A Year of Your Network

April 2020 – March 2021



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Message from Your Network Team

Welcome to the very first Mencap *'A Year of Your Network'.*

This document consists of an overview of what has been happening across Your Network over the last year. If you see something that you are particularly interested in and would like to find out more, then please let us know and we are happy to share further details with you.

We understand that it has been an incredibly difficult year for many groups due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, we are grateful to have such a diverse and inspiring network of peers to help us learn and support each other in adapting to new ways of working. Despite the many challenges across the last year, we would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the incredible impact that we have as a network of like-minded groups and organisations, and we look forward to what this new year will bring.

The information used across this document has been gathered from the Annual Return, which all groups/organisations complete to maintain their affiliation with Royal Mencap Society. We have also used information from our content management system to provide you with figures and information in relation to collaboration across the network on a range of different levels and activities.

If you would like to speak to any members of the team throughout the year for support or information, please do not hesitate to get in touch via email at **yournetwork@mencap.org.uk** or call us on our dedicated Network Partner phone line **01733 873 712**.

We look forward to working with you this year, and we hope you enjoy reading this review.

Kind regards,
Your Network Team
Mencap



Message from Edel Harris OBE (CEO, Mencap)

Dear Network Partner,

It has been a pleasure to work with you, alongside other valued partners, as part of the Mencap Network over the last year. We want to communicate our heartfelt gratitude to you, and to your staff and volunteers.

The network has responded to the challenge of coronavirus magnificently, tirelessly and with great personal sacrifice, ensuring that, as much as possible, people with a learning disability remained safe and supported.

I am grateful that despite the terrible difficulties brought by the pandemic, we have still had opportunities to connect virtually. It was great that we were able to keep you updated on the work we are doing here at Mencap and also to hear about the incredible efforts of those Network Partners who continued to operate throughout lockdown. We appreciated your support, advice and sharing of experiences as we all struggled at times to respond to the ever-changing situation. Inevitably the pandemic has overshadowed our work collectively as a network, with many groups sadly forced to close for over a year.

Even so, it has been a real team effort as we adapted to new ways of working and new ways of engaging with each other. We have collaborated to share resources, information, knowledge and experience. Together, we have also influenced real change.

As services and activities begin to open up again across the network, we are looking to the future with greater positivity. At Mencap we have commenced the implementation of our new Big Plan and are excited about working with you over the next year to achieve its goals.

I cannot end this reflection without paying tribute to the members of the Mencap Network who have sadly lost their lives due to coronavirus. I have been deeply touched to hear about the full and varied lives of members, staff, volunteers and trustees across our Mencap family and how much they will be missed by family, friends and support teams. We will not forget them.

Edel Harris OBE
Chief Executive
Royal Mencap Society



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Who are Your Network?

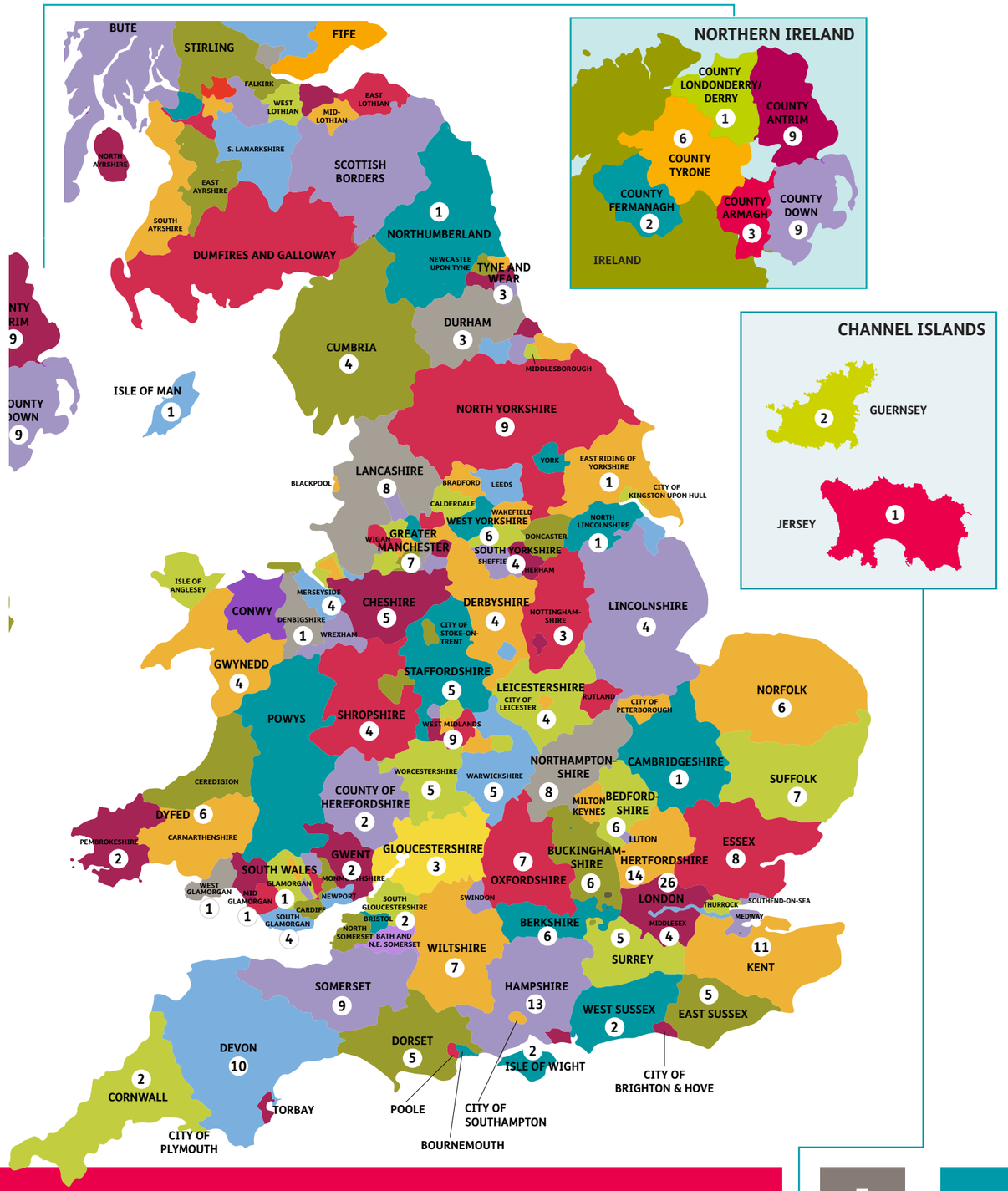
WALES	Network Partners
Blaenau Gwent	1
Clwyd	5
Denbighshire	1
Dyfed	6
Glamorgan	1
Gwent	2
Gwynedd	4
Mid Glamorgan	1
Neath Port Talbot	1
Pembrokeshire	2
South Glamorgan	4
West Glamorgan	1
TOTAL	**29**

NORTHERN IRELAND	Network Partners
County Antrim	9
County Armagh	3
County Down	9
County Fermanagh	2
County Londonderry/Derry	1
County Tyrone	6
TOTAL	**30**

ENGLAND (inc. Channel Islands)	Network Partners
Avon	1
Bedfordshire	6
Berkshire	6
Bristol	2
Buckinghamshire	6
Cambridgeshire	1
Cheshire	5
Cornwall	2
County Durham	2
Cumbria	4
Derbyshire	4
Devon	10
Dorset	5
Durham	3
East Riding of Yorkshire	1
East Sussex	5
Essex	8
Gloucestershire	3
Greater London	26
Greater Manchester	7
Guernsey	2
Hampshire	13
Herefordshire	2
Hertfordshire	14
Isle of Man	1
Isle of Wight	2
Jersey	1
Kent	11
Lancashire	8
Leicestershire	4
Lincolnshire	4
Merseyside	4
Middlesex	4
Norfolk	6
North Lincolnshire	1
North Yorkshire	9
Northamptonshire	8
Northumberland	1
Nottinghamshire	3
Oxfordshire	7
Shropshire	4
Somerset	9
South Yorkshire	4
Staffordshire	5
Suffolk	7
Surrey	5
Tyne and Wear	3
Warwickshire	5
West Midlands	9
West Sussex	2
West Yorkshire	6
Wiltshire	7
Worcestershire	5
TOTAL	**283**

In 2020-2021, you and 341 other Network Partners worked together to change the lives of over 36,000 people with a learning disability across Wales, Northern Ireland and England (including Channel Islands).

Check out our map below to find out how many Network Partners are based in the same county as you. If you would like to connect with a Network Partner near you, or across the Network, to work collaboratively at any point across the year, please contact us and we can put you in touch!



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Your Network at a glance

You are part of a countrywide network that has a huge impact on the lives of people with a learning disability.

We have been collecting information to show your collective power, and using it to support more collaborative work with Mencap and across the network. Find out more about the demographics of the network and your collective impact below.

