

ROYAL MENCAP SOCIETY

# Fundraising Report

APRIL 2024 to MARCH 2025





# Thank you!

This is how we spent the money you kindly donated to help people with a learning disability live happy and healthy lives.

None of this work would be possible without your generous support.

## Contents

- 04 This is Mencap
- 08 Fundraising
- 14 Community & Events
- 24 Empowering families
- 30 Information and advice
- 36 Society
- 54 How we work

# THIS IS MENCAP

**We want everyone with a learning disability to get the best chance in life.**

We're here to make sure that the rights and needs of people with a learning disability are fully recognised throughout society. We will continue to work tirelessly until public services are fair and inclusive, and until people with a learning disability are afforded the choice and freedoms they deserve without being held back by outdated attitudes.

We use our wide-reaching connections to hear directly from people with a learning disability and their communities so that we can help create change where it's needed. We spread our message far and wide and will not stop until we have eradicated inequalities.

## WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

- **We work directly with individuals** providing support, information and guidance to people in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.
- **We work to make communities more inclusive** supporting people with a learning disability to make the change.
- **We work to change society** campaigning alongside people with a learning.



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## What is a learning disability

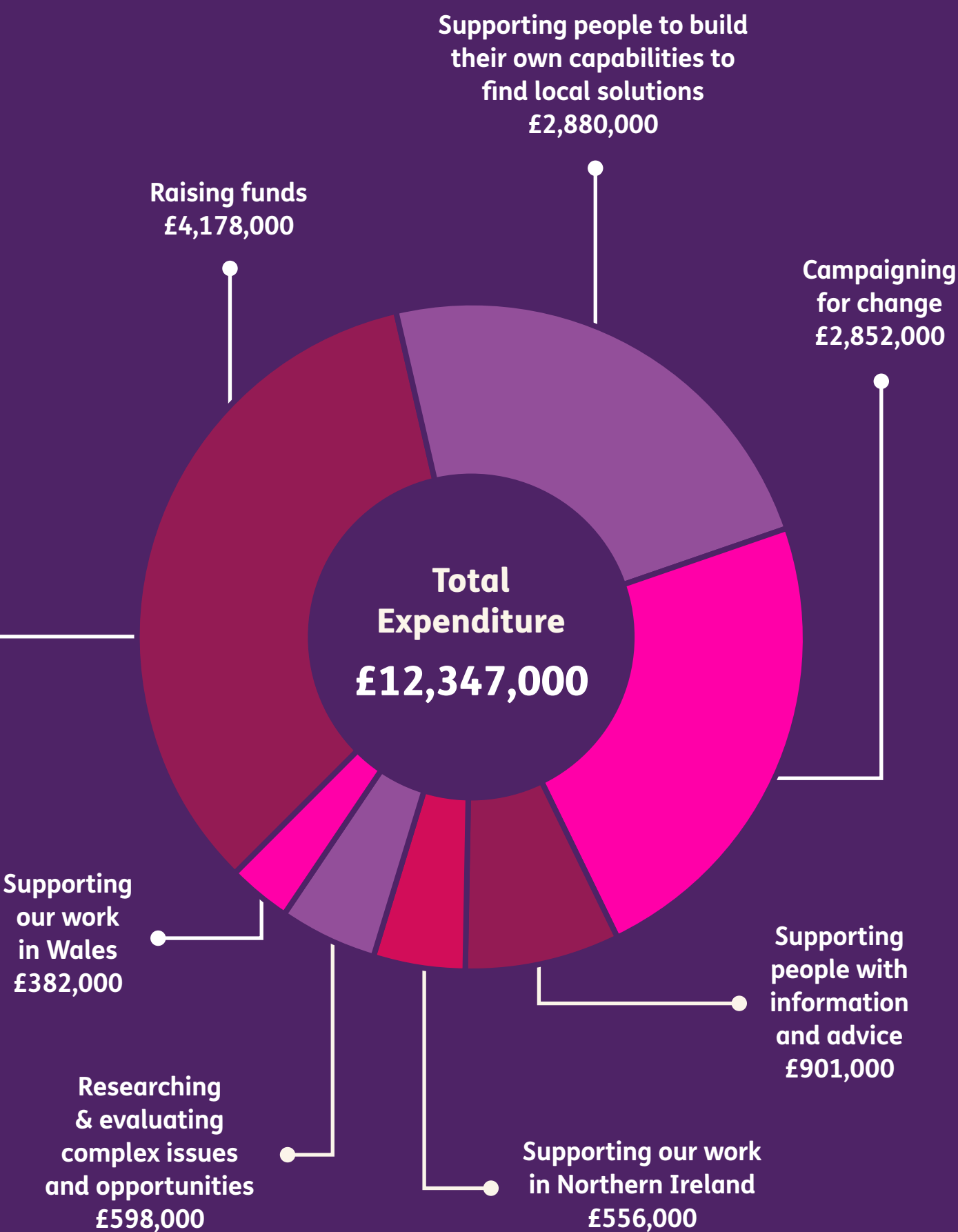
A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability, usually identified soon after birth or in the early years, and which lasts a person's whole life. People with a learning disability are likely to take longer to learn and need support to develop new skills, understand information or interact with other people.

Many people with a learning disability, such as people with Down Syndrome, may have difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money. Other people with a learning disability need to be fully supported in all areas of their life, such as with personal care, accessing the community and staying safe.

Although a learning disability is permanent, many people can develop new skills throughout their lives. And, of course, societies and communities can change to be more inclusive. With the right support and an inclusive community, people with a learning disability can thrive.

# Income generation and fundraising activities

We're incredibly grateful for every single donation we received this year. The generosity of our supporters enables us to deliver our essential support to the 1.5 million people with a learning disability across the UK. Our gross fundraising income in 2024/25 was £18,784,000. This is an increase of 66% from the year before. This growth was mainly a result of significant one-off donations. This year, people with a learning disability and the charity sector have faced unprecedented challenges, and so these funds are needed more now than ever before.



## Our winning partnership with Omaze raises £3.9m



**In August 2024, Mencap was incredibly proud to be announced as the charity partner for Omaze's Yorkshire House Draw.**

Omaze is an entertainment company with a social purpose. Through the Omaze Million Pound House Draw, Omaze offers people the chance to win life-changing prizes, while supporting good causes.

The public had the chance to win a stunning Georgian mansion, valued at over £2.5 million. In just six weeks, our partnership raised an incredible £3.9 million and boosted vital awareness of people with a learning disability, helping to challenge misconceptions and reduce the stigma they face.

Mencap supporter, actor and Dr Who star Jodie Whittaker, was the face of our partnership alongside many people with a learning disability and our Mencap Myth Busters. The total raised was announced in a fantastic reveal video in Yorkshire featuring people with a learning disability.

The whole organisation joined together to raise as much money and awareness of people with a learning disability and Mencap's work. All teams came together with real energy and commitment – we engaged our corporate partners, major donors, and regular

supporters, ensuring they had every opportunity to get involved. Across our media outreach, website, social channels and email communications, we made the most of every platform to highlight the incredible impact the prize draw could have. With the support of our ambassadors and community, we made this a moment to be proud of — one that brought people together and helped raise vital funds for people with a learning disability.

The transformational funds raised will be invested into programmes and campaigns in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to reduce the unacceptable health inequalities that people with a learning disability face. They will help us to save lives now and in the future.

