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## Diabetes & the Duke of Edinburgh (award)

Lauren Edwards

Have you ever jumped at the chance to hike 20km a day with heavy back packs through Wild Country? Most of you probably (and understandably) answered no. Have you ever been in a situation where an opportunity arose that you were so interested in exploring but you were held back by something (or someone)? Perhaps this is more likely – it certainly is for those of us who suffer with [Type 1 Diabetes](#).

My fellow [Diabetics](#) will likely have felt held back by their health condition at some point, and agree with how helpless it can make us feel. That's why it is often a relief to find others experiencing similar difficulties and groups who are willing to accommodate.

The [Duke of Edinburgh Award \(DofE\)](#) is designed to be open for all. In theory this works and is a fantastic opportunity to be involved with. Unfortunately, when it comes to the practicality of the Expedition element of the award, success of the group is dependent on a number of factors including ability to complete the requirements and stay together. I experienced difficulty as a [diabetic](#) doing this when I completed my Practice expedition because no-one else in my group suffered from any conditions or disabilities. Furthermore, I was unaware at the time that there are actually variations that can be added to ones' Expedition to allow for disabilities. I completed my Practice trying to behave like someone who did not have [diabetes](#) (need to take regular breaks to medicate etc) and this led to a traumatic and unfulfilling experience, for a number of reasons:

- My blood sugar was dropping constantly, rendering me weak
- I had to have my heavy bag removed regularly to allow for blood sugar recovery (making me feel incompetent)
- My group were (understandably) frustrated at my lack of pace and returning late to camp

This was in 2012, and from that week, I subconsciously put on hold my dream of completing the [Gold DofE](#). I realised in 2018 that time was running out and I in fact had to make a decision as to whether I was going to push myself forward and complete the award. The answer was always yes, but I was fearful about completing a Qualifying expedition with a similar situation occurring.

Nonetheless, I was relieved to find Rich Adventure through my friend Elizabeth who also suffers with an invisible disability. Pete and Claire were knowledgeable on a range of disabilities that could be accommodated for through variations and changes made to Expedition without detracting from the overall aim of it. They got together a group of like-minded individuals to form our Reduced Mobility group and the rest is history!

I am very grateful to [Rich Adventure](#) for taking the time to accommodate the six of us who would have otherwise struggled to complete our [DofE](#) due to our disabilities. As a [Diabetic](#) I recommend taking your Expedition with them, because you may think, as I did in the beginning, that your [diabetes](#) should not stop you from completing it with your able-bodied friends; however, the Gold Expedition is very different to everyday life and it throws you a lot of curveballs that you may not have prepared for – I know who I would rather entrust with my health and well-being.

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