Your Network is made up of:

273
small groups (turnover less than £100K)

37
large groups (turnover over £500K)

32
medium groups (turnover between £100K - £500K)

Further breakdown:



In England and the Channel Islands there is a total of 283 groups (216 small, 31 medium and 36 large) than £100K)



In Wales there is a total of 29 groups (27 small, 1 medium and 1 large)



In Northern Ireland there is a total of 30 groups (30 small groups)

Did you know that you are part of a network that:

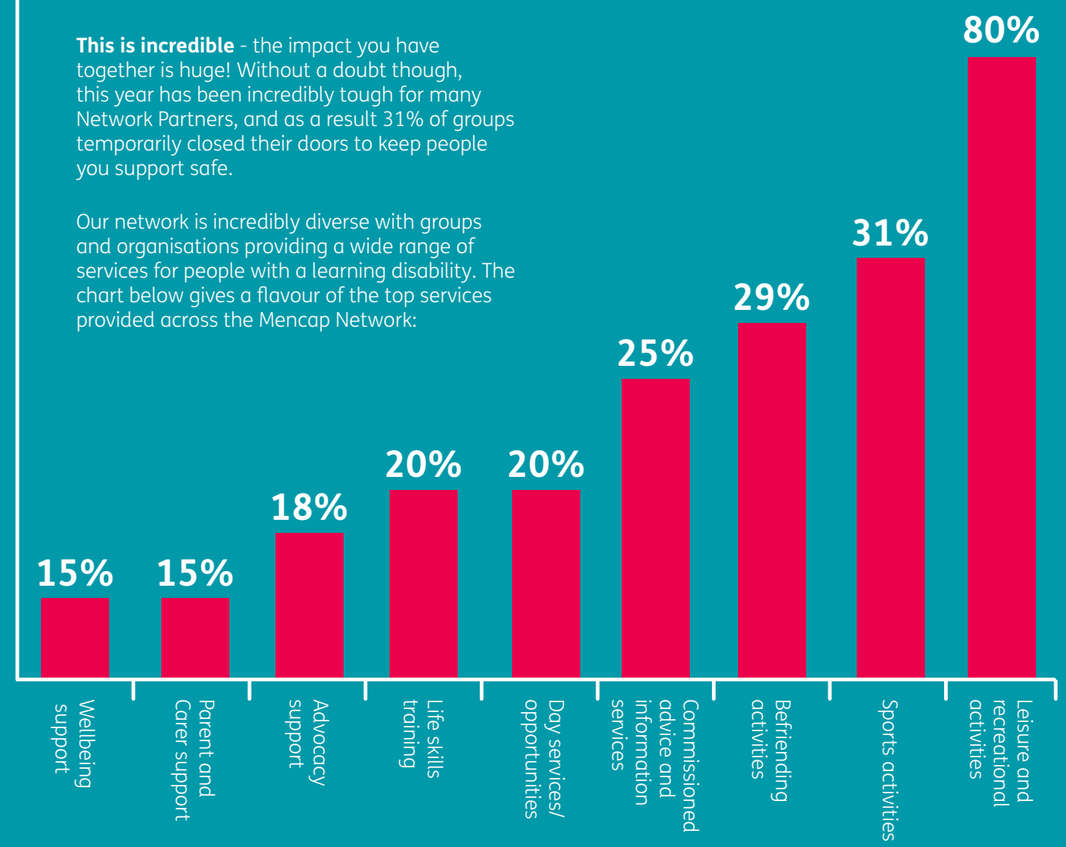
Employs
3,667
staff (230 of whom have a learning disability)

Involves
6,505
volunteers (982 of whom have a learning disability)

Supports over
36,000
people with a learning disability across the UK

This is incredible - the impact you have together is huge! Without a doubt though, this year has been incredibly tough for many Network Partners, and as a result 31% of groups temporarily closed their doors to keep people you support safe.

Our network is incredibly diverse with groups and organisations providing a wide range of services for people with a learning disability. The chart below gives a flavour of the top services provided across the Mencap Network:



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Collaborative work and engagement

Across 2020-2021, we have had the pleasure of engaging and collaborating with a wide range of Network Partners. As a network of like-minded groups and organisations, we have had a hugely positive impact on people with a learning disability, their families and carers - especially during such a difficult and challenging year. It's incredible to see the potential of what we can achieve together.

We would like to take the opportunity to share some highlights of collaborative work from across the year, to demonstrate how working together can help us to have a meaningful impact on our priorities, and to achieve our vision for the UK to be the best place in the world for people with a learning disability to live happy and healthy lives.



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Tackling Inequalities Fund

LOTTERY FUNDED

The Tackling Inequalities Fund (TIF) was set up by The National Lottery and Sport England in 2020 to support local and national organisations to ensure people could remain active during the coronavirus pandemic.

Mencap was awarded a grant which we then were able to distribute, through an application process, to Network Partners in England. Each organisation could bid for up to £10,000 to ensure that people with a learning disability were supported to remain as active as possible.

67
Network Partners expressed an interest in this funding

38
Funding applications were successful

£186,458.60 was allocated between September 2020 and March 2021. This reached 750 people with a learning disability.

During this time there was a diverse range of activity being delivered both online and socially distanced face to face activities.

For groups who delivered online sessions, funding was allocated for IT equipment, subscriptions to sessions, online coaches and supporting running costs.

For socially distanced sessions that took place in person, funding was allocated for venue hire, staff support and volunteer costs.

"I enjoy the sports sessions. It's the first time I have done anything on Zoom. I really like moving about.

- Session participant

Some of the activities that took place included:

- **Walking sessions**
- **Online dance classes**
- **Online Zumba**
- **Online aerobics**
- **Socially distanced yoga**
- **Socially distanced tennis**
- **Healthy eating project**



The funding has been able to support Network Partners with some financial stability during coronavirus, and also ensure people with a learning disability remain as active as possible during a very challenging period. We have seen new and innovative ways of reaching people delivered by Network Partners, and we hope to see these continue as restrictions come to an end.

Plans for the future

The second phase of the TIF funding came out in May 2021. We look forward to sharing the details of this funding, as well as more brilliant partner success stories in due course.

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Being involved in the Let's Get Digital project has been very beneficial to us, by connecting us with new and existing service users that we had lost touch with due to the pandemic. The results of the project for our service users can not only be measured by their improving digital ability, but also by improved connections and mental health.

One person we support who lives on his own became totally isolated due to lockdown. But because I was visiting him to help him with his device, I discovered that his mum was in a care home miles away, and he hadn't seen her for over a year.

We were able to make contact with his remaining family, find out which care home she was in and arrange a visit for him. The impact of this for him was off the scale.

- Ryedale and District Mencap

Let's Get Digital Project

Let's Get Digital

Let's Get Digital is Mencap's digital inclusion project developed using the coronavirus response fund from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, The Pears Foundation and the National Lottery. The project supports Network Partners to increase the online support they can offer, and therefore reduces the loneliness often felt by people with a learning disability.

82
Network Partners applied for this funding opportunity

57
applications were successful (53 in England, 3 in Northern Ireland and 1 in Wales).

£

£227,500
was allocated for IT equipment for staff, volunteers and people with a learning disability on the project.

1,300
devices and
1,250
MiFi hotspot devices were also given out.

Approximately 30 people with a learning disability per Network Partner have been reached through this funding - a total of around 1,710 people. There are also at least 2 digital champions per Network Partner group; a minimum of 114 across the whole network.

An additional benefit to this project is access to the Digital Champions Network, which provides people with online training modules to help with skill building for staff, volunteers and members. Webinars around specific modules were really well received by the Network Partners involved. By upskilling people locally, Network Partners have been able to offer more and diverse access to digital technology to reduce loneliness of people with a learning disability during the pandemic; for example, by moving activity sessions online through Zoom in the absence of face-to-face options.

Plans for the future

We continue to deliver this project and are enjoying the opportunities it gives us to interact with a wide range and diverse group of Network Partners. We will keep all Network Partners updated about any further opportunities that stem from this project that could support groups digitally.



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Healthy Eating Project

The "A Healthier Me" projects have come from internal funding at Mencap, and were designed to give Network Partners and the people they support an understanding of how to live a healthier lifestyle through healthy eating. Each Network Partner has been given the flexibility to set their own programmes and deliver against their own set goals.

26
Network Partners expressed an interest in this funding

13
Funding applications were successful

£

£50,957
was allocated to this project which began in January 2021 and finished in June 2021. So far this project has reached 278 people with a learning disability.

As a direct result of this project, resources are being created which will include information booklets, activity cards, recipes and menu planners. If you are interested in accessing these please let us know and we are happy to share.

Some of the activities that took place included:

- Cook along live sessions
- Healthy eating workshops
- Grow your own
- Allotments
- Garden growing

"We have a married couple who both have a number of complex disabilities, and both of them now take part in the cook along sessions along with their support worker. They have now begun cooking and eating together with their vulnerable elderly neighbours who they are in a bubble with. This is a really good example of a ripple effect where more than just the direct participants are benefitting from the work we are undertaking.

- Pennine Mencap

Plans for the future

We look forward to sharing the resources developed by the project on the Your Network Online Platform for everyone in the wider network to access and benefit from.



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All Move Project

The All Move project is funded by Virgin Money, as part of Mencap's 2020 London Marathon partnership. The project aims to increase opportunities for young people aged 11-16 with a learning disability and/or autism to get active in England and Wales. Participating sites receive an initial grant of £500 as well as the opportunity to apply for up to a further £750. These funds went towards external facilitators leading physical activity sessions, equipment, staff time, transport and any other means which enrich the experience of All Move participants.

7 Network Partners expressed an interest in the **All Move** project

4 expressions of interest were successful

£134,818 was allocated to this project. So far this project has reached 23 people with a learning disability, with a further 20 people who started the project in June 2021.

The list of activities includes cricket, horse riding and soft play and is designed to encourage young people to get active, feel fitter and healthier, and develop a positive outlook about exercise.

Activities were exclusively delivered online during project delivery due to coronavirus. Young people were also encouraged to engage in physical activity at home using the resources packs provided by All Move.

For example, the group of children at 4Eden Mencap will plan a route between Penrith and Kirkby Stephen, which is the length of a marathon, and then undertake activities that relate to the route. For instance, if their route crosses a river then they might do a swimming session in the pool, or if their route goes over a mountain they might go to the climbing wall.