“

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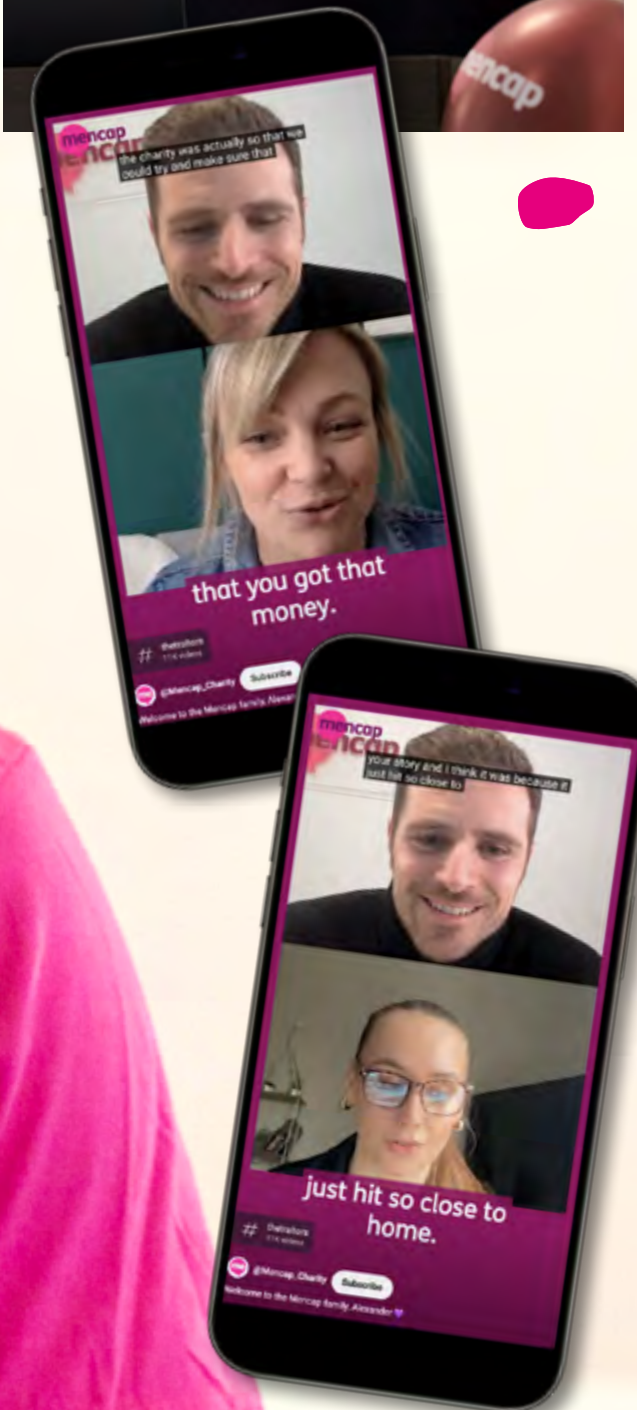
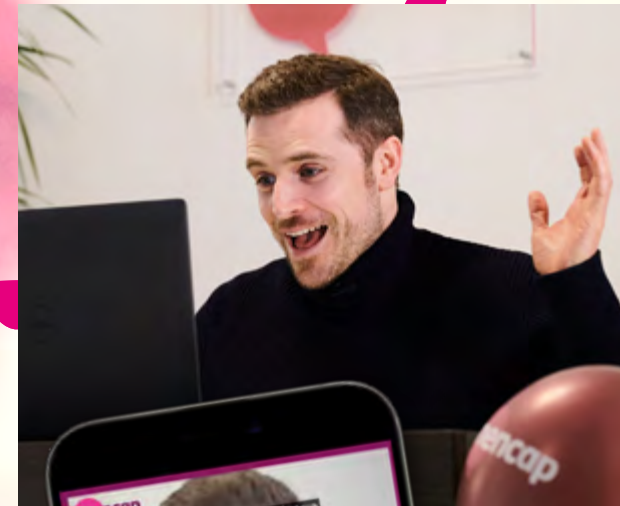
### REVEAL VIDEO

Mencap supporter, actor and Dr Who star Jodie Whittaker, was the face of our partnership alongside many people with a learning disability and our Mencap Myth Busters.

The total raised was announced in a [fantastic reveal video](#) in Yorkshire featuring people with a learning disability.



[Click here to watch](#)



## Recruiting a faithful on Traitors

In January 2025, Alexander appeared on hit BBC1 series *The Traitors*. During the show he spoke fondly about his late brother, who had a learning disability, and of their time spent at a Mencap summer camp. Alexander mentioned that he wanted to donate some of his prize money to support Mencap if he won.

This was picked up by *Traitors* fans on social media, and we created content and paid ads, working with influencers and mainstream media to maximise coverage and publicity. It inspired an overwhelming wave of donations and support for Mencap which raised an incredible £96,556 from a total of 5,510 cash donors and 196 regular givers.

Some of these invaluable funds will be invested into providing respite activities just like the one Alexander's brother enjoyed so much.

Following his appearance, we were delighted to announce Alexander as a new Mencap high-profile supporter with content across mainstream and social media. Watch this video of him thanking some of the people who donated.

**Click here to watch**

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/DygObLuU2Mk>

Our funders

British Gas Energy Trust

Since 2022, we’ve been developing Mencap’s Learning Disability Energy and Money Advice service in partnership with the British Gas Energy Trust.

People with a learning disability continue to be among the hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis and higher energy bills. Thanks to the support of the British Gas Energy Trust, through Supporting Communities at Risk Programme (SCARP), Mencap was able to respond to the increasingly complex Money and Energy advice enquiries that people with a learning disability, and their families, are contacting us about. All too often they call us at crisis point.

The British Gas Energy Trust is generously funding our work over a 2-year period (from April 2024 – March 2026). As energy costs continue to be unmanageable for so many people with a learning disability, we are able to continue to provide dedicated support for both people with a learning disability and those that care for and support them.

We have also provided practical solutions such as hot water bottles along with accessible information and advice in a variety of formats, over the phone, online and in community settings.

| KPI              | Apr - Jun | Jul - Sep | Oct - Dec | Jan - Mar | Total |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Supported        | 133       | 130       | 192       | 170       | 625   |
| Complex          | 133       | 130       | 168       | 164       | 595   |
| Issues           | 524       | 463       | 425       | 410       | 1822  |
| Caseworker hours | 692       | 885       | 1430      | 1586      | 4593  |



Our Money and Energy Advice Caseworkers supported:

625 people  
595 of these receiving in-depth, holistic support  
1,822 issues,  
4,593 hours of casework support provided

Our funders



Cornwall Council’s Active Travel Social Prescribing Fund

Based in Cornwall, our 12-month project centres around co-producing an Active Travel Fund for people with a learning disability to receive financial support which enables them to overcome travel and transport barriers in accessing physical activity.

Over this period the team held a number of community forum meetings and individual conversations, as well as worked closely with established physical activity groups.

In January we recruited our Community Connector. A key team member, with a learning disability, who has been involved in the final shaping of the project. Through our consultations we have identified some of the barriers people faced locally and began co-producing a solution – an accessible walking challenge, that has been shaped by the experiences of the many people with a learning disability we have been hearing from.



Northern Ireland Appeal

In 2023 – 2024, Mencap ran a Northern Ireland Appeal to raise vital funds for our work locally.

Our aims were to:

- Refurbish the outdoor play facilities at the Mencap Children’s Centre in Belfast to make them more accessible for children with complex and mobility needs.
- Raise money for a new multi-purpose, accessible community space, increasing our capacity to deliver parent and tots groups as part of our Early Years strategy. We could also use it as a training space and a general area for any of Mencap’s other service and community engagement teams.

The urgent refurbishment work was made possible by a number of generous supporters, including Ulster Garden Villages, Katie Fraser, Sean Coyle, Esmée Mitchell Foundation, B&Q Neighbourly, the Enkalon Foundation and Alan Campbell.

This project was also supported through the Department of Health’s Mental Health Support Fund, which is managed by the Community Foundation for NI.

These donations have made a huge difference to the children and their families, as well as the wider community who are now able to access this space.

## Community & Events

### One Big Walk – Cooper

Cooper walked 46 miles in September and smashed his original target of £150, raising £260 by taking on One Big Walk.

Cooper has autism and is non-verbal. Alongside his mum he wanted to take on the walk to shine a light on the huge contribution people with a learning disability make to society. Cooper spread joy to those he met on his walks and sparked many conversations with members of the public. While Cooper is non-verbal, he stopped people in their tracks with his enthusiasm and happy nature, enabling Kate to talk about the great work Mencap does for those in the learning disability community.



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**46 miles**  
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### Local Coporate – Chopstix

Chopstix has been supporting Mencap throughout 2024 and 2025 – volunteering at Lakeside Shopping Centre and helping to wrap Christmas presents.

The Junior Board also organised their own fundraising quiz raising over £1,000.

As well as this, the Chopstix Executive Team launched the Chopstix Foundation and donated £5,000, and took part in Rock your Socks by designing and selling their own socks to staff and customers.



