service, and learned how to talk to people, plan and even read.

He likes the fire service, he says, because of their sense of community: “They accept people, and allow you to be proud of who you are,” he says. “With my autism, I didn’t talk very much. But the fire service has helped me with socialising and just coming out of my shell. I feel part of their community.”

Andrew is on a mission to visit all 3,000 UK fire stations and so far he’s managed 1,264. It was in Norfolk that he realised the enormity of the work done by the Charity: “The firefighter looking after us explained he was off work with a broken back, but that he’d been helped by the Charity,” says his mum, Kirstine. “Andrew looked at him, then after a moment’s pause, said, ‘so, I’m raising money for your treatment?’ And he looked back at him and said, ‘I’ve never thought about it before, but yes you are.’ It was magical, this big burly firefighter and my autistic son, staring at each other, both with tears in their eyes. That spurred him on to raise more.”

Andrew has raised thousands of pounds by organising vast sponsored bike rides, combining new station visits with fundraising and raising awareness of the Charity, as well as autism. He has shared his own experience and even influenced firefighters to adapt their approach accordingly, explaining the need to talk calmly to autistic people during evacuations.

Being autistic is no longer something that limits Andrew. He has aspirations of joining the fire service and is keen to be part of the next generation coming up through the ranks, and not let anything hold him back from joining his heroes.

www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/andrew-impey

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