



MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL

# THE ACCESSIBLES



## OUR TIME IS NOW



Archives +

GREATER  
MANCHESTER  
**coalition**  
— of disabled people —  
GMCDP

## **UK Disability History Month 2015: Portrayal of Disability in Media: *Are we there yet?***

This Comic Book has been produced as part of Manchester City Council's programme to mark UKDHM 2015, in partnership with the Central Library, Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, and coordinated by MCC Disabled Employee Group.

This is the 2nd year of Manchester City Council's participation in UKDHM, and our aim for this year's programme was to involve young disabled people in a project that would support them to explore the history of disabled people. Our focus was on the stories of Manchester's community of disability campaigners, activists, thinkers, artists, politicians and organisations, who have influenced and shaped developments and understanding about disabled people's lives and inclusion at local and national level. We partnered with GMCDP who as part of their remit coordinate projects specifically targeted for young disabled people.

We met with their young group in summer 2015 to explore ideas, and consider best way to approach the project aims. The young people came up with the idea of designing and producing a comic book, with members of their group as the key characters. Using time travel, they could observe key events and visit people who had contributed to the understanding and portrayal of disability today. We appointed a local artist Jim Medway, experienced in working with young people's groups and comic books. Jim held four workshops with the group in October and November at Manchester Art Gallery, teaching them how to draw characters, speech bubbles, and supporting them in converting their ideas into a comic book format.

The group also met frequently at GMCDP offices to undertake research, and decide what to put into the comic. They were supported and mentored throughout the project by Louise Hollingworth, Brett Savage and other members from GMCDP. We hope this project will help inspire the next generation of disabled people to continue the work of their forbears in campaigning for disability equality and inclusion.

*Lorna Young, Chair of Manchester City Council's Disabled Staff Group*

Come on, Josh,  
we better  
introduce  
ourselves...

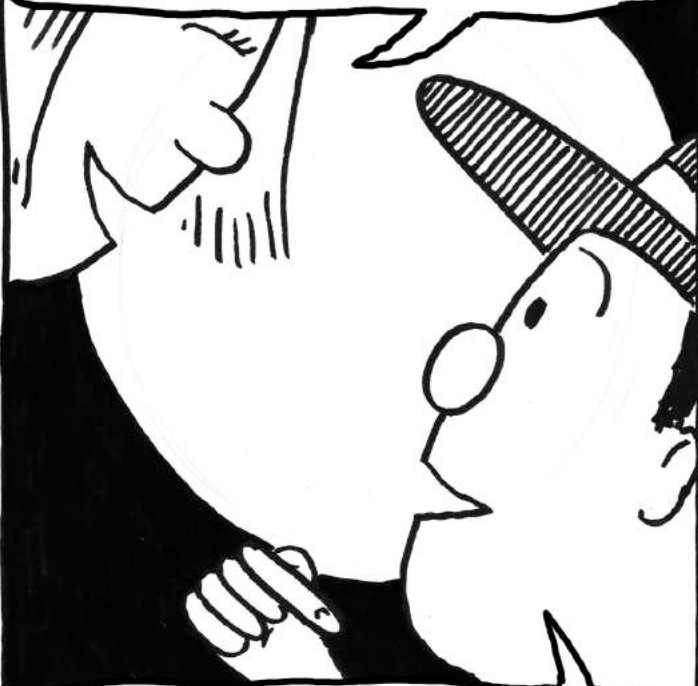
I'm  
Hannah



And I am...  
Professor  
Accessible!



Stop mucking around,  
Josh! I know you are  
mad for Dr Who, but -



-but check it out,  
round my neck is my -

Time travelling  
Timepiece!



'See, this here is where  
you set the year, -oops!

Woah!  
What's going  
on, Josh?

We're travelling  
through time!  
Not sure where  
we are heading...



... but we are  
witnessing how disabled  
people have been depicted  
throughout the ages. Look,  
there's Tiny Tim from  
Dickens! A pathetic  
object of pity if ever  
there was one!