## Community & Events continued



### London Marathon – Lucy Ball

Lucy is a part-time reprographics technician at a local secondary school and carer to nine-year-old Logan. Logan was born in November 2014 with an undiagnosed condition called Trachea Oesophageal Fistula and Oesophageal Atresia (TOF/OA) which means he was born unable to swallow. After his third birthday he was diagnosed with autism.

Mencap provide Logan with a weekly youth club session every Saturday for three hours where he is safe, supervised and gets to spend time with other children just like him, without judgement. Lucy took up running in 2023, realised she enjoyed it, and decided to apply to join Team Mencap at the 2025 TCS London Marathon. So far Lucy has raised £2,960.

“ I have never run for any charity before. But I felt compelled to give back to Mencap. They’ve really brought us a little bit of a lifeline that we wouldn’t have had otherwise.

**LUCY**



### Michael Beynon – Cardiff Half Record breaker

Michael has been a Mencap Myth Buster since 2021. It’s a voluntary role where Michael lends his time and significant public profile to Mencap, to increase visibility and representation for the learning disability community, while helping to challenge misconceptions about living life with a learning disability and Down Syndrome.

He became the first person with intellectual impairment from Wales to complete the London Marathon in 2021 and has since completed it multiple times, both virtually and in person, raising over £11,000 for Mencap across his various walking and running challenge events.



## Community & Events continued



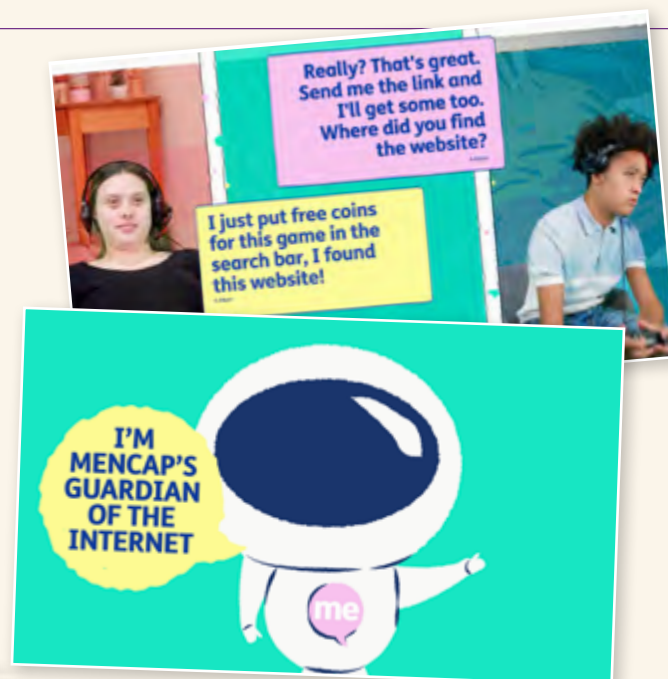
### Google / Guardians of the Internet

With thanks to a £500,000 grant support from Google.org to develop Guardians of the Internet – a digital citizenship programme designed to help young people with a learning disability stay safe online.

The funding enabled Mencap to co-design and deliver the programme across schools in England and Northern Ireland between Which ran from 2024-early 2025.

The internet can be a powerful way for people with a learning disability to connect, learn and build relationships, but it also comes with real risks. Many face online harms such as scams, harassment and threats of violence. Despite this, they are often left out of mainstream online safety education. The Guardians of the Internet programme set out to change this. It was shaped by the voices and experiences of young people with a learning disability, and delivered using accessible formats, inclusive teaching methods and practical, real-world scenarios.

The programme reached 895 young people across 39 schools, exceeding the original target of 500. Over 1,000 additional beneficiaries, including teachers and school staff, were also engaged. Sessions covered key topics including scams, misinformation, cyberbullying, grooming and data sharing. Teaching resources were developed to support different learning needs and styles, including visual prompts and minimal written content. Actors with a learning disability featured in training videos, bringing the content to life.



### After completing the programme:

#### YOUNG PEOPLE:

- 86% felt more confident online.
- 77% could identify online risks such as fake news and scams.
- 80% reported stronger critical thinking skills.

#### TEACHERS:

- Nearly 90% felt better equipped to support digital safety in the classroom.
- Many reported that students were using what they'd learned in other subjects and everyday conversations.

One student, 14-year-old Jamie, said he used to accept friend requests from strangers without thinking. After attending a session, he changed his behaviour. He told his teacher, "I used to add people I didn't know, but now I check their profile first and don't add them if they look suspicious."

Engaging parents was more challenging. No parents responded to the post-programme survey, and teachers noted that families often struggled to engage with online safety content. Future phases of the programme will look at ways to involve families more effectively – for example, through in-person workshops, co-designed resources or short, accessible videos. Mencap also identified a need to adapt materials further for different levels of learning disability, and to offer a wider range of tools including Easy Read and Makaton options.



### Advent International – Employment Programmes

Since 2020, Advent International has been one of Mencap's longest-standing and most generous corporate partners, contributing more than £530,000 to support people with a learning disability.

An initial £400,000 donation helped respond to the Covid-19 crisis – with £120,000 funding PPE for frontline staff and £280,000 invested in employment support for young people disproportionately affected by the closure of services and placements.

This investment laid the groundwork for Head Start and Right Start, our school-based employment programmes that help young people with a learning disability build skills, confidence and readiness for work.

The model piloted with Advent's support has now been scaled using over £650,000 in matched funding from local authorities and other donors, with programmes now running in Waltham Forest, Camden, Bedford, Kingston and Sutton.

### Supporting students

Throughout 2024, Head Start has supported 54 students across two Waltham Forest schools, exceeding our original target.

Nineteen took part in structured work experience placements, while younger students joined site visits and employability sessions to prepare for the world of work. All students completed vocational profiles and individual plans.

One learner, 16-year-old JB, had poor attendance and confidence before joining the programme. After a placement at The Co-op, he began arriving on time, worked independently and spoke confidently to staff. The opportunity gave him a sense of direction and allowed him to show his ability outside the classroom.

Advent's long-term support has helped us respond to urgent needs and build sustainable employment support that works. Together, we've supported over 100 young people into meaningful experiences that improve their future prospects.



## Employ Me

**We also supported 775 people this year through other programmes including Employ Me which helps people develop the skills they need for the workplace and for looking for work.**

## Amazon Employ Me Traineeship Programme

**In 2024 we worked with Amazon to launch a supported employment programme for adults with a learning disability, learning difficulty or autism.**

Delivered through our Employ Me programme, the traineeship ran across three sites in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

The model combined two weeks of classroom-based preparation followed by a 10-week paid placement as an Amazon Associate. Each participant received on-the-job coaching, funded by Access to Work.

The programme aimed to support adults aged 18+ who were eager to enter work but faced barriers to employment. A total of 20 people completed their placements.

Before and after the placement, participants completed surveys measuring their skills and confidence. Results showed improvement in areas such as teamwork, understanding workplace expectations and using public transport. Several participants reported increased confidence and said they enjoyed working with colleagues.

# ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

**Thanks to funding from Sport England, since January 2023, Mencap is proud to be a System Partner driving a national push to tackle inequality through movement.**

We're creating inclusive communities where people with a learning disability can lead active, healthy, and connected lives. Through partnerships with councils, leisure centres, and day services, we're breaking down barriers and expanding opportunities for people to be active in ways that matter to them.

A key part of our approach is leadership by lived experience. We've supported the employment of 8 Community Connectors, who all have a learning disability. They're not just involved - they're leading. They have been involved in various activities, including planning and co-hosting community forums, speaking at local network groups, organizing community engagement events, meeting with stakeholders, and more. In Nottingham and Derby, a local volunteer with a learning disability has helped lead interviews, joined forums, and played a key role in shaping community-based activity.



We have co-delivered **18 inclusive sport workshops**, co-led by a trainer with a learning disability. **Reaching 263 people across 16 organisations.**



Partners included Disability Rights UK, Queens Crescent CA, Active Norfolk, and Everyone Active Suffolk. We're also in talks with Basketball England to embed the workshop into their coach development programme.



Thanks to £83,092 in seed funding, we've supported 20 organisations to provide inclusive activities, ranging from silent disco walking groups, seated exercise, creative dance and inclusive fitness sessions. Each one is tailored to local needs, designed with and for people with a learning disability.

This year we have launched our new website, where organisations can access resources, network, and attend training opportunities.

“

I am really liking this job as I have proved to myself that I can do things I never thought I could, such as helping people with our activities.