"This is an opportunity for our children to re-energise, re-invigorate and reconnect. Last year was really tough on both our kids and adults. Many found it hard to understand why they weren't allowed to see their friends, and with limited ways of communicating digitally it was a really difficult time. A lot of people we work with are clinically vulnerable and had to shield. This meant that while we had a window of being able to socialise in summer, many of the people we support had no barbecues, no walks with friends and no holidays.

We are seeing a big rise in mental health problems because of this, which is not yet fully understood. A lot of people are displaying symptoms of anxiety. This is why the project is massively important. It's the first chink of light for many people after a very dark year. It will be a catapult for their mood and help them shake their isolation fears so they can re-engage with their communities again.

- 4Eden Mencap

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Round the World Challenge (RTWC)

27
Network Partners engaged in this project across RTWC during the reporting period

£50,000
was allocated to this project. In total this project has reached 626 people with a learning disability across Network Partner groups.

Some of the activities that took place include:

- Walking
- Football
- Cricket
- Zumba
- Aerobics
- and much more!

As with all areas, the pandemic has had a significant impact on Network Partners, and understandably we saw several organisations pause their RTWC delivery during the lockdowns and geographic restrictions. In order to support organisations to maintain engagement with participants whilst at home, we created our 'Move with Mencap' sports activity packs. These were free resources that were funded partly through the RTWC budget, and consisted of over 70 activity cards for people to follow at home or in groups. We had 35 Network Partners request a total of 707 individual packs and we estimate those packs reached over 900 people with a learning disability.

In order to further support people, we delivered Mencap Sport Live events in December 2020. This was a series of conferences each day. Each session had 3-5 expert speakers, presenting their experiences on different topics. The topics were:

Monday - the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and returning to physical activity.

Tuesday - inclusive communications and storytelling.

Wednesday - coaching people with a learning disability

Thursday - collecting and using programme data and insight.

Friday - best practice examples and future opportunities.

In total, 188 people joined the events across the week, including 22 people from Network Partner groups/ organisations.

"The zoom sessions (Mencap Sports Live events) I was able to attend from Royal Mencap were very good and I found them very informative and inspiring.

- Participant from the session

The current locations for RTWC are:

1. Merseyside
2. Lancashire
3. North Yorkshire
4. Leicestershire
5. Coventry and Warwickshire
6. Nottinghamshire
7. South London
8. South Essex
9. East Cornwall and Devon
10. Cumbria
11. Keighley and Bradford
12. Cheshire
13. Bristol and Gloucestershire
14. Derbyshire
15. Bedford and Northamptonshire
16. South East London
17. Sussex
18. Gravesham and Kent



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Mencap Befriending Network

The befriending group was set up in May 2020 due to an increased interest in befriending as Network Partners were looking for ways to keep their members connected during the coronavirus pandemic. The befriending group is a peer network – a space to share, learn and support each other. We have members who are currently providing befriending support and others who are not but have an interest in this work.



Initially monthly befriending group calls took place, which were an opportunity for Network Partners to get together and talk about how to keep connected with their members who were lonely and socially isolated. Following this:

- A befriending email group has been set up so that people can easily communicate with one another
- A dedicated befriending page has been set up on Your Network Online with a library of resources and links
- An email befriending update was created to keep members up to date with befriending news, information and opportunities
- A dedicated befriending page was set up on the Mencap website. This has the details for the **friendships@mencap.org.uk** mailbox. Any volunteer or support enquiries that come into this mailbox from the public are signposted to Network Partners who are running befriending schemes.

In November 2020, the befriending group took part in Befriending Week. This was the first time that we took part in the week as a Network.

Network Partners shared their stories and experiences on social media to promote and create awareness of the befriending work happening across the Mencap Network. It was an incredibly successful week with lots of activity on Facebook and Twitter.

In January 2021 we joined in with #BrewMonday by sharing stories across social media to raise awareness and promote befriending work. We highlighted how important it is for people to feel connected and not isolated during the pandemic, especially when social activities/ engagements and routines had to stop. This befriending work was just as important for the befrienders as it was for the befriendees.

During the year there were three opportunities (fully funded by Mencap for Network Partners):

- A year's membership to Befriending Networks (2 Network Partners took this up - £260 was allocated for this)
- Community Circles training course (2 Network Partners took this up - £592 was allocated for this)
- Quality In Befriending award (0 Network Partners took this up)

"When other services closed, helping members to stay connected was more important than ever to support members to stay in touch with their friends and build new friendships. Through the befriending group we were able to take up the opportunity to access membership with Befriending Networks which helped us to update and expand how we involve volunteers in our work to reach more people. This has been incredibly useful to overcome the challenges of the last year.

- Bromley Mencap

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Advice and Information Network

The advice and information group is made up of Network Partners who run a commissioned advice and information service and the Mencap Learning Disability helpline. This group was created to give groups and the helpline a chance to discuss the issues that were prevalent and share resources and information.

16

Network Partners are currently involved in this group

The group started in January and meet monthly. From January until March 2021, the main topics of discussion for the group were related to coronavirus, in particular the vaccine. Resources were shared across the group and we collaborated with internal teams at Mencap, like the policy team, to get answers on particular concerns that groups were being contacted about by the public.

The highlight has been the core groups who have attended every meeting and are really engaged and want to work collaboratively to improve the lives of people with a learning disability.

"We get a lot out of attending the regular advice and information calls. It is a good chance to see trends across the country and to see how others are responding to particular needs. We discuss our local issues, with the others on the call sharing their insight and experience or suggesting good resources and training for staff to make use of.

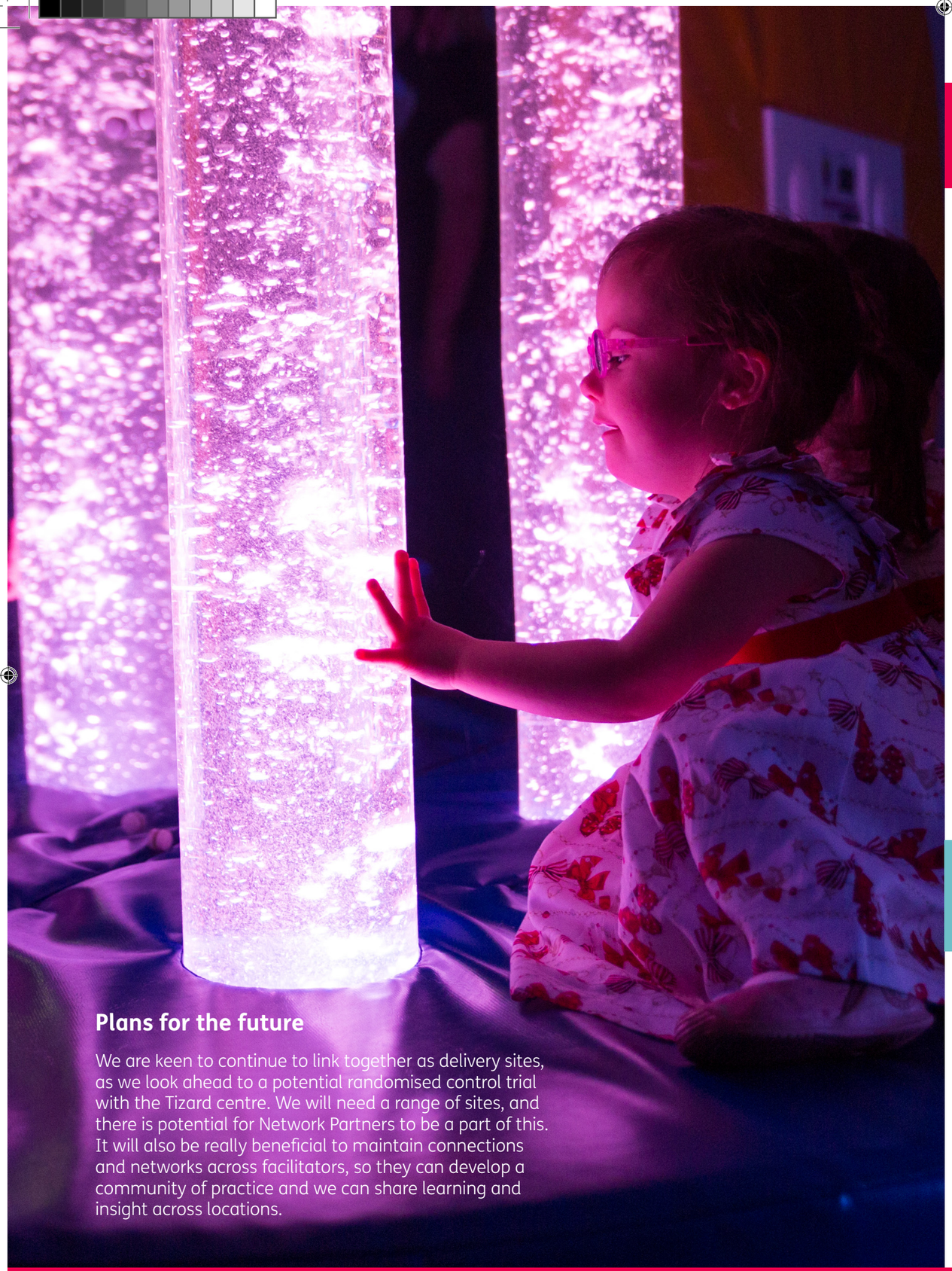
- Worthing Mencap

Plans for the future

The group continue to meet each month and invite subject matter experts to join depending on the needs the group or feedback on areas where support is required. If you'd like to join this group to learn more and connect with your peers, please get in touch and we will share the details with you.



