



Gareth Clarke – February 2007

Gareth is a 28-year-old man who loves his football and has followed Manchester United ever since he can remember, although he never dreamed that it would be possible to actually get to the games. He has Spina Bifida and uses a wheelchair to get around.

In 1998, he began to go to matches. Gareth says that going to watch United play has turned his life around. The match days give him something to look forward to and he enjoys getting together with other fans for a chat.

Gareth soon found that going to football gave him opportunities beyond those of going to football matches and he began going to the social events that MUDSA hold. He found that he was making friends and really starting to enjoy life, his confidence was growing and things were on the up. He started venturing out on his own, something he'd never felt happy to do and a few years ago he finally moved into a place of his own.



He's now living with his partner Rachel; they are happily engaged and plan to marry in 2007, as soon as they can save enough money for the big day.

At a match day last season, Gareth was given a flyer from Learn Direct who were running courses at Old Trafford to help disabled people to gain skills towards finding employment. He was quick to grab this opportunity and within one week he was enrolled to do courses in IT, Maths and English. He has now completed these courses and has the qualifications to show this. Gareth hopes that he'll soon find a job, which will make saving for that wedding a little easier and in the meantime feels pleased to have improved his skills.

Gareth says that his life has never been better and he reckons that he is the happiest man alive. He feels that disabled supporters facilities are really important and that every club should give their fans the sorts of chances that he's had from following United. Lots of disabled people would like to go to football and things need to change, so that everyone feels safe, included and part of the beautiful game.