

# INCLUSIVE FUTURES



Breaking barriers. Building bonds.

**MENCAP  
MATTERS**

Supporter magazine  
April 2024



[mencap.org.uk/matters](https://mencap.org.uk/matters)



## WELCOME! TO MENCAP MATTERS

I'm Mel and I go to my local Mencap community group. It's so great to be able to introduce this magazine to you, one of our amazing Mencap supporters.

I love gardening, as you'll see opposite. It's just one of the activities I've been able to get stuck into at Mencap. It's made such a difference to my life, and what I think about myself.

I know Mencap's working hard to make sure people with a learning disability are part of their community. Mencap's community projects (page 4) are so important!

Thank you for being there,

**Mel**

# DO YOU SEE ME?

**Learning Disability Week is back, and this year's theme is all about being seen, heard and valued.**

It's a bold message created by people with a learning disability to build a movement of positive change. We know you'll agree that people with a learning disability should always be respected by others, and their views and feelings listened to.

This year, we want to celebrate the achievements of people with a learning disability. And we're challenging the barriers they face on a daily basis. **With your support, Mencap won't rest until everyday injustices are a thing of the past.**

Learning Disability Week 2024 runs from **Monday 17 – Sunday 23 June.**

Learn more and get involved at: [mencap.org.uk/learningdisabilityweek](https://mencap.org.uk/learningdisabilityweek)

Or scan this QR Code:



**Cover image:** Community volunteer Rachel with Kim, who has a learning disability. The two buddies share interests, from seeing bands to going out for walks and meals. They're part of friendship programme, Gig Buddies, supported by Mencap.

## “THE CHANCE TO BE MYSELF MORE.”

**As his beloved banana plant has flourished, Mel has grown in confidence with the support of his local Mencap group.**



Mel's been attending Mencap's Islington group for six years, regularly impressing everyone around him. The talented 33-year old has taken every opportunity the sessions have offered to express himself – from making art to gardening.

**Mel's green fingers are the reason why you'll now find an exotic banana plant thriving in Holloway, North London!**

More plants are on the way, as Mel's 'banana pups' grow from seedlings up.

“At home I'd managed to grow two massive sunflowers,” explains Mel, “and a mango plant last summer because the weather was so hot. I just thought try something else. Some other kind of tropical plant.”

### **Undaunted by the weather**

“I wanted to take on a challenge,” adds Mel. “I spent time online looking up different plants. I saw bananas and thought I'd give that a go! Obviously, it's a lot colder here and we don't have a tropical climate.”

**“Seeing my banana plant grow up like that makes me feel great. Makes me feel confident that I can do these sorts of things.”**

**“For someone like me who has autism, Mencap gives me a chance to meet people. To be myself more with others. To make something of myself.**

Hopefully, one day I'll get some bananas on my plant too, like the ones I saw at Kew Gardens.”

# COMMUNITY POWER BRINGS US ALL TOGETHER

**'My Community' is an ambitious Mencap project. We're partnering with local heroes who want to make their community the best place for people with a learning disability to live.**

Our starting point is that all communities have strengths, all citizens have power, and we want to build on this together.

## Nothing significant is achieved alone

We hire 'Community Connectors', people with a learning disability who use their experiences to tell us what matters to them and what would help make their communities better places for them to live in.

We also recruit local people to become 'Community Partners', helping communities come together to take action on inclusivity.

## What do we mean by community?

A group of people who care about each other, care about where they live, and have a sense of belonging to that place. This can be in a town, village, or neighbourhood.



## NOW EMPLOYED AS COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

20 people with a learning disability  
7 family members

## PROGRESS, COMMUNITY-WIDE



We focused on finding communities and working with local people to discover their strengths



We're busy developing relationships: bringing people together, making connections and building trust

## 10 LIVE PROJECTS

### Across England, Wales and Northern Ireland

My Community projects cover lots of different activities and events. From exercise and sports to arts and music. From raising local awareness of learning disability to improving digital skills. Right now, many projects are helping to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, empowering communities to support each other through difficult times and public service cuts.



"For the first time in my life I feel like I have a paid job like people my age. I finally feel like I've found a place in my life where I can be grown up and just be like everyone else my age that I know."

