

Ivor Washbrook

Ivor's mum Sarah describes her son's game-changing trike

WHEN MY SON IVOR, aged six, was diagnosed with Angelman syndrome, life as we knew it came to a crashing halt. Having Angelman syndrome means that he has severe developmental delays. Although he can walk, it's not far or fast, and he struggles with balance and coordination.

You might think that cycling would be out of the question. But as a family of bike lovers, I was determined for him to be able to enjoy cycling just like the rest of us – with all the benefits that brings.

After a huge amount of research into adaptive cycles, we bought a Tomcat Fizz trike. This was based on their reputation, innovation awards, customer service and the trike itself, which can also be converted into a trailer trike that I can hitch to my bike for longer rides with the family.

As a relatively new cyclist, Ivor mostly uses his trike for short local rides from the house with parental control, but as he's getting older we're venturing further afield.



The trike is really stable, so it's great off road on bumpy tracks. He can ride while we walk at a healthy pace next to him – a win for everybody.

There are so many benefits to an adapted cycle, too. High up there is safety. It's not safe or possible for Ivor to ride a conventional bike. He is unable to balance and steer, sometimes will not hold on and he will not respond to safety instructions. Straps and controls make this possible.

Ivor also benefits greatly from being able to do regular exercise. It keeps him moving, controls his weight, uses pent-up energy and helps him to sleep, as well as developing his balance, coordination, motor skills and strength. Not to mention the focus, calmness and positive mental health that comes from cycling – as any cyclist can testify. More than anything, cycling for Ivor is a social event. He can now join in, helping our whole family to get out and about cycling together.

There were a few teething

problems with this adapted trike. It takes practice to put it together after it's been in the car or after using the towing attachment, and time to change the drivetrain for faster rides. The hand brake is somewhat fiddly, as are the calliper attachments and buckles over the feet as Ivor's legs don't stay still.

Yet it's a brilliant trike with really thoughtful technology. It also looks fabulous; on first glance it's little different from conventional bike or trike. Almost everybody we pass admires it and wants to talk about it. I would wholeheartedly recommend it to parents of disabled children. Life can throw some really difficult things at us, but that doesn't mean you can't carry on doing the things you love.

To see Ivor smile when he's on his trike is worth its weight in gold, as is knowing that it's helping him with his development at the same time. He loves it and we love it!



Ivor's trike

Bike: Tomcat Fizz (tomcatuk.org).

Price: from £914.

Key features

- Custom built to each rider's clinical and lifestyle requirements.
- Child's carer can control steering and braking.
- Converts into a trailer trike.

More information: To find out more about Angelman syndrome and the research and treatment efforts being made for it, visit: cureangelman.org.uk.