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Plans for the future

We are keen to continue to link together as delivery sites, as we look ahead to a potential randomised control trial with the Tizard centre. We will need a range of sites, and there is potential for Network Partners to be a part of this. It will also be really beneficial to maintain connections and networks across facilitators, so they can develop a community of practice and we can share learning and insight across locations.

EPAtS project (Early Positive Approaches to Support)

EPAtS is a Family Carer Support programme which focuses on early intervention and family support services, to give children the best start in life and support families from when their child is diagnosed with a learning disability. The EPAtS Parent Support Programme was developed by the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent by Dr Nick Gore and Dr Jill Bradshaw. The programme focuses on areas that families of children with a learning disability really need help with, such as communication, sleep, behavioural issues and personal well-being.

Together with Network Partners we have connected with groups who have been involved in delivering the EPAtS programme in the past, or would like to do so in future – sharing our learning and discussing ideas for future collaboration around family engagement.

Over the past year we have collaborated with Network Partners to provide shared training for new and existing EPAtS sites in order to train up parent and professional co-facilitators. This was the first time we have combined training with different Network Partners, and it was a tremendous success. It was a brilliant opportunity to learn from our peers about a range of experiences of project delivery.

Barnet Mencap, Carlisle Mencap and Leeds have been involved for a few years.

In 2020-21 Croydon Mencap joined the project.



£11,970

has been allocated to this project to cover the cost of new site training and refresher training for Network Partners to deliver this project.

A real highlight of this project over the last year has been sharing learning across sites; and having the opportunity to connect with parent and professional co-facilitators across locations – we hope this could be the start of a community of practice!

"The Early Positive Approaches to Support training was facilitated in a sensitive, clear and encouraging manner that created a safe and supportive learning environment. I think the pairing of trainers with one being a practitioner and one being a parent/carer will enable a well-balanced and empathetic place for parent/carers to get support and information at the start of their parenting journey for the child with a learning disability.

The positive approach encourages parents to see behaviour as communication and give strategies of finding out what is being communicated and in doing so finding strategies that will support their child. Each session flows into the next, covering issues that commonly come up such as sleep, communication and managing and understanding challenging behaviour. Importantly, each session also spends time thinking about the wellbeing of the caregiver. I'm so looking forward to working with parents/carers and being part of a team that is privileged to be in a position to make a really positive difference to the lives of parent/carers and their children.

- Croydon Mencap

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Network needs analysis and support

CASS BUSINESS SCHOOL
CITY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
EST 1894

Changing more than a name

This year we have been working with the Centre for Charity Effectiveness (CCE) at the Bayes Business School to start conversations about building resources for the year ahead.

With learnings from previous Beacon models and an improved awareness of our Network Partners governance, challenges and priorities, we wish to deliver a bespoke model of support with the network.

Earlier this year 21 Network Partners joined a webinar session on what good governance looks like.

Following these sessions, the CCE hosted two needs analysis workshops with 28 Network Partners across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. These sessions established what issues we may want to tackle by developing resources together, as well as discussing capacity building support for the future.

Now we have an improved awareness of governance and the challenges and priorities groups are facing, we will be working together with you to establish areas of support required. We want to ensure the positive impact of the network is maximized through the ways we work together.



Plans for the future

Planned sessions and key themes across 2021 – 2022 include:

- Local authority funding for day services
- Reopening of activities and services safely post coronavirus
- Co-production workshop and best practice sharing opportunity
- Volunteering workshops to include involving volunteers, recruitment and management
- Recruitment, renewal and succession planning
- Business development, service models and vision plan
- Case study and sharing stories workshop
- **And much more!**

In delivering our new Big Plan together, we will be working in different ways to support Network Partners. To achieve this, we will not always be the expert for our diverse network and our aim is to find solutions from within RMS and the wider network. We hope to collaborate and include Network Partners in delivery so that they can share their experience, guidance and best practice across the network for peer support and learning.



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Moving Forward – Bereavement pilot opportunity

The "Moving Forward" pilot was an opportunity to discuss a fundamental part of being a human being; bereavement and loss. This was achieved through conversations, workshops, listening, recognising the barriers that makes this a difficult subject to broach with people with a learning disability, and learning how to overcome common barriers.

Timeline of activity

Over summer 2020, we engaged in weekly calls with Network Partners to share information, updates and discuss important issues arising from the coronavirus pandemic. One of the areas that emerged from these conversations was around loss and bereavement.

In February 2021, a conversation was facilitated by Mencap, with technical support from Lead Inclusive Counselling, a specialist learning disability counselling organisation.

This conversation was attended by 24 individuals, representing 21 Network Partners. The discussion raised the following points:

- Best practice amongst the groups
- Case studies of local partnership working
- The need for training to underpin the support of people with a learning disability dealing with loss

As a result of these developments:

- A consultation via Teams was attended by 21 people, representing 12 Network Partners
- 2 bereavement and loss workshops were attended by 16 people in total, representing 13 Network Partners

A conservative estimate of the number of people with a learning disability who could have benefitted from these workshops was 348 (based on a follow up questionnaire sent out to attendees 6 weeks after they completed the workshops, and the number of people the respondent Network Partners support on a weekly basis).

Each workshop cost £350, meaning a total of £700 was allocated for the workshops with Lead counselling in March. A further 6 sessions were planned for 2021, meaning the total cost allocated to this project was £2,800.

Plans for the future

Further sessions were booked - two each in the months of April, May and June 2021. The June sessions were modified, and offered to previous attendees to reflect specific topics they wanted to explore further.

"I thought the training was absolutely excellent and would be most valuable for parents of people with learning disabilities to increase their understanding of what, for some, is a difficult subject. I'm sure it would increase their confidence, especially being with other parents. From the training it was clear that a lot of difficulties arose from parents' beliefs. Many thanks.

- Participant from Alnwick & District Mencap

"Just to say a HUGE thank you for organising the training with Selina (Lead Counselling) - it was brilliant. The problem is it's really left me wanting more! Especially regarding difference strategies and how to deal with different scenarios. So if there is the opportunity (and funding) to have another workshop with her, we would be extremely grateful.

- City of Chelmsford Mencap

NETWORK PARTNER ANNUAL REVIEW 2021 V5.indd 30-31 29/07/2021 14:13

Facebook community work

From April 2020, many Network Partner groups were coming to terms with brand new digital ways of working to ensure people with a learning disability were not left behind during the pandemic. One of these methods was the use of Facebook groups. During the start of the pandemic there was a significant appetite from the network to learn more about how to utilise Facebook groups as a way of keeping volunteers, members, staff and families connected.

In June 2020, we organised an exclusive webinar session with Facebook, who delivered information about how to build a community using Facebook and also went through a reminder of safety guidance for both group admins and group users. This was an excellent session which was supported with follow up resources and information from Facebook.

Over 60 people from across 21 Network Partner groups attended this session.

Following this session we worked with Facebook from December 2020 to March 2021 to learn more about how to build a Facebook community using Facebook groups. Across the pandemic many Network Partners drew to our attention that a Facebook group exclusively for Mencap Network Partners would be an ideal place for partners to connect, using an app that many people are already familiar with.



Late in January 2021, we met with eight Network Partners to begin thinking about a pilot project for how we could set up a community group via Facebook for Network Partners. This group of people decided the mission, vision and values for the Facebook community. This information was used to develop a community playbook so that everyone using the group has clear expectations for how they can get involved and engage with like-minded peers.

What is the Your Network Facebook group?

The Your Network Facebook group is a safe place for staff and volunteers of affiliated Network Partner groups/organisations. Here we share, learn, connect, engage, discuss and support each other. We connect to each other by sharing good practice, answering questions, supporting others in the group. We talk about what we have in common, what we need help with or advice on to progress our organisation services. We share knowledge, experience and practice.

Plans for the future

The eight Network Partners involved in the pilot and Mencap will be planning to onboard Network Partners across 2021-22 to access this exclusive Facebook group community.

A big thank you to the following groups for your involvement in this project:

- Bexley Mencap
- Carrickfergus Junior Gateway Club
- Colchester Gateway Club
- East Kent Mencap
- Jersey Mencap
- Kingston Mencap
- Leighton Buzzard Mencap
- Taunton Mencap



Ali

Jersey Mencap

Characteristics
We run projects for a wonderful group of around 120 young people and adults with a range of needs.

Why they joined the Your Network Facebook group. To share what works well, to be inspired and to get better opportunities for the people we support.

What benefits do you want to gain from being part of the group? Talking through familiar issues, sharing resources, new ideas, working together. Being motivated by successes elsewhere.

What is your biggest hope for your group/ organisation for 2021? That we can see more people in person; and increase the numbers of people being active, getting out and taking part in our new healthy lifestyle sessions.

Jackie

Carrickfergus Junior Gateway

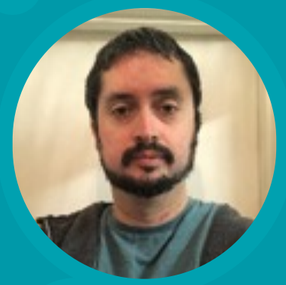


Characteristics
Young people aged 6-29.

Why they joined the Your Network Facebook group.
To share knowledge and connection with other groups.

What benefits do you want to gain from being part of the group?
To learn from each other.

What is your biggest hope for your group/ organisation for 2021?
We resume in person activities.



Dave

Taunton Mencap

Characteristics
Adults with a learning disability.