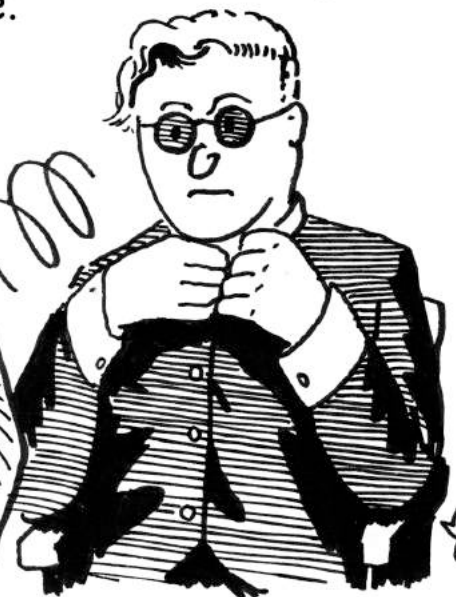
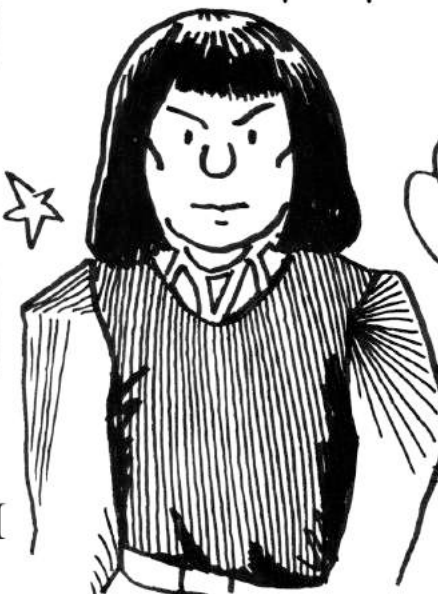
Darth Vader

Writers often make  
their villains to be  
disabled people.

Dr Strangelove



Richard III



Media representations are much better these days, -



Love you!  
big fan of your work!



Izzy from  
Coronation  
Street

Tyrion Lannister in Game Of Thrones is a great example of a positive disabled character.



And what about Liz Carr as Clarissa Mallory in Silent Witness?



Professor X was pretty cool in the X-Men

He and I go way back!



Nabil Shaban was a real pioneer for disabled actors, but TV producers thought he would scare children!

He was great in Dr Who!



Parents thought young children would be afraid of Ceri Burnell, but she is amazing!



Hold tight, Hannah,-  
we're coming in to land!





The 70's was when disabled people began to get organised for themselves, isn't it? Some say it was Paul Hunt's letter to the Guardian that got the ball rolling...

... and what look like very dull meetings are actually the start of a hugely significant movement!



This here is the UPIAS (Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation) round table, hammering stuff out.

Individuals like Mike Oliver worked on formalising the Social Model of Disability. This separated out 'impairments' which are personal and individual issues, from 'disability' which was explained as the barriers created by society:



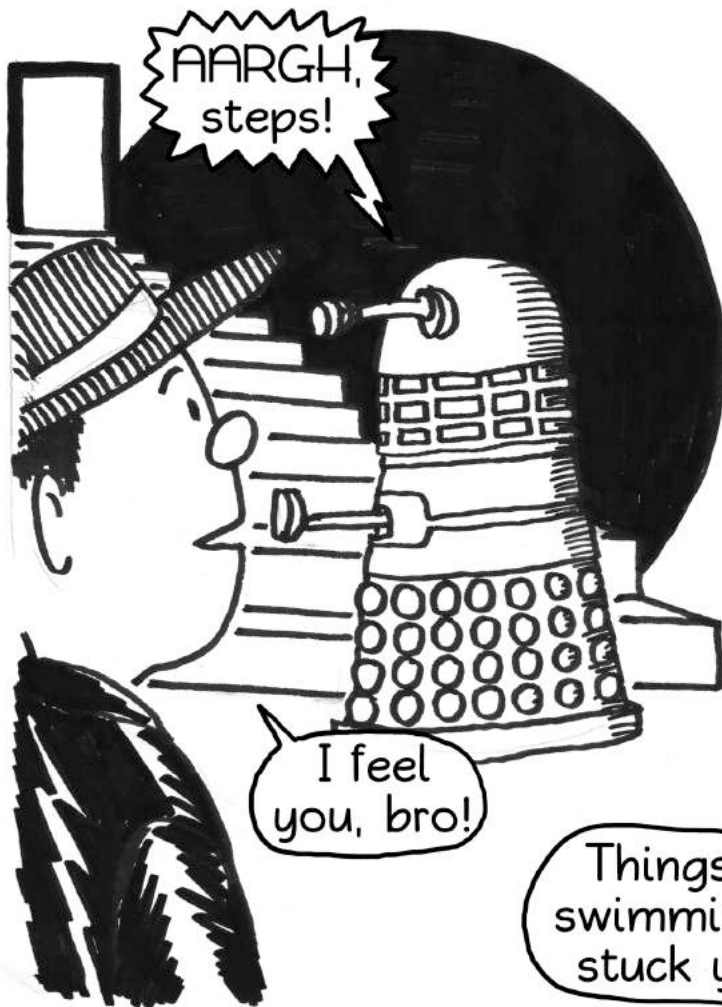
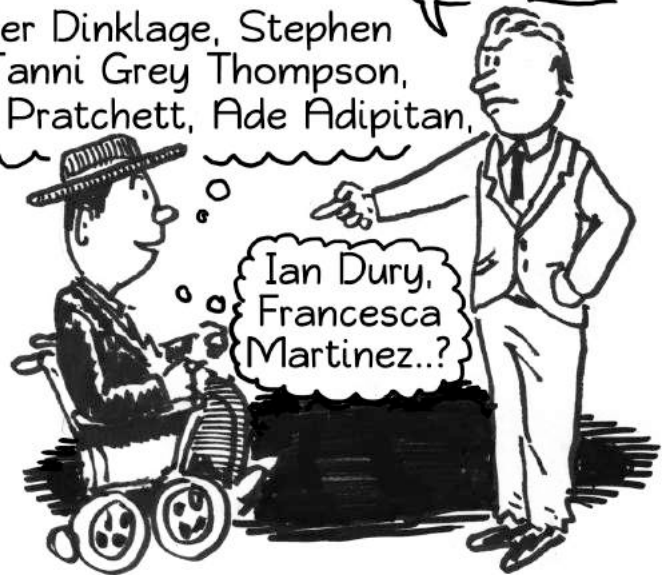
Here are some examples of the barriers that society disables us with -

