



# JOE'S STORY

When Joe was born, his mother knew there was something wrong before the doctors did. His eyes were cloudy. Cataracts, she learned. Complications and emergency surgeries were a feature of his first months on earth. Joe would be visually impaired for life.

“When I was growing up, I didn’t know anyone who was visually impaired. I didn’t feel different. I didn’t know any different. I came to Linden Lodge at age five. It was at school that I started to notice my life wasn’t typical; I wasn’t like my brother and sister. No one had ever explained to me what a visual impairment was. As I got older and started to understand things bit by bit, I had so many questions. And I was so angry. My behaviour was going downhill.”

Joe became painfully aware of his ‘differences’ and what that would mean for his future. He felt “written off” by life.

“The worst part of being visually impaired is other people’s lack of understanding of what that means. Linden Lodge was a fantastic place to be for me because everyone understood. When I left school, I realised that the world wasn’t like that. People were none the wiser about my needs. I had to explain it anew for every person I met.”



Attending Linden Lodge, describes Joe, was like existing in a happy and unique bubble, but it was a bubble nonetheless.

“When you leave and get exposed to the world it’s a shock. Growing up I only had visually impaired friends. When I left, I had to teach the world about my needs. I continued to feel written off by people thinking I wouldn’t be able to achieve things.”



Despite the multitude of challenges life outside of Linden Lodge threw at Joe, he has gone on to forge an incredible career in Habilitation. He is passionate about fair access to education for all.

He is vehement that aspirations for children remain high, and that young people with visual impairments are empowered and supported to dream big. This is, in part, inspired by Joe's own family. "My two kids were born with cataracts. I felt angry about their visual impairment. I felt guilt for what I had passed on to them and then I felt bad for me; for little Joe. It brought up so much grief."

Joe is determined to fight for a better and fairer future for his children and for all blind and visually impaired people.