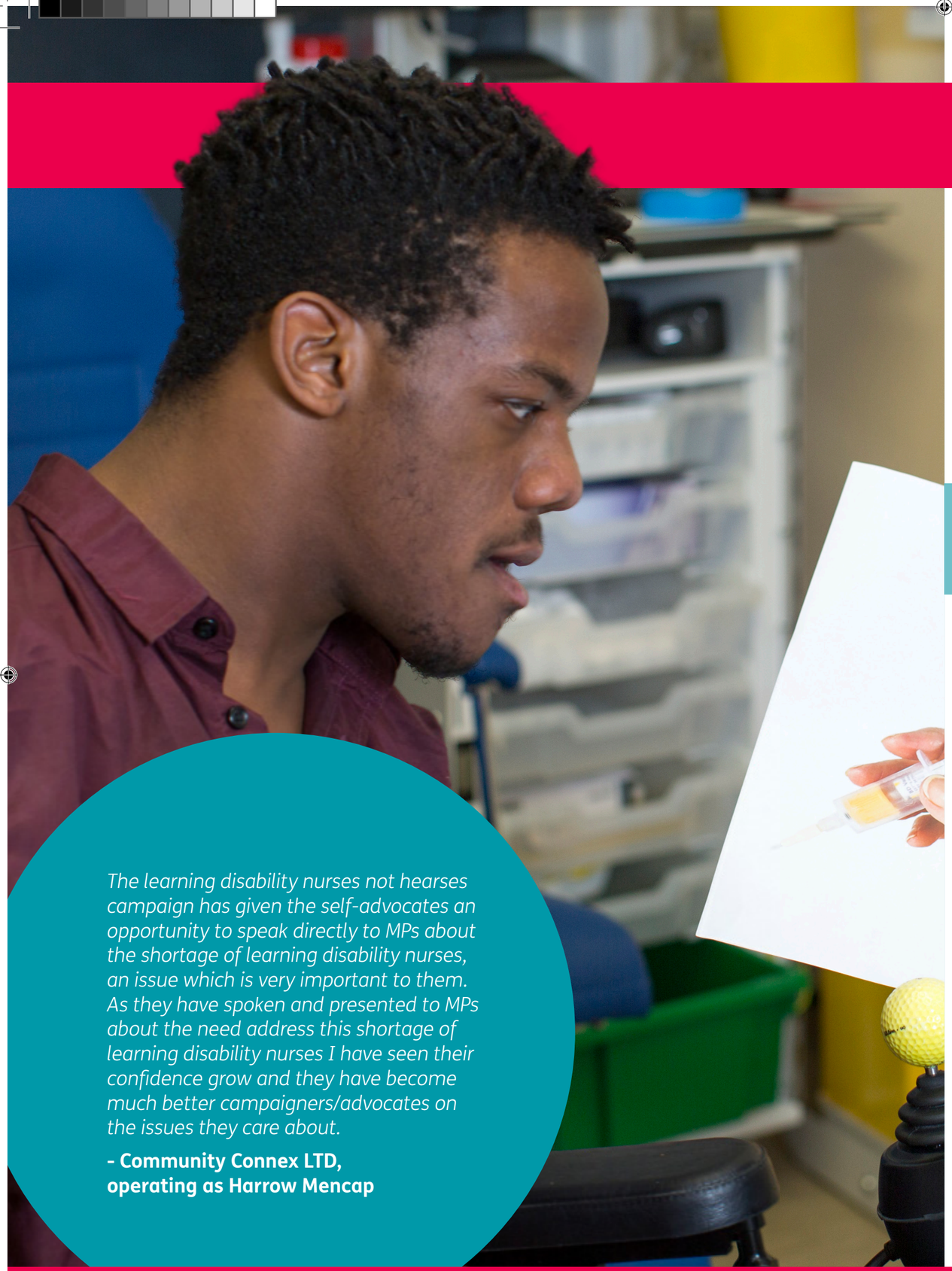
Why they joined the Your Network Facebook group. To share ideas for activities, share support and make new connections.

What benefits do you want to gain from being part of the group? The fact that there is strength in numbers and we will be able to share ideas for activities as well as information and advice.

What is your biggest hope for your group/ organisation for 2021? To carry out some of the plans we had prior to Covid-19, especially the return of Taunton Mencap's Got Talent after a decade.

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Working with Mencap Campaigns, Policy and Public affairs team



The learning disability nurses not hearses campaign has given the self-advocates an opportunity to speak directly to MPs about the shortage of learning disability nurses, an issue which is very important to them. As they have spoken and presented to MPs about the need address this shortage of learning disability nurses I have seen their confidence grow and they have become much better campaigners/advocates on the issues they care about.

- Community Connex LTD, operating as Harrow Mencap

16

Network Partner groups were involved in the Treat Me Well Campaign at Mencap

Better communication.
More time.
Clearer information.

Simple changes in hospital care can make a big difference.

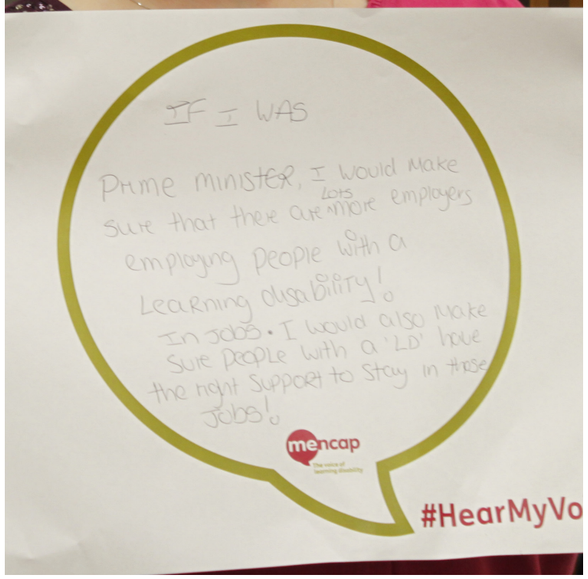
But we know the treatment people with a learning disability get in hospital is still not good enough in many parts of the country. This has to change. 1,200 people with a learning disability die avoidably every year.

Our campaign, Treat Me Well, calls on NHS staff to make reasonable adjustments for people with a learning disability which can help to save lives.

Across the year, internal teams at Mencap and Network Partners have collaborated to support each other's campaigns and share information and resources.

Community Connex LTD, operating as Harrow Mencap, launched a fantastic campaign called "Nurses not hearses". After their successful campaign to lobby North West London Healthcare Trust to recruit another learning disability nurse (which involved a petition signed by over 600 people and gaining support from their local MP), they used this campaign as a springboard to try and raise awareness of the shortage of learning disability nurses across the UK.





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September 2020

In September 2020, a number of people with a learning disability from Network Partners gave evidence to the House of Lords coronavirus committee on their experiences of the pandemic and hopes for the future. This was the first session of its kind.

October 2020

In October 2020, a number of people with a learning disability from Network Partners took part in a focus group with the Minister for Disabled People to help shape the Government's upcoming Disability Benefits Green Paper (consultation) and National Disability Strategy.

January 2021

In January and February 2021, Mencap in partnership with East Kent Mencap and Midland Mencap facilitated round table conversations to gather insights from groups of people with a disability and learning disability, which fed into the National Strategy for Disability.

June 2021

In June 2021, Community Connex LTD, operating as Harrow Mencap, were involved in the panel for the All Party Parliamentary Group's meeting on coronavirus, which focused on the experiences of people with a learning disability during the pandemic and the key themes that need to be addressed in the upcoming inquiry. Other Network Partners will be attending the meeting and these meetings are open to everyone.

Across the YEAR

During the pandemic, the policy team at Mencap joined regular conference calls with Network Partners to hear about concerns arising from the Network that could be influenced at a national level. The team took away many concerns and followed these up with Network Partners, including cuts to day opportunities, track and trace accessibility, coronavirus testing for the people we support, staff and volunteers, direct payments issues, blanket Do Not Attempt Resuscitation (DNARs) and much more. It has been great to work as a network of like-minded groups and organisation across the year to influence real change for the people we support.

Across the YEAR

Across 2020-21, Mencap Mon, Ceredigion Mencap and Chepstow Mencap have all worked closely with Mencap Cymru by sharing stories at fortnightly Welsh government meetings. Chepstow Mencap also worked with Mencap Cymru on day service provision. Additionaly, Ceredigion Mencap and Mencap Mon sit on the Mencap parent/carers coronavirus group. Mencap Cymru really valued the sharing of stories and experiences about the pandemic and have used them to show Welsh ministers the reality of how the pandemic has impacted the lives of people with a learning disability and their family carers in Wales.

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Remote Engagement

From April 2020 to March 2021, there has been a real increase in engagement across Network Partner groups. The year brought about brand new ways of working and it has been an incredible learning experience for the network.



From conference calls, to wellbeing calls, to the launch of our new app for senior leaders and much more, we are all now very familiar with remote ways of working. Here's a flavour of the remote engagement over the past year.



Conference calls

A minimum of 50 conference calls were set up last year to focus on a wide range of topics including:

- Advice and information
- Approaches to working in the local community
- Befriending
- Bereavement
- Covid-19 response calls
- Family support
- Our New Big Plan
- Sleep-ins update
- **And much more!**

"I would like to say a big thank you to everyone. The information, guidance and support from RMS and network partners have been invaluable. In times like this, it is a great comfort to know we can all pull together, and I will definitely be using Your Network a lot more.

- Greenwich Mencap

Coronavirus conference calls with Mencap Executive and wider Network

From April to August 2020, weekly conference calls were initiated for Network Partners to engage with one another, as well as having an opportunity to hear from and ask questions of the Mencap executive team. There were two calls set up per week - one for groups with a turnover less than £100K, and the other for groups with a turnover over £100K.

