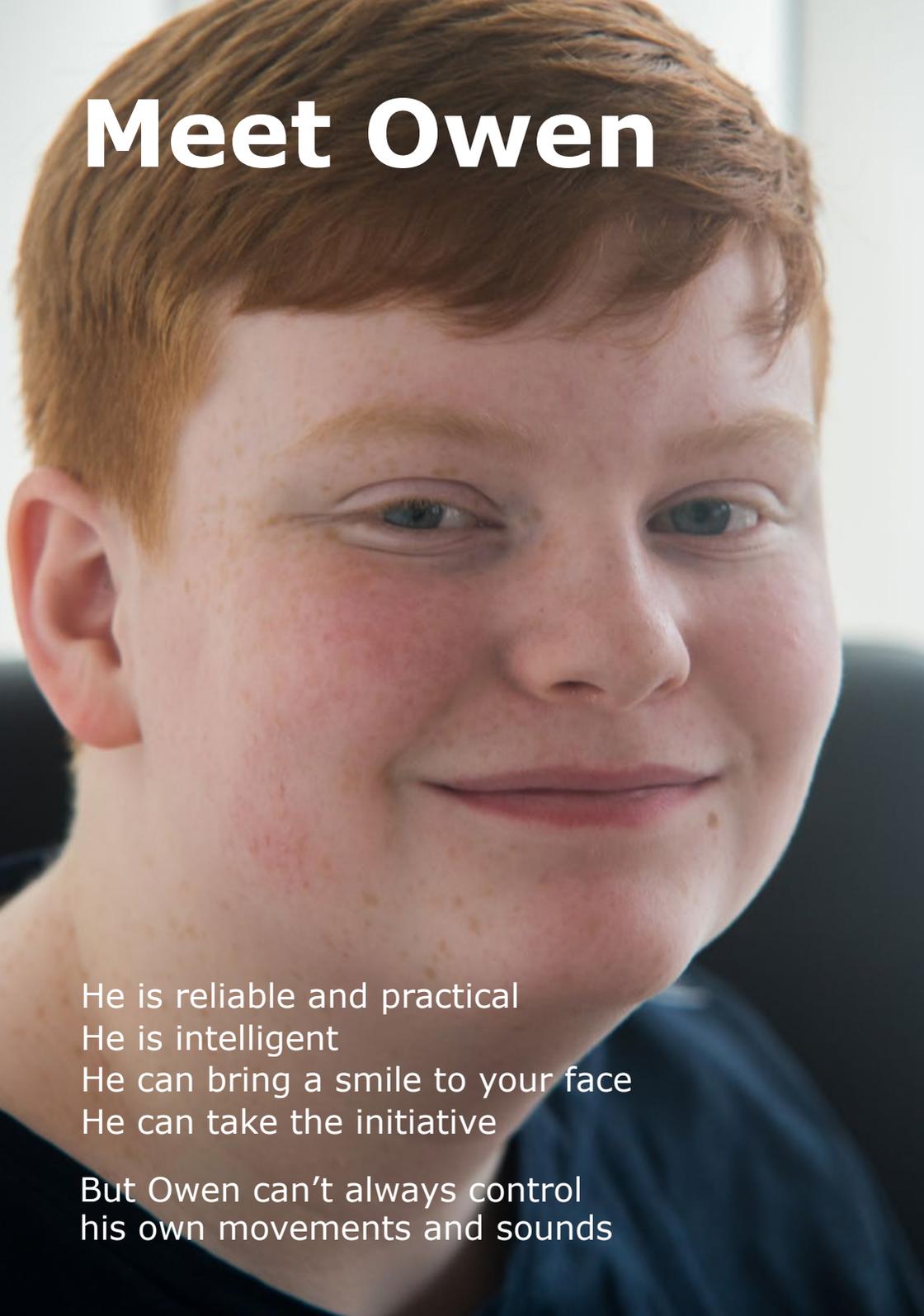


Meet Owen

A close-up portrait of a young boy with short, wavy red hair and light blue eyes. He has a gentle smile and visible freckles on his face. He is wearing a dark blue shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

He is reliable and practical
He is intelligent
He can bring a smile to your face
He can take the initiative

But Owen can't always control
his own movements and sounds

Understanding Tourette syndrome

Tourette syndrome is a neuro-developmental condition - which means that it is part of the make-up of the brain. It affects around 1 in 100 people, is more commonly diagnosed in males and may run in families.

People with Tourette syndrome sometimes lose control over the movements and sounds they make. Without warning, they may twitch, nod, jerk or make grunting, coughing or other noises. These actions are completely involuntary and are known as 'tics'.

Tics can come and go and vary in severity. They can be 'simple' such as a small movement or a single sound, or 'complex', such as speaking a phrase or making a series of movements. Most people will have a combination of physical and vocal compulsions, and may also experience difficulty in managing their emotions. A well-known feature of Tourette syndrome is an uncontrollable use of obscenities ('coprolalia'), but this is not very common.

More and more people are being diagnosed with Tourette syndrome as understanding about the condition improves. Symptoms tend to begin in childhood and are generally most prominent during the early teenage years.

Tourette syndrome is often associated with other conditions such as ADHD, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and coordination difficulties.

Tourette syndrome: strengths and challenges

Owen works best with consistency in the surroundings and people he comes across, as sudden changes and new situations may be hard to handle.

While the tics are involuntary, certain strategies may help to reduce and manage them. It is important that in every environment, Owen has a space for peace and quiet.

Put him in a position that builds on his reliability and energy. Use his intelligence and constructive ideas, and give him an environment where he can be focused and stay readily on task.

By ignoring the tics and drawing on Owen's sense of responsibility and willingness to work hard, he can be given a chance to achieve his true potential.

Here are a few ways we can all support Owen:

General

- Avoid reacting to the tics
- Keep Owen busy and focused

At home

- Have reliable routines
- Provide structure to the day
- Help him to find a hobby to concentrate on

At school

- Break assignments into manageable sections
- Talk together to agree the best classroom strategies
- Make sure Owen can have regular breaks
- Give him plenty of time to complete tasks and allow extra time for tests

At work

- Try to arrange for Owen to work in a familiar place with the same people
- Build in opportunities for regular breaks
- Ensure his workload is manageable and clearly broken down into smaller sections
- Minimise disruption and available distractions

At the hospital

- Ensure Owen sees the same staff regularly
- Provide activities to occupy Owen
- Consider the best time of day for an appointment
- Make waiting times as short as possible