**COMMUNITY CONNECTOR**

## Empowering families through community-led support in England

Parents understand better than anyone the realities of raising a child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). At Mencap, we believe that supporting families means working with them, not just for them.

Thanks to generous funding from The Zochonis Charitable Trust (to Tameside), The Marlene Gabriel Charitable Trust and Pears Foundation (to Newham), we've continued to develop and expand our family engagement programme for parents and carers of children aged 0-5.

This includes peer support groups, workshops around topics such as transitions, Disability Living Allowance and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). There's also a bespoke support group for Dads in Newham, which now has 56 members.

This year we've strengthened relationships with local organisations and community members and hosted and attended a variety of community events. These include coffee mornings, SEND stay-and-play sessions and an Early Years Conference in Newham.

To ensure our work continues to meet the evolving needs of families, we collect feedback after every session. This has been overwhelmingly positive, with both parents and professionals praising the emotional support, practical tools and fresh ideas gained through our sessions.



## SUPPORT HIGHLIGHTS

**1,945** families have engaged with our family support programme so far.

**527** new families engaged with the programme this year.



**1,024** parents are part of a WhatsApp peer support group.

**523** parents have taken part in workshops or peer support groups.

“

**As a parent with significant mental health issues and social anxiety, attending Mencap sessions with my children has made a huge difference to all our lives.**

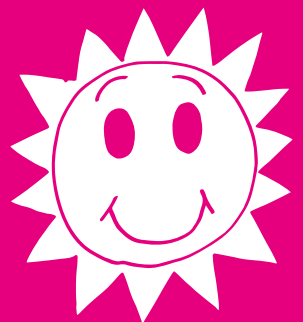
I never felt able to attend play groups with my children through fear of judgement but these offer a safe space for my children to be children and I am eternally grateful that we have access to this.

The family engagement project has been a massive help navigating the world with a child with additional needs and I don't know what I would do without the project.

The meet ups are amazing as well to chat with other parents going through similar situations. I have been led to resources and learned things I may have not found out about through reaching out to them.

### PARENT SUPPORTED IN TAMESIDE





## EARLY YEARS TRAINING PROGRAMME

In 2024, we provided

**2,590** courses to

**552** people from

**535** unique settings

covering important topics like wellbeing, global development delay and supporting children with a learning disability

## FAMILY SUPPORT IN MENCAP CHILDREN CENTRE

DURING 2024-25:

**81%**

81% of parents at MCC said their practical skills and confidence to support their child's learning and development improved.

**81%**

81% of parents at MCC stated that their wellbeing improved.



### WHAT FAMILIES TOLD US:

“

I have absolutely found a second family in Mencap. Before I was home all day [and] spent time with my child alone due to their needs. Now I have [a] full network of people I can turn to and call my close friends.”

“

Mencap made me feel like part of a big family. All key workers, workers, staff etc were amazing at making you feel welcome and like you fit in. Everyone was so considerate and helpful.”

“

I wanted my child to get a place in Mencap to help support his learning and development. I didn't realise how much I needed this place for myself. My wellbeing has improved watching him grow and develop with staff that cared for him so well and celebrated his success as much as me. I didn't realise I needed the peer support bubble that I have gained through meeting other parents who just get it – we'll keep in touch with the friends we've formed at Mencap.”

THANK YOU!



## ME TIME



**Me Time supports people with a learning disability to live healthy, happy lives and take an active role in their communities.**

Running in Islington, Nottingham, Tameside, Suffolk, Sutton and Llanfyllin, the programme empowers people to shape their own futures. This could be through education, trying new hobbies, building friendships, or getting involved in local communities.

This year, people taking part in Me Time have gone beyond leisure activities to make meaningful contributions in their communities.

**187 people in England and Wales supported 49 local organisations engaged within England.**



### **Making art in Tameside:**

As part of the National Greater Manchester Hate Crime Campaign, the group got a £500 grant to collaborate with a local graffiti artist. Their powerful artwork was showcased on Tameside Council's social media and in local press.

### **Working hard in Nottingham:**

Me Time volunteers completed a 10-week placement in a Mencap store, gaining skills in customer service, stock management and Gift Aid. They got reward vouchers for exceeding their targets.

### **Going green in Islington:**

Volunteers joined local parks teams to help prepare Spa Fields, a local park, for spring, contributing to a greener community.

### **Creating change in Sutton:**

Participants attended local Speak Up Sutton advocacy meetings, using their voices to influence change.

Across all locations, Me Time is co-produced with the people we support, ensuring that activities reflect their interests and ambitions. In Tameside, this approach is central to Jubilee Gardens, a long-term project aimed at transforming a public garden into an inclusive, welcoming space for everyone. It's a powerful example of how Me Time supports people with a learning disability to break down barriers and become active citizens.



## Providing advice and information in England

At a time when many helplines have closed, our helpline in England has continued to provide a vital and reliable source of support for people with a learning disability and their families.

Despite being a small team, our specialist advisers and caseworkers delivered outstanding support this year, consistently going above and beyond to provide essential guidance, reassurance and advocacy during some of the most challenging moments in people's lives.

### Top five reasons for calling:

1. Social care
2. Money
3. Adult diagnosis
4. Mental capacity
5. Welfare benefits



### IN THE YEAR WE:

Helped with **5,879** enquiries from individuals, families and carers. Many were highly complex and required tailored support over a number of weeks or even months.

This work resulted in **33,533** individual interactions, demonstrating just how in-depth, responsive and sustained our support is.

Secured over **£321,000** in financial gains for people.

Responded to **139** safeguarding concerns with care and sensitivity, ensuring that people were protected from harm and that risks were swiftly identified and reduced. Supported people across a wide range of issues – from benefits and housing rights to safeguarding, social care access and navigating health and education services.



## Outreach and inclusion

This year, in addition to offering telephone advice, our British Gas Energy Trust-funded outreach programme expanded. This enabled us to provide practical, on-the-ground support that made a tangible difference, allowing us to connect with people directly in their communities, ensuring they received the support they needed in person.

### During the year we:

- Distributed 127 energy-saving packs – containing a total of 567 individual items including hot water bottles and blankets to individuals and families living in fuel poverty.
- Provided face-to-face advice and support on energy efficiency, welfare entitlements and local resources, helping people to feel more informed and better equipped to manage during difficult times.



## The National Lottery Community Fund: Reaching Communities

In October 2024, we commenced a vital 3-year partnership with the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund. With the cost-of-living crisis and cuts to support and services, we have been receiving many complex enquiries from people with a learning disability, who had reached crisis point and had nowhere else to turn.

Through this funding, we have been able to recruit two new Learning Disability Caseworkers, who will support over 1,000 people with a learning disability to access the advice and support they need, when they need it and tailored to their specific concerns or queries.

Since the project started, we have been providing specialist information and advice, in an accessible format and through a range of assets, (including easy read guidance, video content and in person support), to ensure people with a learning disability are able to address the complex challenges they face.

