

A black and white photograph of a young man with dark, curly hair and glasses, smiling broadly. He is wearing a dark t-shirt and is seated at a table, with his hands clasped in front of him. The background is a simple, light-colored wall.

KASHMIRE

KASHMIRE HAWKER

The Journey of a Young Leader
(So far!)

Introduction

Changing Our Lives is a rights based organisation that works in coproduction with disabled people and people experiencing mental health difficulties of all ages, supporting them to find solutions to inequality and disadvantage.

We believe that people themselves know their own situation best and it is only by working together with people on the basis of equality and trust that real solutions can be created that lead to positive, sustained change and meaningful outcomes for people. Taking this approach means we invest heavily in leadership development; we work with individuals who are committed to equal rights and support their development through a leadership development programme and tailored opportunities such as individual mentoring and work based learning within a range of settings.

This book charts the leadership development of Kashmiri Hawker from 2008 through to present day in 2016. Kashmiri is one of those individuals you meet and you know that what he's showing you today in terms of his leadership skills, is

only a mere fraction of what he will become. He is brave, principled, passionate and outspoken in his commitment to equality for all disabled people. As I write this he's just started a BA in Politics at Sheffield Hallam University. This is a lifetime achievement for Kashmire, the beginning of his next step towards Westminster!

Jayne Leeson MBE
Changing Our Lives CEO
October 2016





From the beginning...

I started off in a 'special school' when I was younger. We used to travel on a big yellow bus, which was the bus for disabled children. Then just before year 9 I moved to a mainstream school.

Even though I was labelled as disabled from young, the support I got in the mainstream school and my own determination, meant that nothing held me back!

I was recently called
a **'self-made man'**.

I suppose that's right;

I believe you have to
work for what you want
and **create**
your **own**
self.



I first started to be interested in politics when the banks crashed in 2008. I was really young then! But I started looking at what the Youth Parliament was doing and then in 2009 it was the first time the Youth Parliament appeared in the House of Commons, and I thought I wouldn't mind doing that!



Since then I have kept up to date with politics and I am really well informed now. I have been a member of my local Youth Council since 2012. I am now also a member of the Labour Party; I get to meet some senior people such as Hilary Benn, Owen Smith, Jeremy Corbyn to name a few.....

I want to create a

**better
society**

in which

disabled people

have the

**same life
chances**

as **anyone**

else.



I want to make a
**positive
difference**
to **people's lives.**



In 2014 I went on the Changing Our Lives Rights 4 All leadership programme. This programme works with young disabled people from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities to develop their leadership potential. Being part of this leadership programme gave me extra confidence and really helped me with public speaking. It gave me an extra push, supporting me to understand that anything is possible with hard work!



In 2015 I started working part-time for Changing Our Lives as a Quality of Life Facilitator. I've been involved in lots of different types of work, such as speaking at events to raise awareness of disability rights and checking the quality of services. My job at Changing Our Lives has also meant I have met lots of disabled people from different walks of life. Some of these individuals might not use words to communicate, and struggle to have their rights met. This has enabled me to see things from other people's perspectives.

Working with Changing Our Lives has enabled me to meet a lot of decision makers and policy makers. I don't think people realise that you can actually meet these people and make a change.



Being a leader is about persuading people and bringing them with you. Everyone having equal rights, regardless of background or disability, underpins my whole approach to politics.

I'm really **passionate** about the
participation
of all **young**
people
in **decision-**
making.



Getting myself ready for Westminster one day, I have thrown myself into local youth politics. In 2014 I was elected on to the Youth Parliament in Wolverhampton. That November, I travelled with a fellow Youth MP to the House of Commons to debate with 300 members of the UK Youth Parliament. We discussed the Living Wage, reducing the voting age to 16 and improvements in mental health services.



In December 2015, I was part of the delegation of the British Humanist Association for the 4th Intergenerational Chamber Event organised by the House of Lords and the English Speaking Union, where Baroness De Souza asked me to speak about diversity in Parliament. The question put to us was a fantastic one: "*How do we Increase Diversity in Parliament?*" Do we: "*Do Nothing; Improve The Current Process; or Make It Happen?*"

My response was, "Improving the current process makes a hell of a lot more sense than the other two options". And it truly does, as the UK Youth Parliament sitting in the House of Commons on November 13th 2015 had 51% representatives that were women, compared to 29% of current House of Commons MPs. On top of this, currently there are only 42 MPs in the House of Commons from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community, which is a shocking 6%. As a result of this, I suggested the Commons shouldn't be full of "*Male, Pale & Stale People*".





“Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.”

Sheryl Sandberg

The night before I was in the BBC Question Time audience and David Dimbleby called upon me to speak, which was nerve wracking but I got a lot of audience applause.



One of the highlights of 2016 for me was being in the audience for a prime time BBC One programme called "How Should I Vote?", debating the EU Referendum. As a new voter I wanted to be as engaged as possible in the Referendum campaign. So when I discovered that the programme was going to be produced, I thought this would be perfect for me to once more put my opinion out there.

It was simply a case of an email to the senior producer, an online application, about two more emails and a spot was confirmed! I was thrilled to get in as young people were applying from all over the country and competition was fierce.



My biggest achievement to date is getting top grades in my exams to get me into Uni. This felt amazing! I even managed to sneak myself into the local newspaper, the Express and Star, as a successful student.

It has always been an ambition of mine to continue into further education and it's a dream come true to be studying Politics, as it takes me towards my long-term ambition of being elected as a Member of Parliament.





I'm really
looking
forward
to studying
Politics
and **living**
independently
at **Uni.**

This is
my next
challenge.



Kashmire Hawker

Changing Our Lives
22 - 24 Hagley Mews
Hall Drive
Hagley
West Midlands
DY9 9LQ



Tel: 0300 302 0770
Email: ask@changingourlives.org
Web: www.changingourlives.org

Registered Charity Number: 1093883