These sessions were an opportunity to share, learn and ask questions about the ever-changing coronavirus pandemic and how this was impacting the people we support. There was a really board range of topics covered as part of these conversations which included, for example:

- The closure of activities and services
- Shielding of vulnerable people
- Accessibility and practicalities of coronavirus testing
- Transport
- Ideas for keeping people connected
- Cuts in funding
- Direct payments for people we support
- Bereavement across groups and organisation
- Financial hardship
- Inspiring stories
- Track and trace accessibility
- Helpline support
- Befriending and volunteers
- Blanket Do Not Attempt Resuscitation letters
- **And much more!**

12
weekly calls were held with groups with a turnover less than £100K

20
weekly calls were held with groups with a turnover more than £100K

"Thank you all for your support. These meetings are really useful, and it is great to hear about the fantastic ways each group is supporting members. I appreciate we have a different set of issues as we are funded independently, so having input from other Network Partners' working at the front end of coronavirus is hugely beneficial as we look to see what changes we need to make to our operational model.

- Bishop's Stortford Mencap

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Remote Engagement

Regular coronavirus updates and communications

In response to the vast amounts of information being shared and the evolving changes across the pandemic, regular updates and communications specifically relating to the pandemic were set up.

Across the year, 66 coronavirus update emails were shared with partners which included:

- The latest government updates
- Resources
- Template risk assessments and guidance
- Activity ideas for members
- Funding opportunities
- Collaborative opportunities to work with organisations at a national level
- Media opportunities
- Inspirational stories from Network Partners
- **And more!**

"I am receiving your daily updates which are very informative, and I am sharing some of the information with other organisations in our area who are supporting people with a learning disability.

- Dacorum Mencap

"Just to say I really value the COVID updates, I am very pleased to receive them.

- Kennet Gateway Club

"Your daily updates are so useful. We have distributed activity packs/gift packages to the children who missed out on our Noah's Ark play scheme this Easter and the feedback was very positive.

- Hertsmere and District Mencap

We also set up a specific area on the Your Network Online platform to host all of the content that we shared in these updates in one place. The page breaks down all the resources we have available as a network to support groups across the pandemic. A flavour of some of the topics that you can expect to see on the coronavirus page on Your Network Online includes:

- Information for family and friends
- Easy read material about the virus, testing and vaccines
- Response funding
- Outbreak management plans
- Working from home
- Supporting volunteers
- Mental Capacity (2005) and Best Interests
- Personal protective equipment and control measures
- Reintroducing activities
- Vaccine information
- Help and support

Engage4 app

Over the past year, we have listened to feedback from Network Partners about the real need for a place where senior leaders across the Mencap Network can engage with each other and with RMS executive leaders.

We have responded to this by working with an external organisation called Vidatec who have developed an easy to use mobile app.

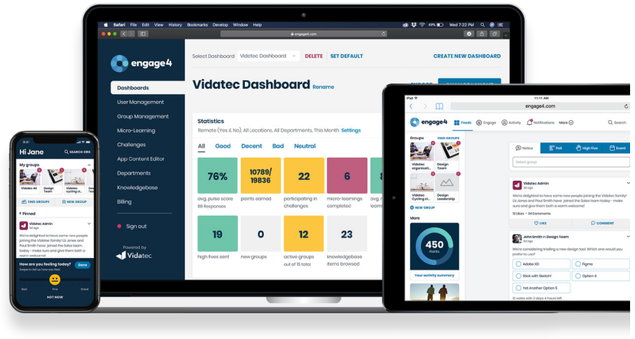
The app is a place where you can discuss things that are important to you and your organisation. The Engage 4 app provides a super easy collaborative platform, allowing everyone to get involved in sharing information and setting up groups that are of common interest.

The app also provides a toolset to help improve your wellbeing with exclusive weekly content.

We began using the app in August 2020 and were joined by 48 Network Partners who attended a webinar with Vidatec to find out more about how to use the app.

Since then, a number of groups have been set up where you can enjoy engaging with senior leaders across the Mencap Network. See below for an idea about groups that have already been set up that you can join:

- Advice and information
- Befriending
- Campaigning
- Day services
- Funding opportunities
- Getting digital
- Online activity ideas
- RMS new strategy
- Reopening gateway clubs
- Training and development



"Thank you for organising the webinar today. It was very informative. I have the app loaded on my phone, and have this afternoon been looking around, plus joining groups while still fresh in my mind.

- South Oxfordshire Mencap

Other remote engagement

Throughout the year, other important collaboration has taken place across the Network. This is in the form of the Me20 groups, Northern Lights group and Northwest London Consortium. These groups meet approximately four times a year and are made up of Network Partners who are the largest groups in the network or geographically.

The groups meet to share information and updates from their respective groups and discuss issues that they can work together on to support each other, as well as areas where they can influence change as a group of like-minded organisations. There has been a shift to online meetings for these groups over the last year, but all in all this has worked well and now more than ever it is great to have input from others across the network to learn from and support each other as peers.

If you are interested in finding out more about the groups mentioned above or would like to set up a similar group in your area or based on specific interests, we are happy to support with this - **please get in touch.**

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Membership offers



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Membership offers

As part of your membership, you have access to a range of exclusive discounts and offers. You can view the full portfolio of offers on the Discounts and Offers page of Your Network Online.

Below is a flavour of some of the offers that have been used by Network Partners across the year.

Recruitment advertising for staff and volunteers

Promote your job and volunteer opportunities on our Mencap recruitment website for free!



The Your Network Team made it straight forward to access the offer of providing recruitment advertising on the Mencap platform for the Strule Buzz Group. They replied quickly to any queries and a request to extend our closing deadline. We managed to find a promising volunteer for our group with suitable skills, as a result of using Mencap's own recruitment website as a large and reputable organisation to publicise our volunteer vacancy, which might otherwise have received limited attention due to us being a small club.

- Mencap Strule Buzz Group

Disclosure & Barring Service

Access Northern Ireland

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)/ Access NI

You can have peace of mind that your staff and volunteers are safe and suitable to work with adults and children with a learning disability without paying an administration fee.

I would like to say how much of a benefit it was to our group to access the Disclosure and Barring Service. As we are a whole new group of trustees and all of us eight in total needed a DBS check, this would have cost the group quite a lot of money. But having membership with Mencap entitled us to free volunteer checks without paying an administration fee, therefore saving our group from our using very limited funds. We would like to say how grateful we are.

- Rhyl and District Gateway Club

Photo stock

You can access Mencap's Our Stories image stock and download Mencap photos for your communications for free. You will be able to access a variety of images and request their download for communications proposes. You will be assigned your own unique login and password to access Our Stories image stock which you can access throughout the year!

Having access to photo stock images is a really useful resource. Sometimes we need imagery, but it can be difficult to get photo permission with short timescales. It's great to be able to use this offer to access images as an when we need – it's a great resource.

- New Forest Mencap

Sodexo employee/ volunteer benefits

sodexo QUALITY OF LIFE SERVICES

Sodexo are the UK's leading experts in employee and consumer engagement. We have been working with Sodexo to develop an exclusive offer for all Network Partners no matter how big or small your group/ organisation is. Sodexo have agreed to an exclusive discount for Mencap Network Partners should you wish to access this offer.

First of all, you will have your own group/ organisation online platform where your employees and staff can access any of the benefits at any time.

Secondly there is a wide range of benefits available; below are examples of the types of benefits that your employees/ volunteers could access as part of this offer:

- **Discounts** at 130,000 retail and entertainment locations
- **eVouchers** – instant savings up to 20%
- **Reloadable Cards** – top up and make savings up to 20%
- **Vouchers** – save up to 20%
- **Cinema** – save up to 40%
- **Health care** cash plans
- **Spree Cashback Card** – enjoy up to 15% cashback
- **Holidays** – save up to 10% with Getaway: trade price across over 200 tour operators (concierge service, ATOL protected, ABTA and IATA – bonded).

Mencap Ask HR

Mencap Ask HR service can provide up to 20 minutes per case (limited to 2 cases per month) of free advice and support to Network Partners (up to but excluding litigation whereupon separate legal advice is recommended), on an individual agreement basis.

Examples of areas where the service can support include how to deal with extended sickness leave, guidance for formal meetings and appeal processes, and how to resolve difficulties relating to conflict of interests.