## What our support means to people

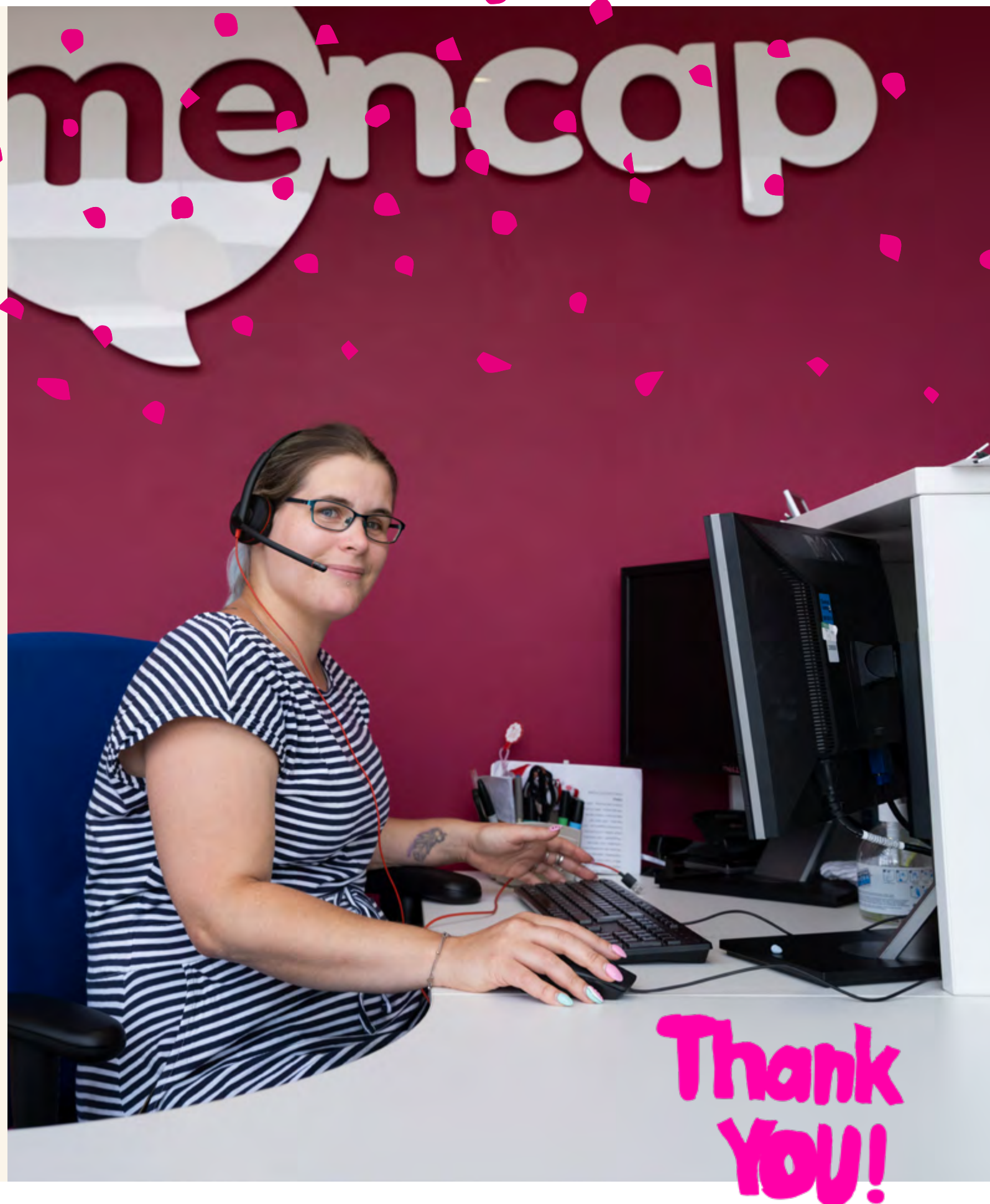
Our advice helps people make confident choices, access opportunities and build resilience. Feedback shows that the people we help feel more informed, empowered and supported. As a team we've also expanded our knowledge – enabling us to provide a more holistic approach to advice and support.

“

Over the years we've contacted quite a few organisations for advice in relation to our complex situation and found that Mencap was the most supportive and accessible. I felt listened to, and there was an appreciation of all the nuances of our case.”

“The adviser was amazing and gave me great advice [on] my son's benefits but also advised me on other help I could receive. She helped me with an application for white goods so we now have a new fridge/freezer that doesn't unfreeze our food.”

“I was surprised at how easy it was to access the support. We received a telephone call from an advisor within a few hours. She was super helpful, professional, incredibly supportive and knowledgeable, ready to answer all my questions and share the information we needed to draft our mandatory reconsideration letter. There was empathy and genuine concern for the situation we found ourselves in. We are truly grateful for the help we received from Mencap. Thank you so much.”



## Housing rights made simple

In partnership with Shelter, we also developed a range of Easy Read housing guides, now available on our website. Topics such as rent, repairs and rights as a tenant were adapted into accessible formats, ensuring people with a learning disability can better understand and act on their housing situations. We're developing more Easy Reads, further strengthening this vital resource.

## More than help: A lifeline in a cold winter

In November 2024 we were called by a lady with a learning disability following one of our community outreach sessions at a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller campsite. She needed support with her energy debts and to understand and manage her bills. She was struggling to keep warm as her home is an outbuilding/shed on the site and is not well insulated.

There was not enough room in the outbuilding to accommodate a standard double bed, and the lady had been sleeping on her sofa. The sofa had worn out due to more than two decades of use and was very uncomfortable. Our community caseworker visited the lady in her home and reassured her that we could provide a confidential, non-judgemental service.

The lady connected with our helpline and spoke with an energy and money adviser. With some support from us, and her family, we were able to support her with fuel vouchers, budgeting advice, a washing machine and provided a sofa bed that fitted her home. The lady was very grateful that the washing machine was professionally installed, and we were able to provide her with new bedding too. She told us our support had made a massive difference to her physical and mental health.

## Improving access to online information

Everyone should have the opportunity to access information online – so we're working hard to make our website easy to use for everyone. This year we received over 440,000 views of our advice and information pages and over 137,000 views of our Easy Read pages.



## Research

**We want a world where people with a learning disability are valued, listened to and included.**

Research can help us gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by people with a learning disability and how we can help people to live the lives they choose.

This year we've worked with a wide range of academics and other researchers to help champion the importance of research into learning disabilities and support more people with a learning disability to become involved in research. For example, we supported a research project led by University College London (UCL) aimed at improving the lives of children with complex health needs. We've also co-funded research exploring potential ways to make energy costs more affordable for people living with a disability.

## Improving our work

Mencap is also committed to ensuring that we're using research and evaluation to understand how effective our own work is and how we can make it even better. To do this we've commissioned independent researchers to evaluate a number of our projects. These include an evaluation of our Active Communities programme by The Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research (SPEAR) based at Canterbury Christ Church University, and the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDtI) evaluation of our Be Internet Citizens programme.

We've also commissioned and carried out our own research. For example, we commissioned a piece of qualitative research looking at the extra costs of living for people with a learning disability. Plus, with the generous support of the Motability Foundation, we designed and delivered an important research study exploring people with a learning disabilities' experiences of using public transport and what changes can be made to make it better.



## Making transport better

**Our research shows public transport is a major source of anxiety for people with a learning disability.** Our findings revealed that two of the top three concerns when going out are getting lost and using public transport.

With generous support from the Motability Foundation, our latest project set out to explore the barriers people with a learning disability face when accessing public transport in the UK and to develop practical recommendations for change.

Five Research Champions took part in training to build their research skills and co-produced the design and delivery of interviews, a national survey and a series of focus groups.

## Sharing experiences

**To inform the research and shape focus group discussions, 10 people with a learning disability across the UK captured their travel experiences by filming journeys using GoPro cameras.** These videos provided powerful, real-life insights and were followed by interviews where participants shared their stories in more detail. The videos will be shared on Mencap's website and social media channels to raise public awareness about the everyday challenges people with a learning disability face when using public transport.

Our Big Public Transport Survey, carried out in October 2024, received 1,137 responses. In addition, seven focus groups were held to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on how transport barriers affect wellbeing, social connection and access to work. Findings from this research will be shared in August 2025 at a celebration event recognising the contributions of all involved.



BE  
KIND

## Campaigning for a fairer society

**People with a learning disability face barriers in everyday society. We work hard to remove these and make society fairer.**

We work in the areas we talk about below because we know these are where the inequalities are greatest. All our work is rooted in what people with a learning disability tell us, and wherever possible, we simply provide the platform for them to speak to policy makers directly. We've a wide range of tools to use on each issue – from full scale campaigning and generating national media coverage all the way to quietly advocating for a small change which often can make all the difference.

The arrival of a new government in July brought significant policy shifts, especially in England, across the areas that matter most to our community – social care, health, Homes Not Hospitals, cost of living and benefits, and employment. From the start, we've worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices and rights of people with a learning disability are not only heard but acted on.

Before the election, we published our own manifesto, based on the views of our 600-strong Policy Shapers who have lived experience, so that all political parties know what is needed.

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/what-we-do/mencap-manifesto>

## Making progress

**We welcomed some early progress, including commitments to Mental Health Act reform, extension of the Household Support Fund and adoption of our apprenticeship accessibility recommendations.** Yet we remain vigilant. The government's decision to reduce the number of people eligible for Personal Independence Payments caused huge anxiety among those with a learning disability. And the increase in National Insurance Contributions without additional funding has placed immense pressure on the social care sector.

