**Carina:**

Thank you. Along with Michele Morrice I am here to present this petition to you all. This petition is being put forward on behalf of the 17% of the Bristol population who are registered as disabled adults. We are asking for everyone’s help to create a safe, fun, accessible and life-changing disabled adult play park.

Within Bristol we know of many fun and accessible environments for disabled children, but when your young person becomes an adult your options are extremely limited, especially if they have a severe learning disability and challenging behaviour.

I run a project called Invisible Army which shines a light on unpaid carers. During this project I have collected many stories about life as a carer. Many of the carers say that they mostly stay at home within the same 4 walls, due to limited access to safe, understanding places to visit. They know that if they take their loved one to a play park there is a risk they may unintentionally hurt a small child or receive verbal abuse from other people at the park. There are hundreds of real people trapped in their homes often deteriorating as the world is not designed for them.

A comment on our petition states: "This is so needed! I also have a 24-year-old ASD daughter who would love to go to the park on a more regular basis but now won't go out at all because of the comments, laughs and stares”

**Michele:**

Raising my son Declan for 28 years has been extremely challenging. My son is 6ft 5 and has very complex needs. I must do everything for him: personal care, feed him, and most importantly keep him safe. This is extremely difficult while out in the community. Feedback from other carers shows they feel the same way, even though we know that disabled adults should have access to the community. My son's needs aren’t my only experience with disabled adults: I have experience with adults who have seizures and dementia and I know that both of these groups would benefit, as would many other disability groups.

As a carer it is hard to make friends as we are always looking after our loved one. Often I don’t speak to anyone all week, which I have noticed has impacted my communication skills. If we could be somewhere where we know they are safe, we could have the opportunity to chat to other people and share useful information about things that are troubling us.

I wanted to campaign for a disabled adult play park for everyone experiencing the same issues I am dealing with. I think it's hard to explain the difficulties involved in caring for a 28-year-old with complex needs in a home environment, but it's even more difficult out in the community.

The petition comments showed many carers have similar experiences. One story from an adult with autism described how she had to go to the park to go on the swing before she went to bed, in order to clear her head. On occasions the police had been called. Adults with disabilities, whether they have mental health or physical needs, would benefit hugely from a disabled adult play park, as would their carers.

**Carina:**

The list of benefits is endless. Here are a few:

* Exercise (which could also lessen obesity)

A comment on our petition states: "This would be amazing. I hope Bristol city council take the lead on this. As a doctor I can say that lack of exercise & obesity can be severe problems in growing adults with learning difficulties, so somewhere to let off steam & have fun would be invaluable both from a mental & physical health point of view. "

* Improving mental health
* Community for disabled adults and carers
* Coming out of isolation (especially after Covid)
* Job or volunteer opportunities (such as caring for the park, garden, a potential cafe)
* Fun (and a sense of development, release and safety)
* Respite for carers
* Reduced loneliness
* Increasing people coming into Bristol
* Lowering discrimination against disabled adults
* Accessible equipment and changing places

53, 501 people have signed the petition, including 3060 from Bristol!

We would like to know how, and in what timescale, you can help us with this idea, so that disabled people and their carers have a better quality of life.

**[If there is time]**

Here are some comments from the people of Bristol regarding this petition:

* "As a parent of a son with autism we are always being marginalised by Bristol City Council. Their ‘inclusivity’ is so far removed from reality."
* "I have a son who is nearly 15, and already 5’11” and wears size 11 shoes. He has Autism, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder, Pica and Severe Learning Disabilities. We can’t play anywhere - soft plays are too small, parks have unlocked gates, and open spaces are often full of people who look down on Matthew because he’s different. It would be so helpful for him, and therefore me, to have somewhere to go and let off steam!"
* "I work with children and young people with additional needs including autism. However, I work in south Gloucestershire because there is barely anything in Bristol. I am constantly shocked at how little Bristol provides children, young people, and families! It sounds like more needs to be done to connect families but if a specific play park is what is needed then let’s start there! There are similar play park examples in south Gloucestershire!"
* "I used to teach young people with autism and fully appreciate that they need to be able to access outdoor spaces where they can be free to be themselves."
* "We have a 12-year-old who has Down's Syndrome and challenging behaviour who would benefit from a dedicated play area now and in the future. She loves the play equipment but also loves small children and doesn't have the skills to interact safely with them (picking them up, squeezing, unpredictable behaviour) despite our support and intervention. I would feel much more relaxed in a dedicated play area."

Thank you for listening!