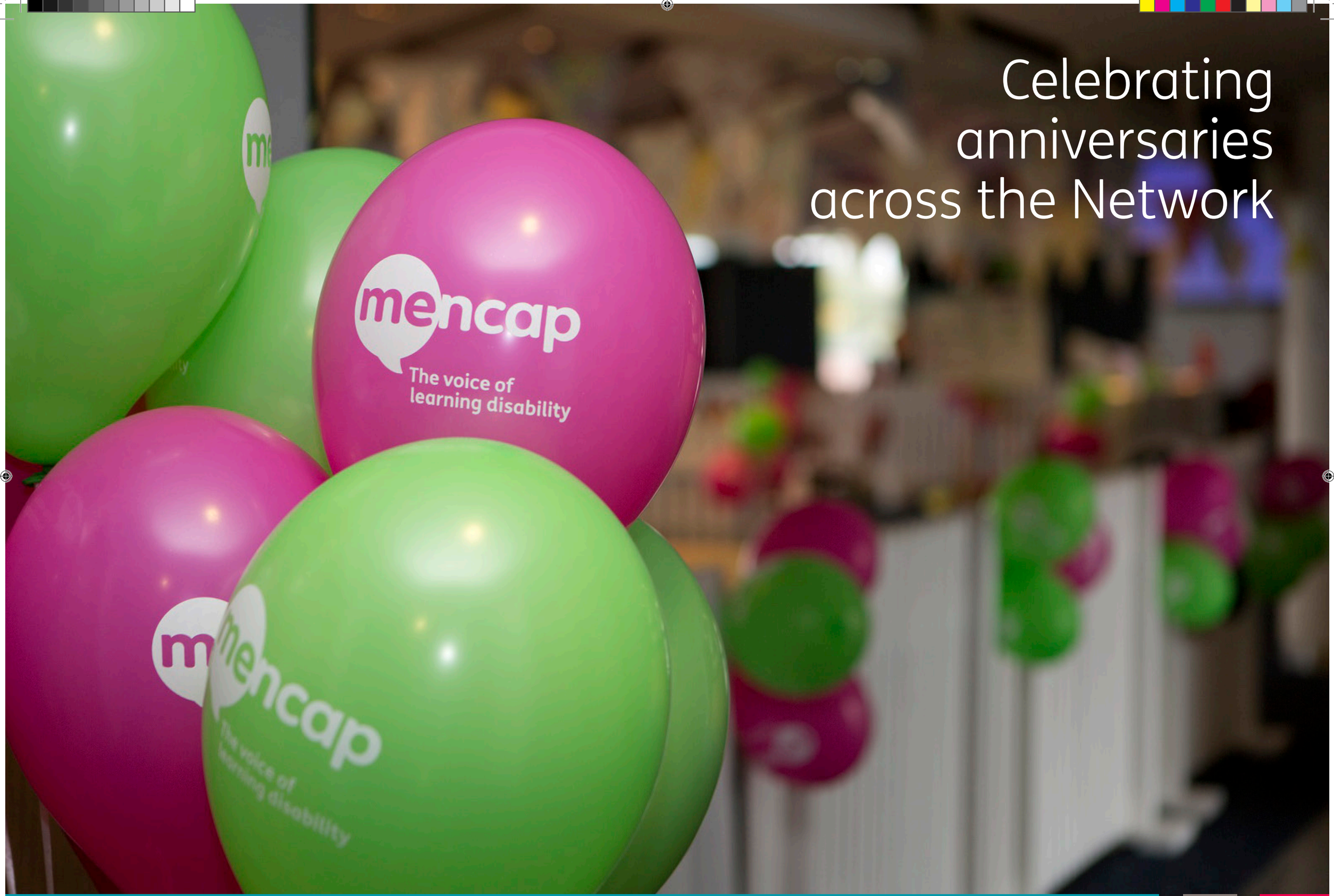
Included in this offer is a review service, which can review policies, staff handbooks, draft contracts of employment and other associated tools (again on an individual agreement basis which is dependent upon the amount of hours involved).

When we were considering an organisational restructure, it was really helpful to speak to someone on the phone who was honest and insightful. We received support and advice around ensuring the process was fair and open and the Mencap HR team were a sounding board for us to share our ideas and concerns. The team also shared examples and model templates which have been really useful. We have since come through the other side of a really successful restructure and continue to go from strength to strength! It's remarkable to receive such excellent advice for free as part of our membership!

– Lewisham Mencap

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Celebrating anniversaries across the Network



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October 2021 marks the 75th anniversary of Royal Mencap Society! This is an opportunity to raise awareness across media outlets about learning disability and our new Big Plan. Many Network Partners also have milestone anniversaries across 2021.

We'd like to wish a very happy anniversary to all the groups who are part of the Your Network and the Mencap family!

75 years:

Community Connex Ltd operating as Harrow Mencap - England

Mencap in Kirklees - England

Royal Mencap Society - National (UK)

Westmorland Mencap Society - England

70 years:

Bromley Mencap - England

City of Chelmsford Mencap - England

Greenwich Mencap - England

Hastings & Bexhill Mencap - England

Sheffield Mencap & Gateway - England

Warrington Mencap - England

Watford & District Mencap Society - England

60 years:

Huntingdon Mencap Society Ltd - England

Ipswich Mencap - England

Kingston Mencap - England

Llanelli Mencap Gateway Limited - Wales

Terence O'Grady Social Club - England

Jersey Mencap - Jersey

55 years:

Ards Local Society - Northern Ireland

Bangor Gateway Club - Northern Ireland

Bishop's Stortford Mencap - England

Chilterns (Amersham) Gateway Club - England

Denbigh & Ruthin Mencap - Wales

High Wycombe Gateway Club - England

Isle of Wight Mencap - England

Lowestoft & District Mencap - England

Mid Sussex Mencap - England

Neasden Gateway Club- England

Newton Gateway Club - England

Penrose Club - England

South Leicestershire Gateway Club - England

Stockport Gateway Club - England

Telford & District Mencap - England

Way Ahead Support Services -England

45 years:

Cookstown Gateway Club - Northern Ireland

Cowbridge (Gateway) Monday Club - Wales

Haswell & District Mencap - England

Horizon Club Exeter - England

Magherafelt & District Gateway Club - Northern Ireland

Mencap Mon - Wales

Smiley Gateway Club - England

40 years:

Chippenham Gateway Club - England

Leek Gateway Club- England

Witney & District Mencap - England

Yatton House Society - England

35 years:

4Eden - England

Bradford Disability Sport and Leisure - England

Market Drayton Mencap - England

Penarth Gateway Club - Wales

30 years:

Maidstone Mencap Charitable Trust Ltd - England

25 years:

Gateway Wheelers - England

Orwell Mencap - England

20 years:

Basingstoke Gateway Award Project - England

If you are celebrating an anniversary this year and would like to access some resources to support with this, please get in touch and we are happy to share anything we have. We are also happy to put you in touch with other Network Partner groups who may be sharing a similar anniversary to connect and learn more about each other's plans for a celebration event.

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Queen's Hononurs



We are delighted to share and congratulate five Network Partners who have been recognised in the Queen's Honours list. Thank you for your incredible contribution to the learning disability community.

Anne Trevett
South Wilts Mencap

British Empire Medal for services to the community in Salisbury, England, during the coronavirus pandemic

Joy Scott
Northampton Mencap

Prestigious recognition for services to people with special needs and disabilities in Northampton, England for over 40 years

Mark Jones
Jersey Mencap Supporter

British Empire Medal for services to Jersey's learning disability community

Mr Trevor Monteith
Carrickfergus Senior Gateway

Awarded an MBE for his services to people with a learning disability in Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland for over 40 years

Stephen Lenaghan
Lisburn Senior Gateway

Recognition for services to adults with learning disabilities and to tourism in Northern Ireland

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Looking forward to the future



NETWORK PARTNER ANNUAL REVIEW 2021 V5.indd 52-53 29/07/2021 14:13

We have really enjoyed engaging with partners across the network over the last year, and would love to continue developing our ways of working with you as we look to the future in a changing landscape for the work you do in your local communities.

If you'd like to find out more about Our Big Plan, please get in touch and we are happy to share these details with you.

In the meantime, feel free to check out our brand new values below.

We are Passionate about making the world a better place

We are Inclusive of everyone

We are Brave we challenge and try new things

We are Positive in our work and with each other

We are Kind to everyone



The terms of membership we sign up to as a network of organisations underpins the shared vision and values in the Big Plan. At Mencap, we want the UK to be the best place in the world for people with a learning disability to live healthy and happy lives.

We aspire to work with communities in Northern Ireland, Wales, England and the Channel Islands, supporting them to build capability to find local solutions. With a united voice we have a more positive impact, and we are open to new ways of working with our valued Network Partners.

Your Network is constantly evolving, and we look forward to a bright future with you, engaging to share best practice and working together on developing new opportunities to react to issues faced in our communities.

We would love to hear from you about your thoughts on our new Big Plan and how we can activate change for the future. Please contact us at **yournetwork@mencap.org.uk** if you have any feedback on the Big Plan or ideas for ways of working together to reach our vision together.

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Top tips to get the most out of your membership



NETWORK PARTNER ANNUAL REVIEW 2021 V5.indd 56-57 29/07/2021 14:14



If you don't already know him, **David Fiddament** is the Network Programme Manager.

Here are David's top tips on how you can make the most of your membership and work collaboratively with Your Network to transform the lives of people with a learning disability.

Ensure your communication preferences are up to date

Contact **yournetwork@mencap.org.uk** to check if you have opted in to receive our emails!

I would like to take this opportunity to say we find the Mencap updates really useful.

- Tower project

Encourage your staff and volunteers to sign up to our communications

Ask them to register to receive our emails and newsletters by using the following link: **http://bit.ly/signuptoYNcommunications**

Thank for all the updates and info coming from the network, it's been brilliant.

- Keysham Mencap

Join or host a conference call

Discuss a topic, share ideas or good practice with liked mind organisations around you or all over around the UK!

The Covid-19 conference calls are really useful – we feel much more connected to RMS and the Network and hope to continue with being connected after the coronavirus pandemic. Thank you for giving us all the opportunity to join in.

- Leighton Buzzard Mencap

Access resources on Your Network Online

Coronavirus resources, templates and much more from Royal Mencap Society and Network Partners. Inspire others and share your organisational documents there too!

I just wanted to say that I have been onto the resources area and found the volunteer resources really helpful. I was looking to create an induction pack for our volunteers and was able to pull off a template resource and tweak which saved me a lot of time. Thanks!

- Bexley Mencap

Join or start a discussion thread, or share your events, questions, good news on the Your Network Online Forum (or on the Engage4 app for senior leaders)!

