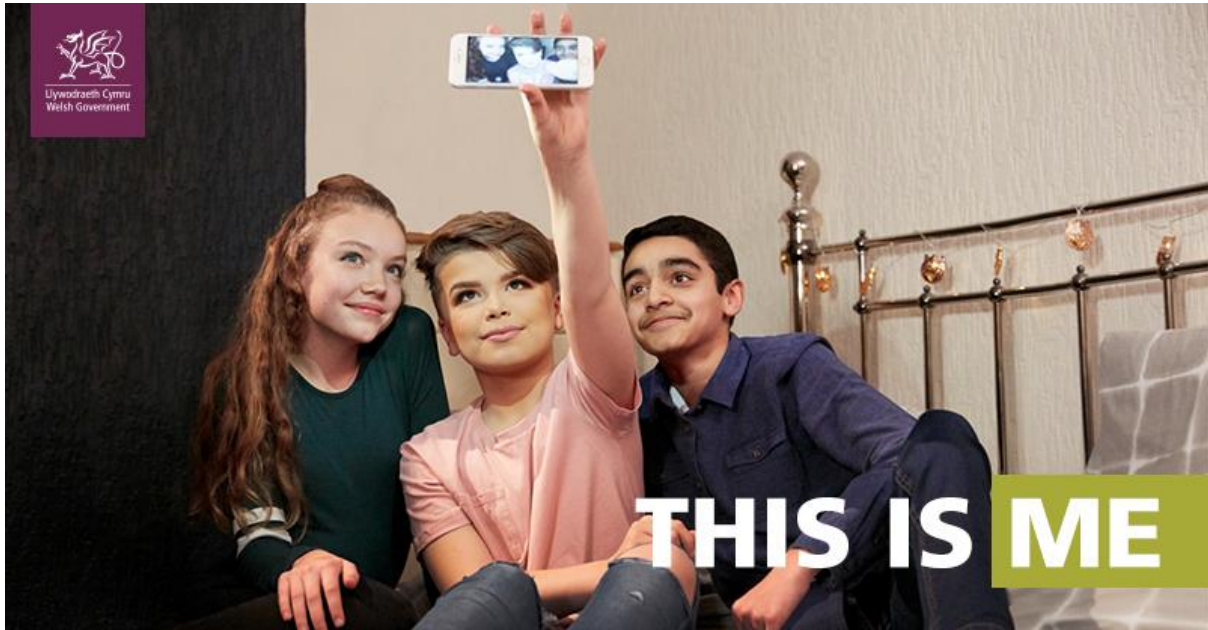


Reuben's story

Cardiff-born Reuben De Maid is not your average 12-year-old. His passion for make-up has led to him to appear on top US comedy talk show, the Ellen Degeneres Show, and he has already amassed more than 80,000 followers on Instagram.



Despite his young age, he already has ambitions to start his own make-up brand and become a professional singer.

“I have enjoyed singing and art since I can remember,” he said. “It was my love for art that got me watching make-up tutorials on YouTube. I couldn’t get enough of it, I thought it was brilliant. Soon after, I started practising myself and wearing make-up around the house.”

Reuben’s mum, Vicky, willed him to follow his passion but was aware Reuben may face stigma for doing a hobby perceived as ‘feminine’ in society.

She said: “I never wanted to discourage Reuben, but there are many people out there who would make negative comments about what he does. Fortunately, he had been very close with the students and teachers at his primary school since he joined, so they took it in their stride – and so did Reuben.”

Despite Reuben’s positive reception at primary school, it hasn’t been an easy few years for the talented 12-year-old. He joined a drama group where other children were not so accepting, and his recent move to secondary school came with its own challenges.

“The people who already knew me were great, but meeting my new peers was really tough,” he continued. “I would get called hurtful names, and people at school and in

the streets still do a double take when they see me. The worst comments I've had are people online – I can only describe them as trolls.”

When asked what message he would have for people experiencing similar negativity, he said: “Don't worry about what others think. Remain strong, even when it's tough, otherwise they win.

“It's time to stand up and fight gender inequality. I believe everyone should be free to be themselves. That's why I'm encouraging everybody to support the #thisisme campaign.”

We are starting a conversation about gender inequality and how it affects people across Wales. From a man working as a midwife to a woman working as a mechanic, a young boy wearing makeup to a young girl playing in the mud with her truck – people across Wales are already challenging gender stereotypes and 'norms', but inequality remains.

Join the conversation on Facebook and Twitter using #thisisme and help us build a Wales that challenges gender stereotypes, a Wales free of pressure to conform, a Wales that celebrates #thisisme.