

## April's Story- First Steps to Independence

April, aged 18, has cerebral palsy and hydrocephaly. Before MOVE, she was completely dependent on her care team, and unable to even play with her friends. She had to crawl on the floor to move around, although most of her day was spent in a fully supportive chair. Unable to participate she became a passive observer of the world around her.

When MOVE was introduced in her school in Inverness, April's care team, including her mum, teacher, physio and occupational therapists and classroom assistants, worked with April to help her achieve her goal of being able to play with her friends by being able to walk around school. By breaking the goal down into achievable skills, from sitting unaided to standing with a gait trainer to standing holding her mum's hand, April was able to see the progress she was making. After four years on the MOVE Programme April was able to walk on her own and could even go up and down stairs.



Her mum, Liz, explains what it was like to see her daughter walk for the first time, and the impact MOVE has had on April's life:

*"I could not believe my eyes... Here was our little girl, who everyone had said would never be able to do **anything** for herself and she was **walking** towards me. It was one of the happiest moments of my life!"*

*April now makes her way around the corridors of her school, nosing into activities in other classrooms! This of course has implications since there is such a strong link between sensory experience and cognitive development.*

*Through MOVE April knows that her body belongs to her, and her mind has followed. She is no longer the passive little girl who just lets things happen to her, but she realises that she has the right to make her own choices and she practices it regularly! The sense of achievement she gets, from simply doing tasks for herself, is evident in the raising of her self-esteem. For example, April regularly claps her hands with excitement when she feels that she has done something well. It is worth using MOVE just to see such a happy scene."*



In 2007 after much dedication, April graduated from the MOVE Programme. April is now walking daily from the school bus, she walks all day to her classes and for lunch and she is able to walk out with the rest of the class to play. April also enjoys swimming and is able to access the pool using the steps to get in and out. April loves her freedom and is a familiar sight getting around Drummond School, with her mp3 player and headphones, and she is also showing the signs of being a typical teenager and refuses to walk at times when it doesn't suit her!

In 2009 April was one of the MOVE Graduates visiting the House of Lords, a very proud moment for April and her family. It was a great achievement too that April coped so well travelling from home in Scotland to the centre of London.

Thanks to MOVE April's family is now focussing less on routine care (toileting, changing etc) and much more quality time together doing family activities. April is now an active participant in her life and is a little girl who **can** do things. Due to the nature of April's disability she will always have problems with her back, however through the MOVE Programme April has been as healthy and as active as possible.