We are concerned that the focus on tackling waiting times could threaten the progress that has been made to improve people's health, and are alarmed about recent measures to reduce the welfare budget. Mencap has responded with urgency – campaigning

for funding, engaging directly with ministers and amplifying the voices of those affected through national media and parliamentary channels.

We launched a powerful new influencing campaign called 'Do You See Me' for Learning Disability Week 2024. It aims to make sure that people with a learning disability are seen and recognised for who they are: people with feelings, unique needs and a whole lot to give. Visit the webpage and watch our co-produced launch video to find out more.

We displayed Do You See Me adverts at Westminster train station to raise awareness of the fact that people with a learning disability die over 20 years earlier than the general population. Several MPs posted on social media about them.



## MEET RAHIMA

Rahima is a lively and creative 19-year-old with a passion for photography, fashion and music. She has a mild learning disability and Cerebral Palsy, which means she requires 24-hour care and uses eye-tracking technology to communicate.

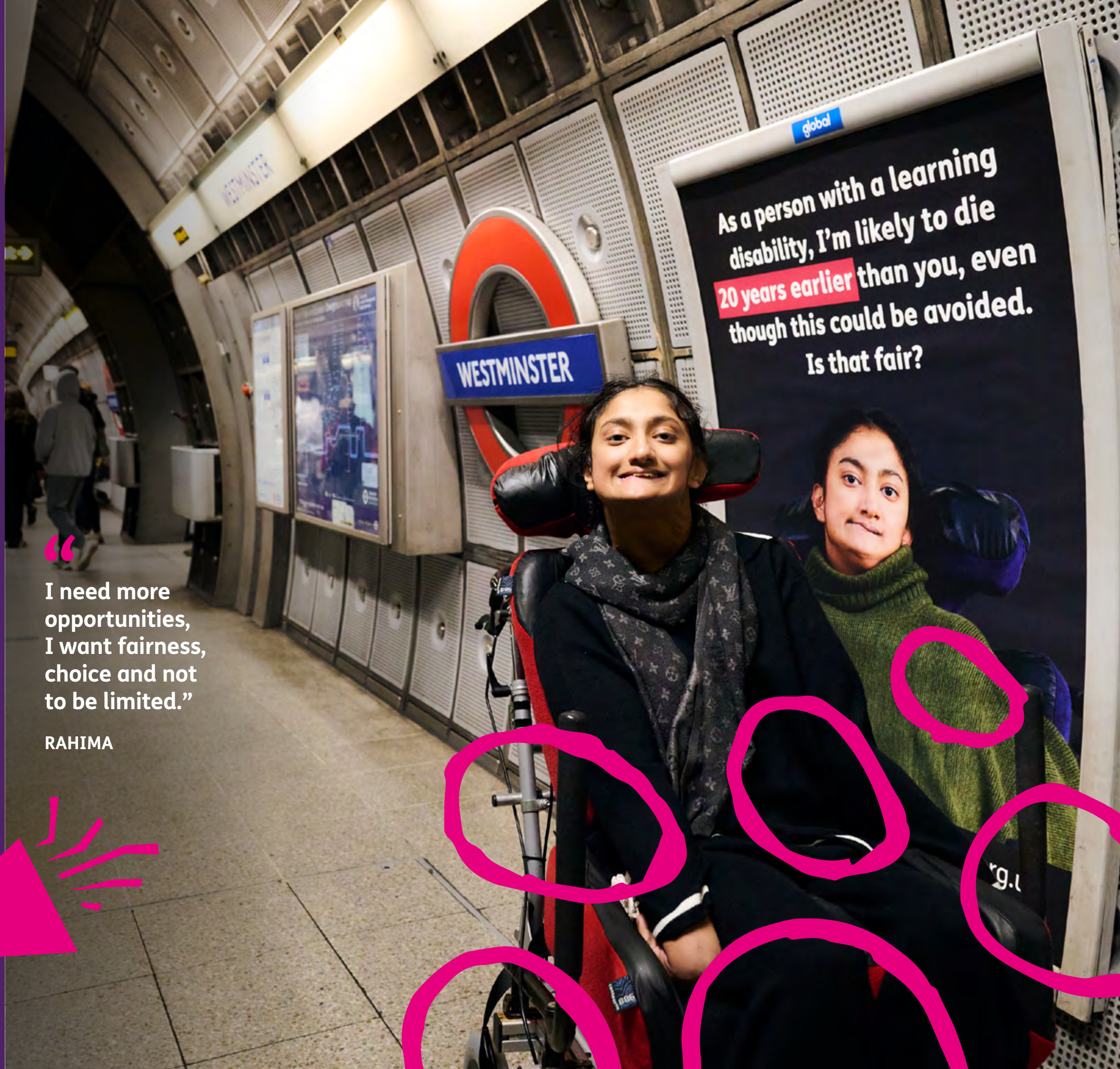
Supported by her loving family, Rahima enjoys college classes in music, art and dance. She's a big fan of Beyoncé, Rihanna, and One Direction – especially moved by Diamonds in the Sky, which she finds calming during painful times.

Rahima has faced challenges, including delays in education and feeling unheard in mainstream settings. But she's determined to change perceptions. Through Mencap's Young Ambassador scheme and the Here I Am campaign, Rahima is using her voice and platform to raise awareness and advocate for others. She dreams of owning her own fashion boutique one day.

“

**I need more opportunities, I want fairness, choice and not to be limited.”**

**RAHIMA**





## Our Big Issue takeover

We continue to challenge, and collaborate with, media outlets to improve the representation and inclusion of people with a learning disability across their work. During Learning Disability Week 2024, we partnered with The Big Issue magazine to create the first-ever issue co-produced by people with a learning disability.

People with a learning disability worked alongside the editorial team to write features, create designs and collaborate on how to make The Big Issue more accessible. All articles in the issue focused on the real-life experiences and achievements of people with a learning disability.

This innovative approach to authentic co-production created a buzz in the wider media, with 244 pieces of coverage, including on ITV News, Channel 5 News, Daily Mail Online and The Standard. It also secured a CharityComms Inspiring Communicator Award for 'Best In-House Campaign' in 2024.



## Championing inclusive research in learning disability

We've worked with a wide range of academics and other researchers to help champion the importance of research into learning disability and support more people with a learning disability to become involved in research. For example, we supported a research project led by University College London (UCL) aimed at improving the lives of children with complex health needs. We've also co-funded research exploring ways to make energy costs more affordable for people living with a disability.

## Our Myth Busters

In 2024–25, Mencap's Mythbusters squad continued to be a powerful force for change – challenging outdated perceptions and championing the voices of people with a learning disability.

This diverse group of ambassadors, including models, athletes, actors and activists, worked to break down barriers and show what's possible when people are seen for their individuality, not their labels. Their stories reached millions through national media and social campaigns, helping to shift public attitudes and build a more inclusive society. They embodied Mencap's mission to ensure people with a learning disability are visible, valued and heard.

Among the year's standout moments was Ellie Goldstein's feature in the Daily Express on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, where she shared her journey from being told she'd never speak to becoming a Vogue model.

George Webster's World Book Day appearance on BBC Breakfast and the accompanying book giveaway generated significant engagement and user-generated content. Also, Michael Beynon's Guinness World Record achievement captivated audiences, with over one million views on social media. Meanwhile, Nigel Smith's powerful testimony on ITV News about the life-saving importance of annual health checks brought critical attention to health inequalities. These moments not only inspired but also sparked vital conversations across the UK.

George Webster



Ellie Goldstein



Nigel Smith



Michael Benyon





## Pushing for better health care

In September 2024 Lord Darzi published his independent investigation into the state of the NHS. We fed into this and the report a number of our concerns and led the work to develop a 10-year Plan for the NHS.

On the back of our concerns about lack of accessibility, we launched our “NHS – Do You Include Me?” campaign and mobilised over 1,000 responses to the NHS 10-year Plan consultation, ensuring people with a learning disability were not left behind. In October 2024, we gave evidence to the Covid Inquiry about the treatment of people with a learning disability during the pandemic. We provided evidence which showed that blanket Do Not Resuscitate orders were applied in hospitals and that some people with a learning disability had reported being told they would not be resuscitated if taken ill with Covid.