**ATTITUDINAL**- people's attitudes can be a barrier by making assumptions about disabled people and their lives...

Don't get your hopes up! The handicapped can't do anything!

What about Peter Dinklage, Stephen Hawking, Dame Tanni Grey Thompson, Sir Terry Pratchett, Ade Adipitan,

**ENVIRONMENTAL**- such as stairs, heavy doors, inaccessible information and much more...

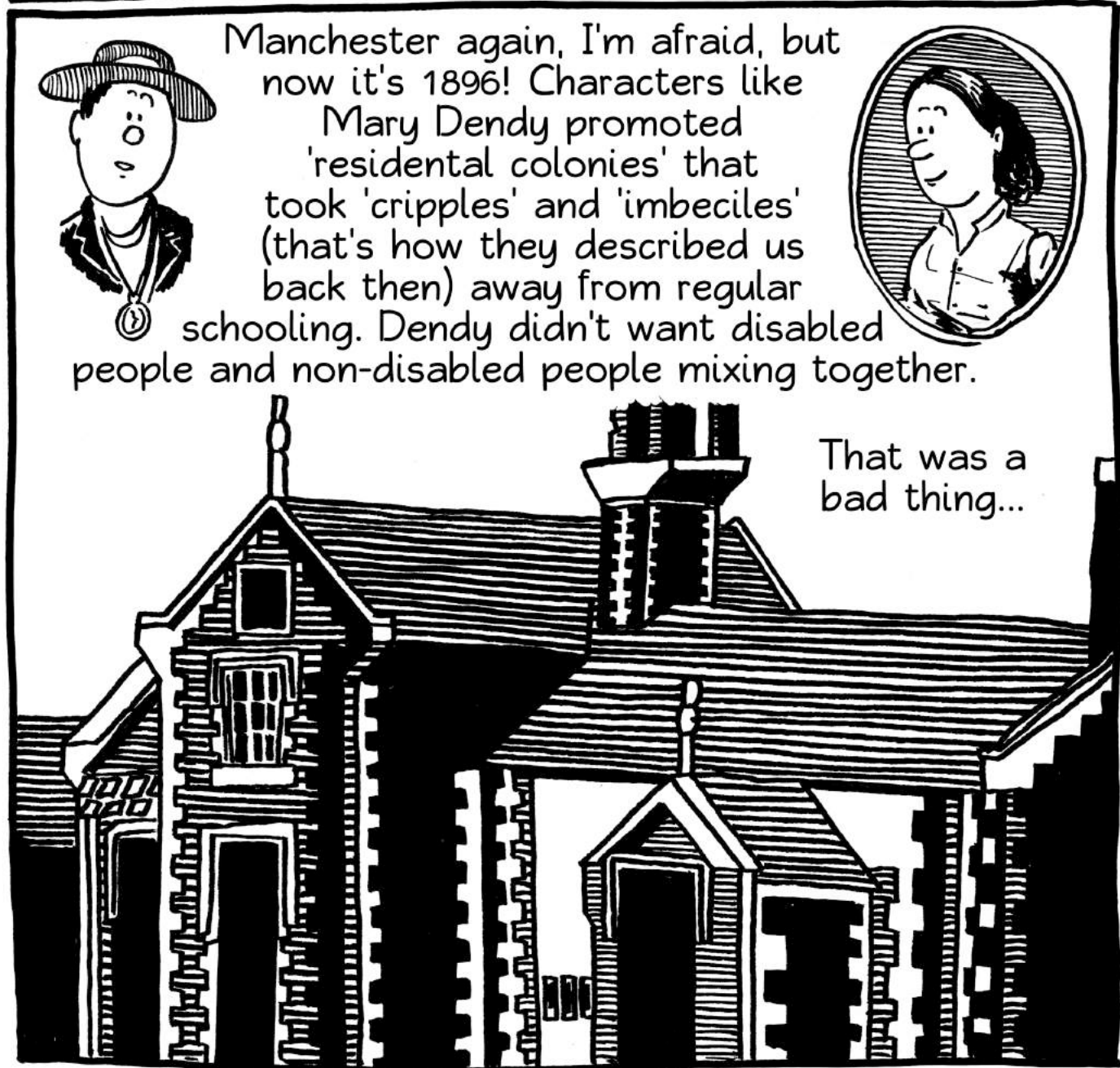
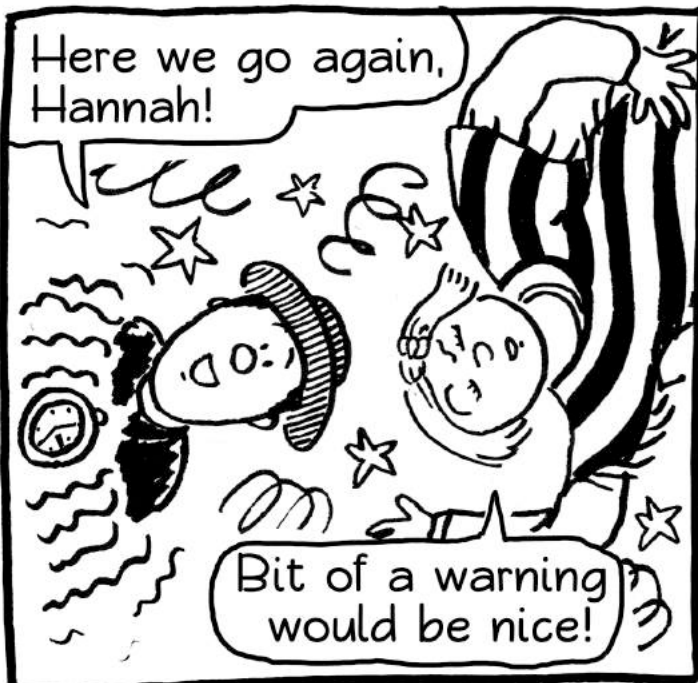


**ORGANISATIONAL**- things organised in an obstructive way.

Can't swim here without a carer! Health and safety!



Things were going swimmingly until you stuck your beak in!





Yes, because this is essentially segregating and ghettoising disabled children...



