

#toylikeme

#ToyLikeMe – Our Story

In the Beginning

#ToyLikeMe® was established in April 2015 after journalist and creative consultant Rebecca Atkinson noticed the lack of diff:ability representation in toys. Rebecca had spent nearly 20 years working in TV production and print



Together they launched #ToyLikeMe to call on the global toy industry to start representing the 150 million disabled children worldwide. Rebecca, who is partially deaf and partially sighted herself, wrote about the beginnings of #ToyLikeMe and

journalism (including Children's BBC) and had always been interested in the way these industries represent diff:abled people, but this was the first time she had noticed the lack of representation in the toy industry. Rebecca called on some fellow mothers, including former Ragdoll play consultant, Karen Newell who has a son with visual impairment.



the impetus behind it, along with subsequent articles, for the UK Guardian Newspaper. You can read the full articles here – www.theguardian.com/profile/rebecca-atkinson

“As someone who had grown up wearing hearing aids, I remembered firsthand how it felt to be a child who never saw themselves represented by the mainstream and what that can do to a child with a dif:ability’s self esteem. I wanted to change this for generations to come and start to get global brands like Lego, Mattel and Playmobil to include representations of disability in their products.” – Rebecca Atkinson

Going Viral

Rebecca began making over toys to give them dif:abilities and took high res images in collaboration with photographer Beth Moseley, and asked other parents to do the same. The results soon went viral and our story was shared on news outlets around the world including BBC, Mail, Guardian, Yahoo, Dystractify, Upworthy and Al Jeezera.



We appeared on radio in Australia, Singapore, Italy, UK, Canada. We were covered by news TV including CNN, Fox News, BBC, Channel 5, Sky TV and many more...we’ve lost count. We’d kinda stuck a match under a firework factory and it went boom!

Here we are on BBC Breakfast – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=debW5vr1l_Q

Makie Dolls

We spotted a company in the UK who make bespoke dolls using 3D printing. We contacted them and asked if they would produce hearing aids and a white cane for their dolls. To our delight they said yes and within two weeks they produced the world's first 3D printed dolls with diff:abilities in response to #ToyLikeMe. We were so happy we fell off our toy box and so did a lot of other kids and big kids. The story made global press.



Petitioning

Then we gave some Playmobil figures some waggy-tailed guide dogs and whizzy wheelchairs and started a change.org petition asking Playmobil to produce the figures for real. Over 50k people signed in a week and the lovely folk at Playmobil said yes! With creative consultation from Rebecca, they are currently developing products inspired by #ToyLikeMe for release in 2017. Whoopee!



Next up we started a change.org petition calling on Lego which has been signed by over 20k people to date. Sadly Lego didn't respond so we launched a wheelchair Father Christmas on the Lego Ideas platform where fans can vote for designs they would like to see made for real.

<https://ideas.lego.com/projects/121896>



Success

In January 2016 Lego unveiled their first ever wheelchair-using mini-figure at Nuremberg Toy Fair. The UK press attributed #ToyLikeMe's influence to this product and the story was carried by global press. We were very happy to see this product at long last.



Going Viral Again!



In February 2016 we went viral again when we gave a batch of Tinkerbell dolls some hot pink cochlear implants and took some snaps. These images were shared thousands of times and the story was covered by global press including Metro and The Mirror.

Growing Up

What started out as a little bean of an idea has grown up, up and away into a more gigantic beast than we ever imagined. We've had to put our paid



work on hold to nurture the #ToyLikeMe giant and grow it into something we hope will have a lasting impact on the toy industry. Fee fi fo fum! Boy we've had some fun! We now have over 36k facebook followers in over 45 countries and

every week more and more people join our 'toy box revolution'. We have even had support from comedy genius Stephen Merchant and Gruffelo author Julia Donaldson.

Our website!

We scour the internet and dig deep in toy boxes the world over looking for toy products which represent disability to share with our followers. They do exist but they can be hard to find and often are sourced from companies overseas.

On this journey we have become experts in disabled toys. Every day we are contacted by parents and carers looking for toys which will represent a particular disability to their children. Whilst our facebook feed is a wealth of information it's hard to search through so information and resources get lost in the passage of time. Because we are committed to making kids feel good about themselves we answer every email which comes our way. It's time consuming and would be much more efficient if we could house all the information in one place. That's why we wanted to create an easy to search website where people can find all the information they need to create a toy box bursting with positive representation for their child.



In January 2016 we raised £16,000 via a crowd fund and launched our website in summer 2016.

Why do we need representation of disability in toys?

For disabled children growing up being the only one in your class or school to use a wheelchair or hearing aids and never seeing children like you in books, TV, films and games can lead to a sense of isolation and low self esteem. To see yourself reflected by huge toy brands like Playmobil and Lego



is about more than just a toy. It's about these brands saying that you are worth it, that everyone should be included and celebrated, not just able bodied children. But #ToyLikeMe doesn't advocate that toy companies should make disabled toys for disabled children

per se. What we believe is that ALL children will benefit from incidental disability being positively included in toys. If we create a more inclusive toy box, then perhaps we can educate by stealth and change attitudes in the real world too.

Phew! Are you still reading? Thank you for staying with us and learning about our story.

Love #ToyLikeMe