

MAKE A CHANGE BE THE DIFFERENCE.

OWN
LIFE



Gifted athlete Stephanie Jones, 12, a pupil at Christleton High School, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when she was just nine years old - but she doesn't let anything get in her way.

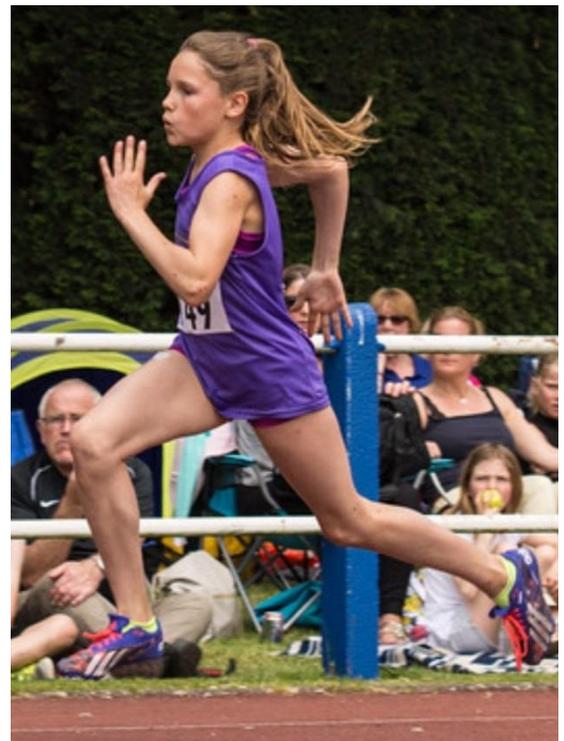
By closely monitoring her condition and training hard four times a week, Stephanie, a member of West Cheshire Athletic Club and Chester Triathlon Club, knocked eight minutes off her triathlon personal best in 2015.

“I was diagnosed in February 2014 after noticing that I was really thirsty throughout the school day. I also had days when I would feel tired and weak and suffer tummy pains. The staff at the Countess of Chester Hospital were wonderful and helped me and my family understand the changes I needed to make to my life but, during the first few months, we found it difficult to find any control.

“My mum and dad tried so hard to help me manage the readings but, because I was still producing a small amount of insulin, it was difficult to get right. I had to inject quite often, which started to upset me, but, after speaking to my diabetes nurse, Helen, I tried the pump method because it was more suited to my eating habits and lifestyle.

“In the early stages, my biggest worry was how my diagnosis would affect my sport. At that point I didn't know how continuing to train and compete would affect my readings. This meant my mum had to stick close by every time I trained. It also meant my dedicated teacher, Mrs Bradshaw, had to make sure I tested my readings before and after exercise.

“I wanted the confidence to be able to carry on with my athletics and competitions without worrying about something going wrong and realised I needed to learn more about how my body reacted to eating and exercise. Only by doing this was I able to push myself hard in training and continue to compete.



MAKE A CHANGE BE THE DIFFERENCE.

OWN
LIFE



“I’ve not changed my diet a great deal but I now understand more about eating the right foods at the right times to help me when I exercise. For example, on competition days I make sure I start the day with a bowl of porridge and eat a banana an hour before any distance running.

“I can now tell when my readings are going low as I get shaky legs and feel weak but I still don’t recognise when my readings are going high. Sometimes my mum and dad can tell though because I become really moody and grumpy!

“Since taking control I have been much happier and felt much healthier. My fitness has also improved along with my performances in training and competition. In the short-term I’m aiming to improve my personal bests further and, hopefully, come away with a gold medal.

“In the long-term, I haven’t decided yet which route I will take - whether to continue with triathlons, which I really enjoy, or stick to track and field, where I excel the most. Either way I want to push myself as hard as I can to keep improving but, most of all, keep myself as fit and healthy as possible.”

Stephanie’s mum Lindsay described her daughter as “an inspiration”.

She said: “Even making a few very small, simple adjustments can make a huge difference. For any other parents who find themselves in a similar situation, ensuring your child has a healthy diet and

takes plenty of exercise will help them to lead a normal, happy life.



“We closely monitor Stephanie’s condition but have also tried very hard to treat her the same as if she hadn’t been diagnosed. We don’t want her to feel any different to her friends.

“Stephanie has been so positive since she was diagnosed and was even unfazed at the thought of injections and testing at such a young age. She really is an inspiration and a joy to be around.

“Her positivity is what most people notice about her, not her diabetes.”