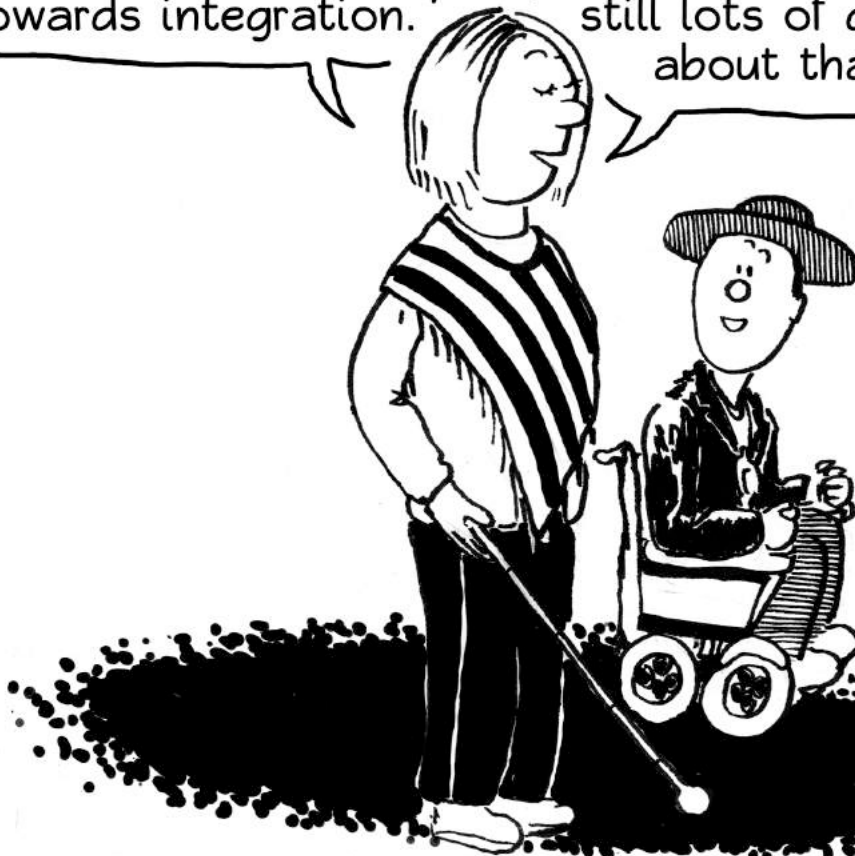
Like just removing us from society so no-one has to deal with us.



Out of sight, out of mind.

It's incredible to think that it wasn't until the 70's that there was a move towards integration.

There are still 'special schools', of course, and there is still lots of debate about that...



Hey, I know what we should take a look at. Hold tight! -

The 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester!

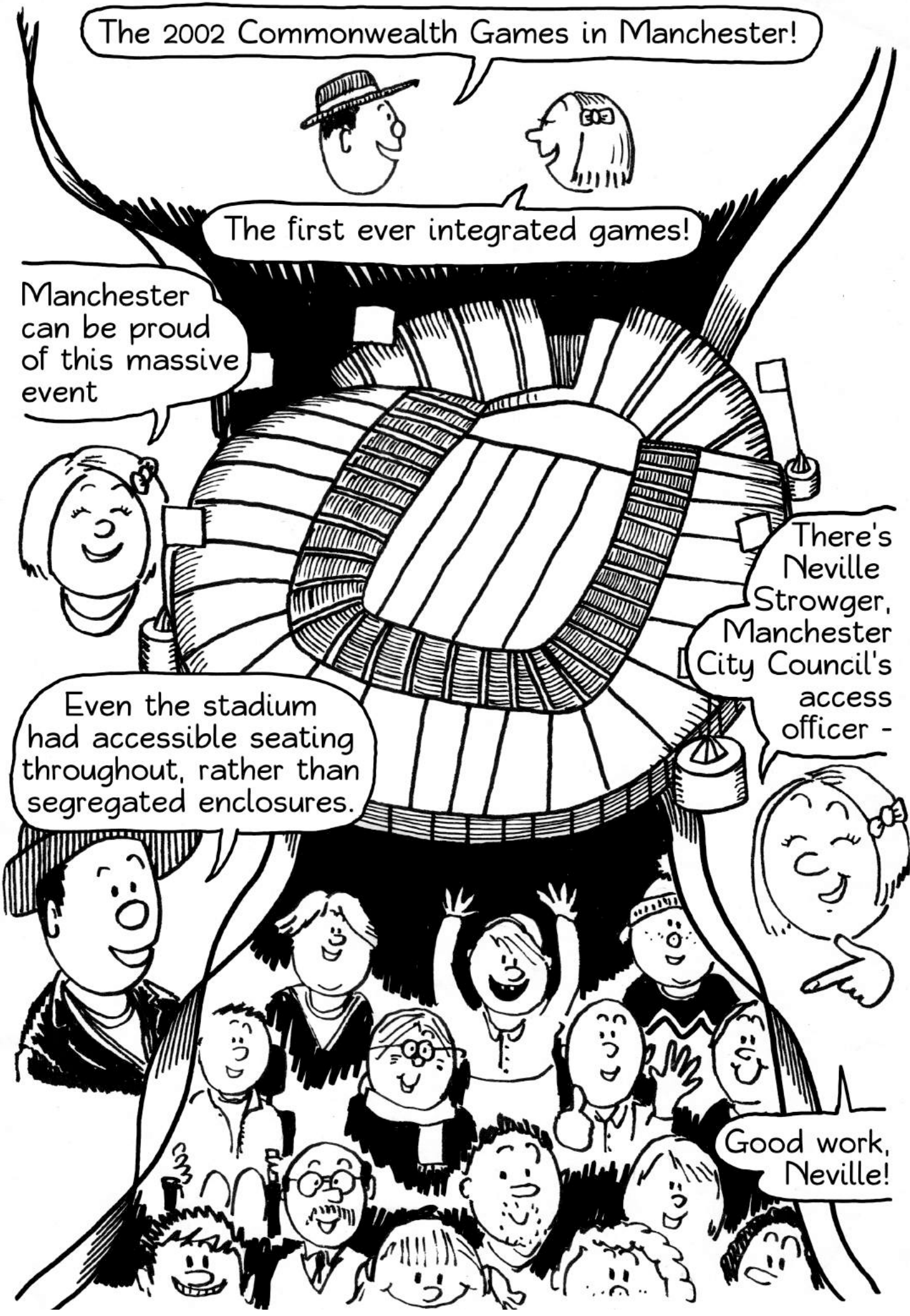
The first ever integrated games!