**Coverage:** I news, BBC Online, Talk Magazine BBC’s Covid Inquiry podcast. Big Issue

At the end of January 2025, we were invited to give oral evidence to the committee of MPs scrutinising Kim Leadbetter’s private members’ bill on introducing a right across England and Wales to assisted dying for terminally ill people who have mental capacity to make such a decision. The invitation followed representations by MPs on the committee who are strong advocates for disabled people. Our position reflected the wide range of views of our Voices Council and set out important tests for any legislation. These include rights to advocacy support, doctors being able to raise assisted dying with patients proactively, and the need for guidance and training under the Act to be co-produced. After the session, we engaged with MPs on the committee, working with them to advise on amendments on these and other areas.



**“NHS – Do You Include Me?”**  
[Click here to watch our campaign video](#)



## Ensuring access to health care

We’ve worked hard to amplify the voices of people with a learning disability and their concerns about access to healthcare throughout the year.

In January 2025, the government announced plans for vital NHS targets to be scrapped, including the goal for 75% of people with a learning disability to receive an annual health check.

We highlighted the potential deadly consequences of this in the media. Our Chief Executive, Jon Sparkes, met Health and Social Care Secretary Wes Streeting to discuss this in March. We’re planning measures to demonstrate the government’s commitment to tackling health inequalities in 2025/26.

**Coverage:** The Independent, The Telegraph, The Guardian, The Standard, The Guardian, Channel 4, Inews

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0kpb0vx>

## Homes not Hospitals

This year started with discouraging data that 2,045 people with a learning disability and/or autism are still detained in mental health hospitals. The government had again failed to meet their promise of halving the number of inpatients by the end of March 2024.

We’ve built key media relationships to bring this complex and shocking issue to national attention. This achieved considerable coverage on national and regional TV as well as BBC Radio 4’s File on Four – definitely worth a listen. [‘File on 4 Investigates’](#)

The piece features three people’s stories, including the deeply shocking treatment faced by Kassiba, a woman detained for nearly 50 years, starting as a child, but who is now living in her community.

We celebrated a campaign win when the Mental Health Bill was announced in the King’s Speech in July – one of the first reforms that the new Labour government put forward. We have been campaigning, alongside National Autistic Society, Challenging Behaviour Foundation and Voice Ability, for this for many years.



The Bill will ensure that people with a learning disability and autistic people with no co-occurring mental health condition can only be detained for up to 28 days. This should prevent the number of people in units from rising once it comes into law.



## Helping people into work

**Official data shows that only one in four people with a learning disability are in work, yet 85% want to work.** We're working with governments in UK, Wales and Northern Ireland to try to fix that and have made some progress. People with a learning disability want to work – they want to be independent and contribute to society.

We're pleased to say that apprenticeships in England are now accessible for those without an Education, Health & Care Plan by relaxing English and Maths qualification requirements to make them available to people with a learning disability.

There's also better-supported local employment, which the Government included in their Connect to Work scheme in the government's 'Get Britain Working' white paper with £110 million in funding.

We think that supporting people into work is the best way to save money on welfare. It's better for people with a learning disability, for employers and for society.



## Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training

**Our Professional Education and Training team have had a highly successful first full year delivering programmes for clients across the health and social care sector to support the national rollout across England of the Tier 2 Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability & Autism.**

This training plays a crucial role in raising awareness among staff working in health and social care of learning disability and autism – and the changes to practice that can make a difference in supporting people and reducing healthcare inequalities. Appropriate training on learning disability and autism was mandated for health and care staff working in regulated services in the Health and Care Act, 2022.

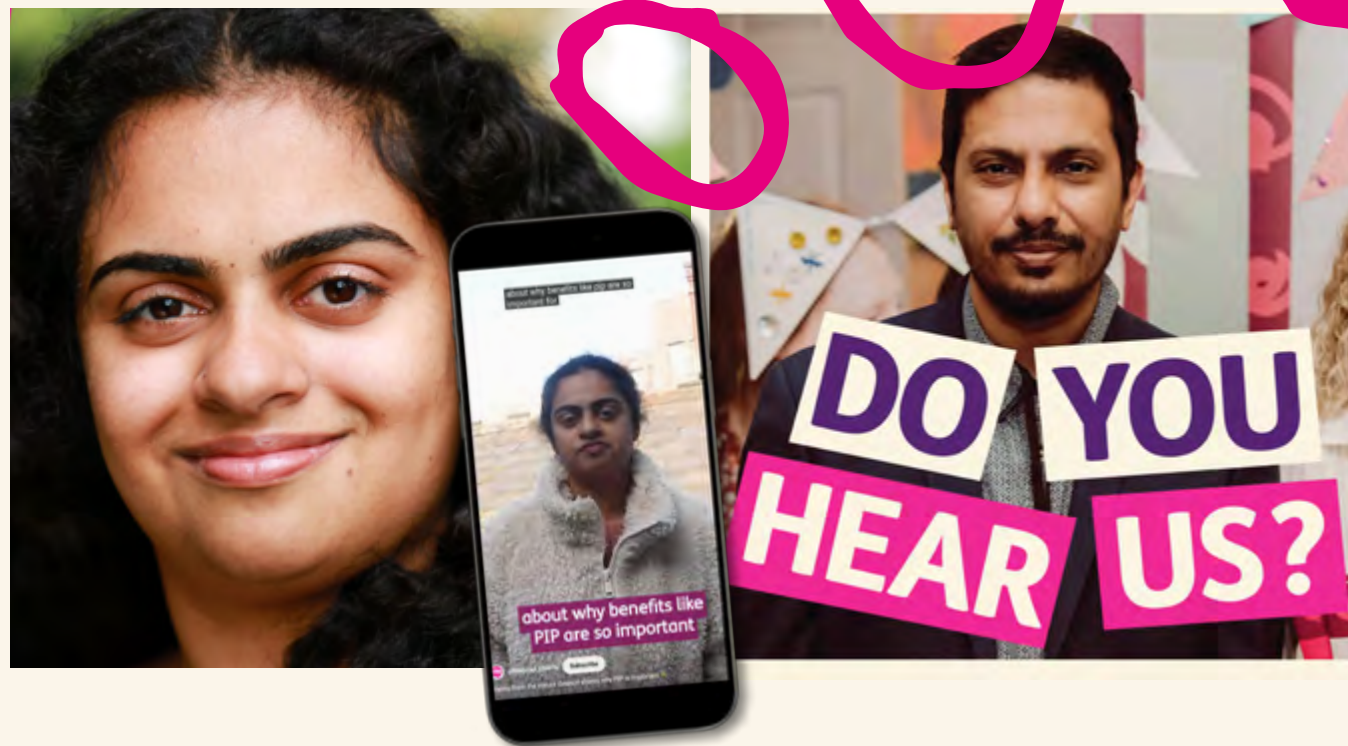
## Supporting teams

**Our work with clients has ranged across direct delivery of the one-day tier 2 face to face training, through to four-day courses for Lead Trainers that only Mencap have permission from NHS England to deliver commercially, who can then support the development of training teams in their own organisations.**

The team have delivered training to 1,832 external delegates across all the courses we deliver between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. This amounts to 10,992 learning hours and campaign exposure to reduce the number of premature avoidable deaths of people with a learning disability.

For the next year, we have already secured substantial bookings, showing potential for further growth, impact on reducing health inequalities and generating unrestricted income for our mission.

In our training delivery, we work with 30 experts with lived experience of autism and learning disability, who co-deliver sessions. We're proud of the support we've been able to provide for our experts, and of the opportunities they have been able to take up to deliver training.



## Protecting benefits

**The government proposed significant changes to how benefits will work, including Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Universal Credit and Access to Work.**

These benefits are a lifeline for people with a learning disability. We helped the government to understand the importance of maintaining these benefits and the impact of their proposed changes.

Watch Voices Council member Bryony explaining the importance of these benefits.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/yUeeGEu1Wr8>

We commissioned Cordis Bright to carry out qualitative research into the extra costs facing people with a learning disability and their experiences of PIP.

The Government also announced it would end all 'legacy' benefits and migrate everyone to Universal Credit. This has significant implications for people with a learning disability, because it changed the way they needed to access support and the benefits system. We championed creation of accessible information resources including Easy Read guides to help people understand the migration process and negotiated extra time for people who requested them.

**Coverage:** Big Issue, The Independent The Standard and BBC.

Alongside a broad coalition of anti-poverty charities, we pushed to extend an extension of the Household Support Fund which provides vital local crisis support to low-income and disabled households. It has now been extended until March 2026. We'll continue to push for long-term funding for local support which is accessible and more strategically targeted at disabled people in crisis.