Community Connector, Bristol

"Our biggest achievement has been to galvanise the community and partners to come together, to work together to achieve our vision of making Croydon the best place to live if you have a learning disability and/or autism."

Community Partner, Croydon

Find out more and get involved at:

[mencap.org.uk/mycommunity](https://mencap.org.uk/mycommunity)

or scan this code:





# FUNDING GREAT IDEAS FOR HAPPY, HEALTHY LIVES



My Fun:D is made by people with a learning disability for people with a learning disability. Launched in 2022, it gives funding direct to individuals, supporting all sorts of request to make life happier and healthier across the UK.



- 602** My Fun:D applications during the first two weeks My Fun:D was open
- 278** requests from people with a learning disability
- 200** requests from parents and family members
- 38** applicants signposted to others who could help who didn't meet the My Fun:D criteria

## FUNDING:

- 68 aids and equipment items
- 65 computers and other technology
- 62 experiences
- 24 holidays
- 19 community engagement activities
- 16 new learning opportunities

As well as co-creating My Fun:D, people with a learning disability set up a panel to approve all of the applications.

## CHECKING IN AND CATCHING UP

Before confirming funding, our dedicated team made a due diligence call to each successful applicant. We then checked in regularly over the next six months, tracking each person's journey and capturing the impact of My Fun:D on their lives. You'll find just a few stories of happier and healthier lives right here.



Watch our MyFun:D video to find out more.

Go to: [mencap.org.uk/myfund](https://mencap.org.uk/myfund)

Watch on YouTube at: [youtu.be/CAgtKeZ\\_JN0](https://youtu.be/CAgtKeZ_JN0)

Or scan here.



## MY FUN:D STORIES

### SPLASHING AROUND IN SAFETY



The parents of Lawrence (aged 9) and Charlie (7) used My Fun:D to enjoy private swimming sessions together. Lawrence even learned how to swim and loves doing cannonballs with his brother.

“Lawrence and Charlie both have anxiety when they're around new people. Having a quiet place to go where we can have fun makes my day. Some pools play music which is unbearable for Charlie, and swimming has helped Lawrence to communicate.”

**Nicole, Lawrence and Charlie's mum**

“I love going – just me, my brother, mommy and daddy – as I don't like the loud noises at a normal pool.” **Lawrence**

### AN ABSOLUTELY MAGICAL BREAK

Nancy had always asked Mum and Dad if she could go to Bluestone resort when she saw the adverts. My Fun:D funded a much-needed break. Nancy's parents were able to take the family to the park over the Christmas period for a long weekend of activities and shows.

“We had the most amazing time away together creating memories to last a lifetime. It really was Nancy's dream come true. In many ways, Nancy's like a normal 13 year old girl into Ariana Grande, but because she has Downs Syndrome, she seems much younger.” **Nancy's mum**



“I love Christmas so much! I could even see the animals at Folly Farm!” **Nancy**

## PROTECT THE FUTURE TODAY

Mencap's Wills and Trusts Service is here for **every** family and carer. Let us help you protect the financial future of your loved one with a learning disability.

### How?

Just sign up for one of our free webinars on discretionary and disabled persons' trusts. Find out how to take the next steps by visiting:

[mencap.org.uk/willsandtrusts](https://mencap.org.uk/willsandtrusts)

"The future can appear to be extremely daunting and there are lots of other things you have to be thinking about as a parent of a child with a learning disability. But I think attending a webinar is a crucially important step and advise all parents to go ahead and do that." **Simon who attended our Wills and Trusts Webinar**



## A HELPING HAND

Our free Helpline service also includes lots of advice and information online, supporting people with a learning disability struggling with any issue affecting their life. We're here to help – thanks to supporters like you.

Find Mencap help online at:

[mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/learning-disability-helpline](https://mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/learning-disability-helpline)



## PLEASE GIVE TO MENCAP TODAY

"Your kind donation will help people like me to lead happier and healthier lives. You'll help make sure we're part of our local community. That we never feel cut off, forgotten about, and alone. Thank you so much!"

## HOW TO GIVE

You can use the donation form in your pack, scan this QR Code or go to [mencap.org.uk/matters](https://mencap.org.uk/matters) Thank you!