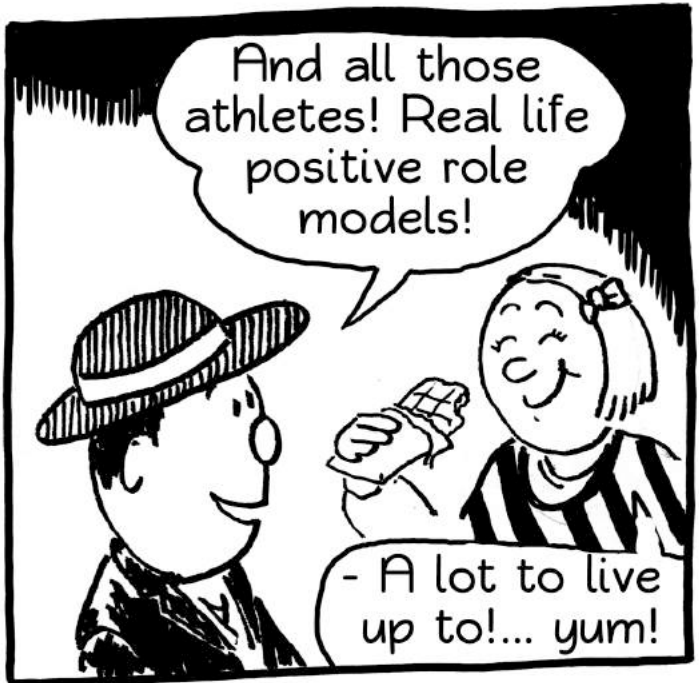
Manchester can be proud of this massive event