We're very pleased that The Consumer Council for Water accepted our recommendation that government extend the main water bill discount scheme to people in receipt of disability benefits to reduce their bills.

Mencap's Parliamentary and Government Officer, Ismail Kaji, who has a learning disability, has been a proactive advocate for change this year. He's spoken to two major BBC Radio 4 programmes – Money Box and You & Yours – about accessibility in finance and the support needed from banks for people with a learning disability. Plus, he was interviewed on Channel 5 News and in the Daily Mirror (alongside Voices Council Member Bryony Moss) about upcoming welfare reforms.



## Winning progress on social care

**We've continued to use our voice nationally, alongside sector partners, to press the government for urgent reform.** We're calling for accelerated progress on the Fair Pay Agreement for social care, a fundamental review of adult social care funding, and meaningful investment in social care.

These are long-overdue changes needed not only for Mencap, but for the wider social care sector and the 150,000 people with a learning disability who rely on properly funded care. We will continue to push for change – because the people we support deserve better.

In January, Jon Sparkes, our Chief Executive, spoke to the BBC about the pressures charities now face due to the increase in National Insurance Contributions and how valuable Mencap's work is.

We hold one of the Chair positions on the Care and Support Alliance and worked hard with the other 60 charities to develop Show Us You Care – an interactive, multimedia campaign aimed at MPs. Every MP in England has received at least one letter and over 24,000 people have taken action.

As the government prepared to announce its plans for a Fair Pay Agreement for care workers, we handed in our Why We Care campaign petition – with over 7,000 signatures – to Angela Rayner. Our campaign called not only for better pay for social care workers but also for more funding for the social care system. Thank you to everyone who signed our petition and stood with us to celebrate our amazing support workers. The agreement can't come fast enough – although the money to fund it will need to be provided too. It's vital that care workers are paid properly for the skilful role they do.

## NAVIGATING NIC RISES

As a care provider, we found ourselves at the heart of the issue as squeezed local authority budgets meant that some Mencap services were running at a deficit – and we could no longer run them without huge costs. We took part in extensive media influencing work to highlight this issue, particularly in regions that were worst hit by funding deficits.

We continued to raise concerns after the sector was rocked by the announcement of increases to National Insurance Contributions. Most notably with a BBC News feature, outlining the real impact of the increases on the people we support.

We welcomed the announcement of Baroness Louise Casey to conduct an independent commission on social care.

## Community activism: Empowering employment for people with a learning disability

In 2023, we met twin brothers Paul and Andrew Aitken at a New Forest Mencap Listening and Activity event. Both are passionate activists leading the Learning Disability Voices Fight Back (LDVFB) campaign to improve work and volunteering experiences for people with learning disabilities in Totton, Southampton and the New Forest.

Paul and Andrew have faced both positive and negative experiences in employment. They value opportunities that allow them to showcase their skills and gain recognition – such as Paul's time volunteering at the British Heart Foundation where he earned Volunteer of the Year and other accolades. However, they also highlight ongoing barriers like inaccessible job ads, poor employer support, communication challenges and lack of accessible resources.

### Raising awareness

Together, we have worked on a variety of campaign activities, including creating and distributing leaflets, producing videos sharing lived work experiences, and managing social media accounts on platforms like Facebook and TikTok. A key achievement is designing an Easy Read version of a 'Work Passport' – a tool to help people with learning disabilities communicate their needs at work more effectively, addressing shortcomings in government guides.

The brothers have raised awareness through BBC Radio Solent and attended the Mencap Parliamentary Event in January, meeting their MP, Rt Hon Julian Lewis, who has praised their campaign. Recently, Paul and Andrew have been invited to help the BHF improve volunteer training and manuals based on their insights.

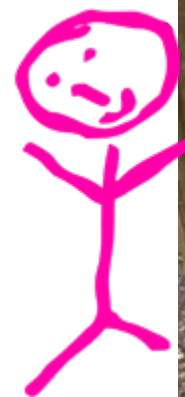
Their dedication and energy have made them invaluable campaigners and our first community activists and influencers promoting better employment outcomes for people with a learning disability.



## Northern Ireland

**£556,000 of our fundraising income supported our work in Northern Ireland. This included:**

- The McClay Foundation, fund our Family Support Coordinator post at the Mencap Centre in Belfast.
- Our Family Support Coordinator, Amy, is delivering an inspiring programme of hands-on workshops and activities for parents and carers, including Makaton sessions, sensory stories, and engaged play. She's also providing vital signposting and one-to-one support, running a weekly wellbeing walking group, evening personal training sessions for dads and male carers, and a weekly parents and tots group for 0-2 year olds.
- The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund is supporting our Bright Horizons project. This funding makes it possible to run bi-monthly youth club sessions for 10-13 year olds with a learning disability. A crucial time when many are transitioning from primary to secondary school. These sessions offer a safe space for socialisation, confidence-building, and fun, while helping young people develop the skills and friendships they need to thrive.



## Wales

**£382,000 of our fundraising income supported our work in Wales. This included:**

- Funded by The Shared Prosperity Fund (North Wales), The Changing Places, Changing Lives project aimed at implementing Changing Places toilet in North Wales, improving accessibility and wellbeing of disabled people.
- The project was completed successfully in March 2025 and a Changing Places toilet was installed in Corwen Pavillion in Denbighshire. The overall funding received from the UKSPF is around £98k.
- Hodge Foundation donated £10,000 in August 2024 to support the family support programme on Anglesey for a year. With their support, we launched a new activity with families during school holidays and were able to build positive relationships and collaborate further with local services and schools.



## Improving how we work

Throughout 2024/25, our fundraising directorate and campaigning teams have been completing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) migration project that will enable us to maximise our efficiency and effectiveness.

With this new and improved system, we'll be able to enhance our data integrity and improve our supporter journeys. Automating processes and improving workflows will boost the experience of our staff and supporters.

## How we work

**We comply with the latest fundraising guidelines from the Fundraising Regulator, Gambling Commission and the Charity Commission. This includes the Code of Fundraising Practice for the UK.**

Where people or organisations raise funds on our behalf, we require that they also comply with these standards. For individuals, this is through our fundraising guidelines, and for professional fundraisers it is included as a contract term. We're not aware of any instances where those acting on our behalf have failed to comply.

We occasionally use professional fundraisers as part of direct appeals, but not for unsolicited approaches or 'cold calling'. Other commercial participators are only involved as partner organisations fundraising from among their own staff or encouraging their staff to fundraise on our behalf on a personal level. Where we do use professional fundraisers, calls are monitored directly to ensure our instructions and requirements are being followed, and regular feedback is provided.

We have a supporter care team which can be contacted by telephone or email with any concerns or suggestions around our fundraising activities. Our events and community fundraising team provide people fundraising on our behalf with clear guidance about what we expect from them. They also maintain regular contact to give support and monitor their activities and progress.

## Our approach to fundraising includes:

- Encouraging people to remember us in their will.
- Securing donations from corporate partners, philanthropists and charitable trusts.
- Direct marketing appeals, raffles and weekly lottery campaigns for people who want to support us.
- Encouraging people to get involved in fundraising events and activities.

In the year ending 31 March 2025, we had 5 complaints through our supporter care team and other channels related to fundraising activity. Of the 5 complaints, 2 related to direct marketing activity, 2 related to administration and 1 was related to partnership activity. All complaints were recorded and addressed appropriately.

To protect vulnerable people and other members of the public, Mencap has a vulnerable customer policy in place, and our fundraising promise is displayed on our website.

Our fundraising team is required to complete enhanced General Data Protection Regulation training and all fundraising teams have policy and procedure handbooks which they're required to abide by. We are careful to protect the private data of our supporters and give them clear options if they wish to stop being contacted by us. As part of our compliance with the Code of Fundraising Practice, we ensure our approach to fundraising is not unreasonably intrusive or persistent, and we do not aim to solicit donations by pressuring potential supporters. By doing this, we ensure that people have a choice about whether to donate to Mencap.

**Thank you for your generous support.**

**None of this work would be possible without your kind donations.**

**Thanks to you, even more people with a learning disability are living happy and healthy lives!**



[mencap.org.uk](http://mencap.org.uk)