Ask about ways of working, tips, recommendations, support or advice - no one is better equipped than people from organisations like yours to help. Share stories, photos and celebrate your achievements - we love to share your successes!

I was put in touch with the strategy, research and impact team at Mencap. They kindly sent me some extremely helpful data from PANSI and NHS Digital to demonstrate the likely demand for services in our area – just what I was looking for.

- Bishop's Stortford Mencap

Make use of offers and discounts.

Discover all offers and discounts available as part of your membership benefits by accessing Your Network Online! Printers, free photo stock, discounted consultant rates, RMS' team's guidance, DBS check and Access NI with discounted rates and **much more!**

Collaborate with other Network Partners!

Apply for joint funding to deliver a project or run a local event, share resources/ ideas and connect. Use your Network Online or contact the Network Office to find who is close by and get in touch.

One of our members was recently on Mencap TV and she loved it. I would like to share this quote from her family with you.

Amazingly even during the Covid-19 lockdown period, she was able to show everyone a piece of music through social media! This is truly inspiring, not only for her, but for our family and our friends. We feel encouraged to move forward.

– Bishop's Stortford Mencap



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Good news stories

2020–21 has been a difficult time for many groups, and we have all experienced this together. With that said, there have been lots of excellent examples across the network that have inspired others to rethink about their activity delivery. These innovative new ways of operating have ensured that people with a learning disability can remain connected in some way, shape or form with the people that are important to them, through face to face and online activities.

There are too many examples to share in this document of all the excellent work that has taken place over the last year, but we want to share some highlights of some great work that took place across the pandemic.

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A huge shout out to Midland Mencap who provided free lunch for children in need during October 2020 half term. Dave Rodgers, CEO, says “We know there are over 10,000 children in that part of Birmingham who would ordinarily be able to get a school meal and suddenly couldn’t anymore. The council stepped in brilliantly and we are just filling the gaps because there are lots and lots of other children right on the margins of that offer”. This is an incredible act of kindness and it’s been great to see coverage of this across the BBC. **Keep up the great and inspiring work!**

Michael Beynon from Amman Valley Mencap has become the first person with Down’s syndrome in Wales to complete the Virgin Money London Marathon! 2020 saw runners take part from across the country, with only elite athletes allowed to complete the traditional route in London due to the pandemic. Michael, who is also visually impaired, completed the 26.2 mile journey despite being told he would need a wheelchair for most of his adult life. The keen runner took on the challenge which has been a dream of his for years. Michael raised more than £3,000, which he hopes will help other people with learning disabilities achieve their dreams. Sharing his achievement on social media, the 25-year-old said: “I finished the London Marathon through rain, strong wind and lots of mud. Very emotional.” **Congratulations Michael!**

Croydon Mencap created a fantastic video to highlight what their members have been up to during the Lockdown of their day service. They named it “Lockdown @Leslie Park”! There video is bound to put a smile on anyone’s face! **We really enjoyed watching and sharing it!**

The Saturday Club Omagh created an incredible video which included members of the club with shout out birthday news and other highlights from group’s members. It was like a BBC news production; **excellent work!**

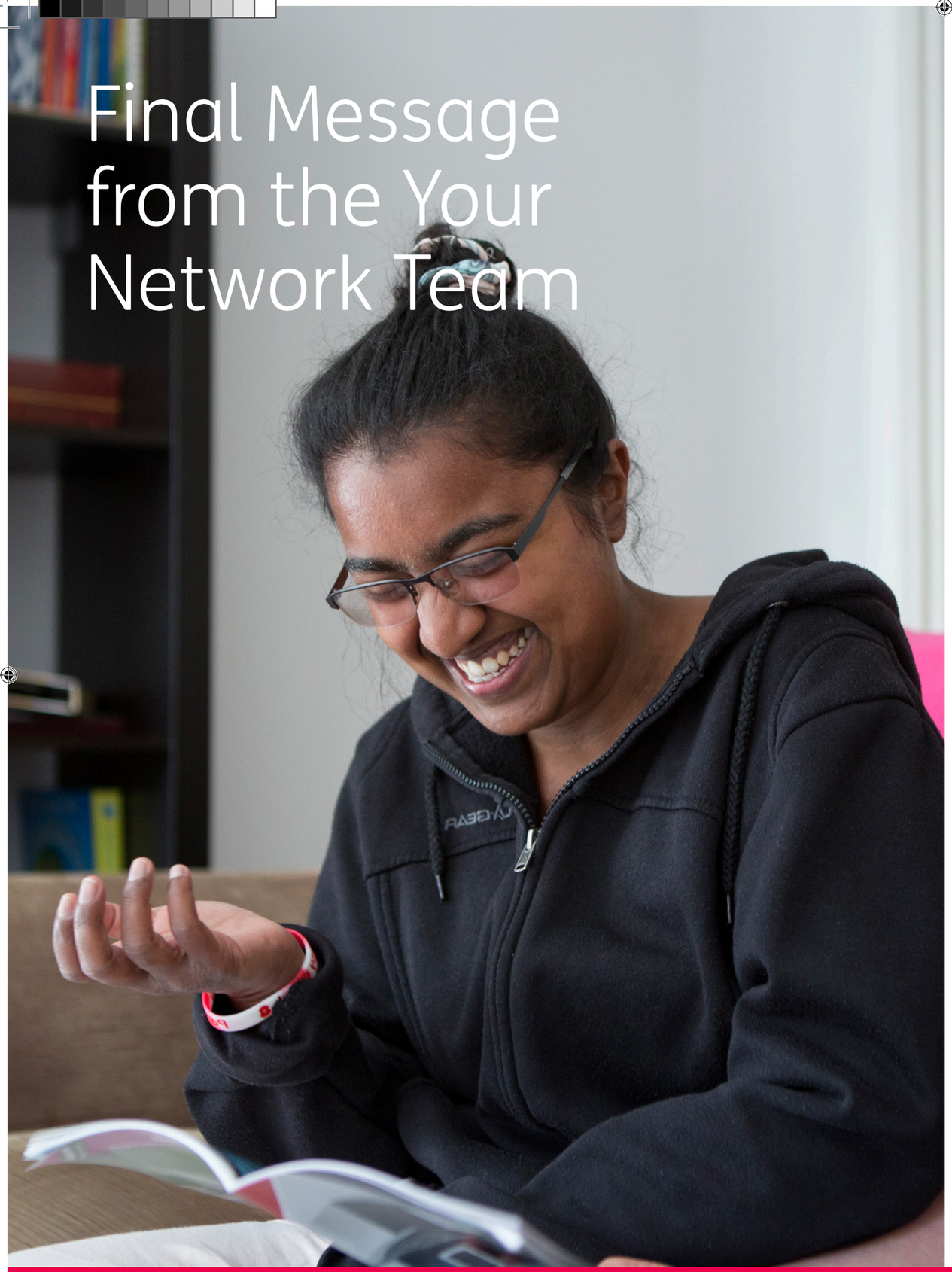
Several partners across the Mencap Network have made us aware of a wonderful activity which you and your members can enjoy. Have you heard of geocaching? It’s the world’s largest treasure hunt and has been enjoyed by many people with a learning disability during coronavirus.

Bath Mencap ran a virtual uproar event, bringing the dancefloor to the living rooms of people with a learning disability. It was an amazing opportunity for adults with a learning disability, parents, carers and families to cut loose and dance to their favourite festivals and party classics!

Jersey Mencap volunteered at vaccination clinics to help with the meet and greet of people attending. The room was set up in a familiar building that many knew, with easy parking and good access. The building had a sensory room that some folks could choose to use for the jab or after. The Jersey Mencap team sat with people to make them feel at ease and handed out drinks and chocolate as part of the 15 min wait that people who received the vaccine had to complete before leaving. All the staff were familiar to the local people with a learning disability which was really reassuring for them. It was incredibly person centred to put people at ease. In addition, the nurses giving the vaccinations were from the local learning disability health team.

Chepstow Mencap have received lots of news coverage in relation to their fantastic ‘booster bus’ support visits during coronavirus, as well as their activity with their members for VE day. The booster bus initiative aimed to boost morale by driving round to visit members outside their homes while they were shielding. People from the group often waited by the window to greet the bus and see their regular staff and volunteers, who shared activity packs and games across the pandemic. **It’s been really good for staff and volunteers as well!**

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Final Message from the Your Network Team

The Your Network Team has been set up to support all Network Partners across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. We understand that different Network Partners have different requirements and rather than a one-size fits all approach, we can work with you to provide the type of support that you need.

The Your Network team can help with:

- Providing support relating to your group/ organisation's affiliation to Your Network
- Providing support to access exclusive offers, opportunities and events
- Creating your user account on Your Network Online exclusive platform for you and your colleagues
- Creating an account on the Engage4 app for senior leaders
- Signposting to other areas of support internally at Royal Mencap Society, across the network or externally
- Signing you up to newsletters and regular updates from Your Network
- Providing support with complaints
- Sharing available templates and resources
- Support to engage with partners across the network

We are available Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm to answer your questions and provide support. Please feel free to get in touch via phone and on **01733 873 712** or email us at **yournetwork@mencap.org.uk**

We have been grateful to Royal Mencap and the Your Network Team for their continuing support, especially through the Covid-19 epidemic, and we are also greatly encouraged by the way Edel Harris is aiming to take Royal Mencap forward.

– East Surrey Mencap

We look forward to working with you across 2021-22. **Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.**

Though we are a small and long established Gateway Club, it is reassuring to know that we are able to call upon the experience and expertise of Mencap and the network at short notice for advice on a vast range of issues, not least the coronavirus pandemic we are living through now. Thank you.

- Northwich Gateway Club

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