There's Neville Strowger, Manchester City Council's access officer -

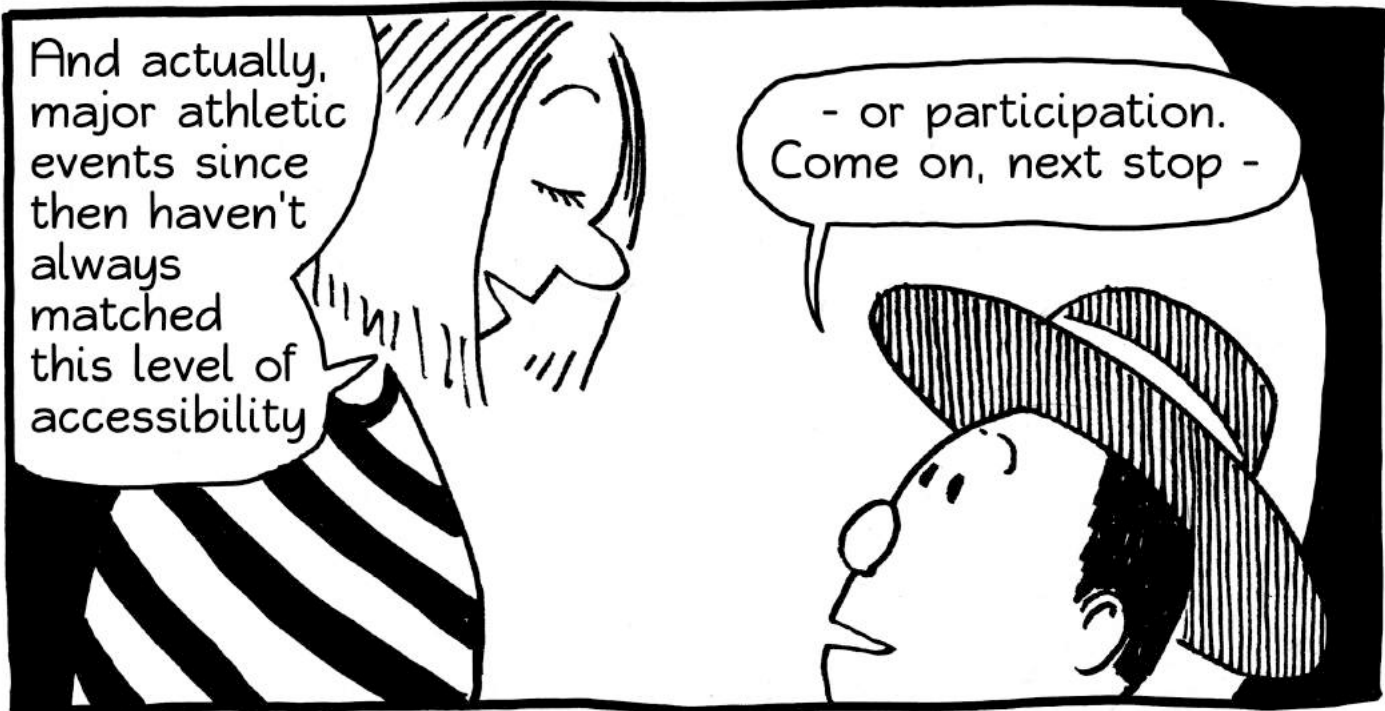
Even the stadium had accessible seating throughout, rather than segregated enclosures.

Good work, Neville!





