

# Robot helps seriously ill Everton fan make history

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A staff member holds an AV1 telepresence robot, allowing teenage fan Jack McLinden to be a 'virtual matchday mascot' ahead of the English Premier League football match between Everton and Newcastle United at Goodison Park in Liverpool, England

A seriously ill teenage Everton fan made history on Monday by becoming the world's first 'virtual matchday mascot' ahead of his beloved team's home Premier League match with Newcastle United.

Jack McLinden, a 14-year-old who suffers from multiple health conditions and is wheelchair bound, was able to enjoy the once-in-a-lifetime mascot experience through the Norwegian-designed telepresence robot, AV1.

It was the first time a child has been able to perform matchday mascot duties remotely, with the robot's integrated camera, microphone, and speaker enabling the virtual experience of going onto the pitch.

Everton team captain Phil Jagielka carried the robot as he led his team out with the AV1 connected to McLinden's iPad at home—allowing him to see and hear the experience in real-time through the telepresence robot avatar.

"We are thrilled to have had the chance to do this for Jack and we hope it has provided him with a memory he will always treasure," said Scott McLeod, Head of Engagement at Everton Football Club.

AV1 is designed to help combat loneliness in children and young adults with long-term illnesses, by allowing them to attend school and social occasions through the device's connection to a smartphone or tablet, allowing them to see, hear and communicate with others.

Colin Dyer, chief executive of Wellchild, the national charity for seriously ill children and their families, said the technology could help alleviate the sense of isolation.

"We think the little [robot](#) could be a massive boon for children with complex needs, whose conditions mean that they cannot be everywhere

they want to be in person," said Dyer.

"There is a growing population of families who are caring for a seriously ill child at home. We know that feelings of isolation are a common issue for many [children](#) and families in this situation."

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