Historically, disabled athletic events have attracted more athletes than spectators!



Right, don't tell me - Manchester!

Well, this is time travel, not a teleport!

Welcome to the

**1980's**



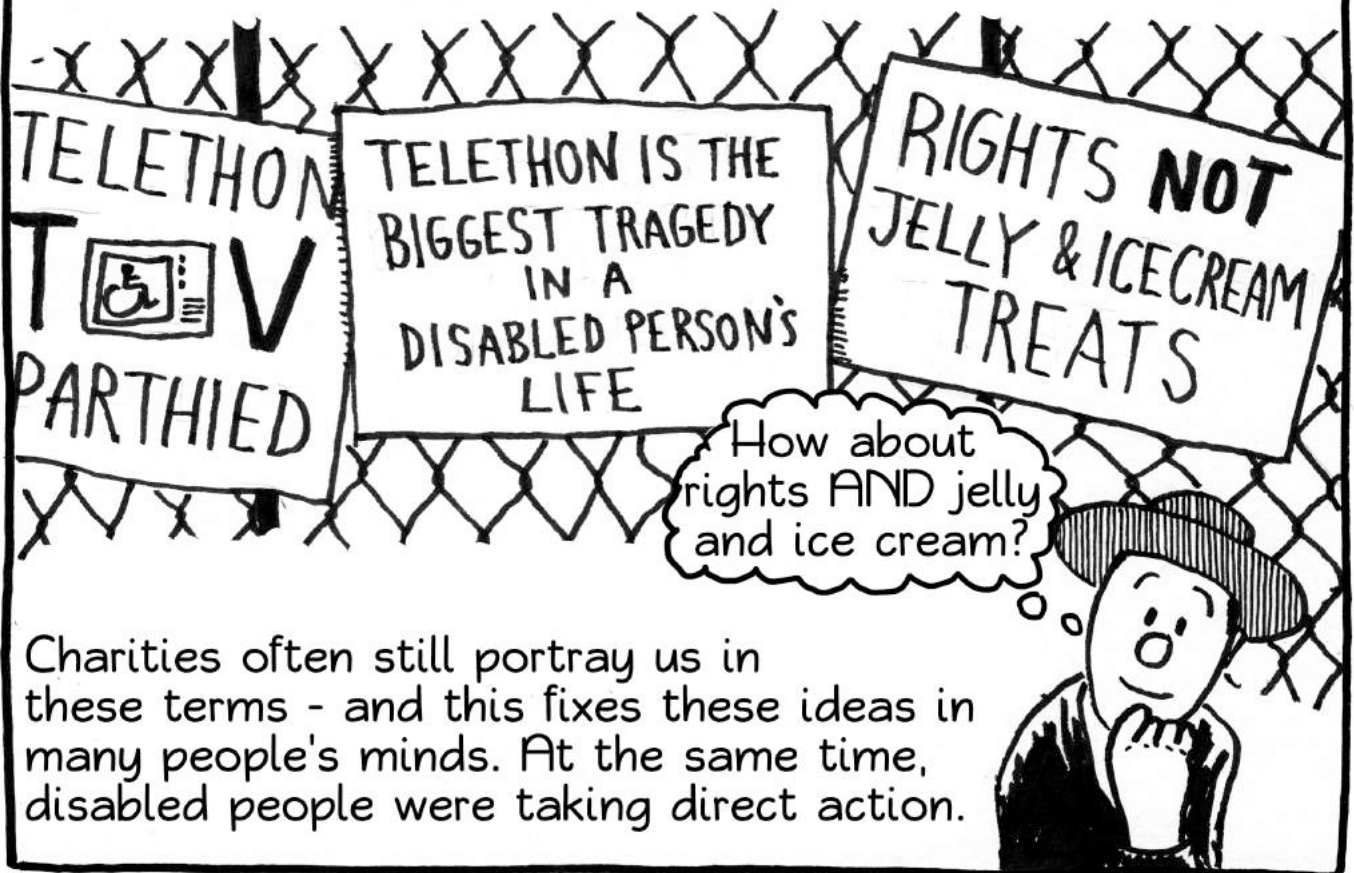
Cool, let's get some Madonna on!

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (GMCDP) came together in the 1980's, most visibly in a campaign to make the Town Hall fully accessible. Protests got a lot of coverage and attention, and campaigners finally won the battle! Manchester led the way in listening to disabled people's voices.



The GMCDP became a positive voice for disabled people on disability rights and equality, rather than others speaking and making decisions on our behalf.

Later in the 90's, ITV's charity Telethon event, along with other charities became a target, when they began portraying disabled children as powerless, pathetic objects of pity, pulling heartstrings for spare change.



Charities often still portray us in these terms - and this fixes these ideas in many people's minds. At the same time, disabled people were taking direct action.

You can trace this protest movement back to 1920,



and the National League of the Blind's pre-Jarrow march to London.

WWI was a real catalyst for social change, having created so many disabled people



And even now in 2015 we are fighting more than ever as austerity bites.

What's amazing to see is how the Coalition started out so small back in 1985,-

Neville Strowger

Ken Lumb

Kevin Hyett



- then grew and evolved into what you see today





Hats off to Cathy Avison who pioneered disability action training, Alison Blake and her groundbreaking young disabled people's projects



Sue Napolitano's powerful poetry

and Ian Stanton's rousing protest songs (he also started the Coalition magazine)



You know, sometimes we don't feel like we're making huge progress, having to battle the closure of Independent Living Fund, benefit cuts,...



But together, we are stronger than ever



So though we are always looking to the future -

our time is NOW!

## **A view of the project by young disabled members from GMCDP:**

“We’ve learnt all about disability history, stories we didn’t know before. I liked research on where disability has come from, how it used to be viewed 100 years ago”

“The workshops made us debate, reflect and consider things from different perspectives”

“I didn’t realise how much eugenics influenced politicians and government in 1940’s,- seeing it again with the Assisted Suicide Bill”

“Amazing how the comic book has all come together and seeing it take shape”

“I loved the idea of a time travel theme and being a character in the book, I have really enjoyed this project.”

“The team spirit has been great, and good how the comic book story has reflected our own personalities and ideas ... I’ve learnt so much”

“I find history fascinating, so I’ve really enjoyed the research, especially the Victorian era and it’s use of language to describe disability. So different from today which is good.”

Created by the **Young Disabled People: Taking Action Project:**

*Daniel Lawless, Qaasim Ali Safdar, Hannah Day, Louise Hollinworth, Audrey Stanton, Josh Coy, Mathias Warrington, Sarah Lord, Brett Savage, Linda Marsh, Maggie Griffiths, Rebecca Legowski, Louise Crowley, Caron Blake all working with Jim Medway.*

[www.ukdhm.org](http://www.ukdhm.org)

[www.gmcdp.com](http://www.gmcdp.com)

[www.jimmedway.com](http://www.jimmedway.com)