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East Kent

Autumn Newsletter 2020



We are



A word from our CEO

Welcome to the autumn edition of East Kent Mencap's newsletter where we share stories of members adapting to the new guidelines for staying safe.

During the sunny weather, some members were able to get and about, in their gardens, parks and beaches, with the help of support workers. We were also delighted to welcome more people back to our Day Resources, and have created safe spaces following COVID secure guidelines. I know this isn't an option for everyone and so we are continuing to offer online activities and sessions that you can access from home on a computer or tablet. If you've not tried an online session yet, do give it a go. I've joined some sessions over the last few weeks and seen how much fun people are having! A favourite was our first virtual Fun Day at the end of July where we were joined by some familiar faces to dance, sign, craft and exercise. There are some lovely photos in this issue of people taking part and you can still watch the highlights on YouTube.

Everyone has had to adapt over the last few months including Kent County Council who recently introduced an exciting new scheme called KARA, which we are very proud to be part of. KARA provides simple tablets connected to the phone line giving people easy access to their chosen friends and family. Over 80 of our members are now connected in this way.

You will see from the long list of 'Thank you's that the generosity of people during this crisis has been wonderful. I wanted to add my personal thanks to everyone who has supported East Kent Mencap, including staff, volunteers, members, families and friends.

If you know anyone who would like to know more about our work and the difference their support could make, do share this newsletter with them and encourage them to sign up to receive future issues by emailing or calling us.

We welcome anyone with a learning disability to our activities and sessions, which are all listed on our website. If you'd like to meet people and try many activities, we'd love to hear from you.

Take care.

Jason Gerlack
Chief Executive Officer at
East Kent Mencap



If you or someone you care for has a learning disability and needs support, please do get in touch. We are here to help.

01843 808 964

@EastKentMencap on Facebook

info@eastkentmencap.co.uk

www.eastkentmencap.co.uk

Update on our services

East Kent Mencap goes above and beyond to ensure our members are supported, whatever the situation. With the pandemic and lockdown, we have altered how we deliver our services, with some becoming virtual and additional safety measures being put in place. Below is an outline of how our services are currently running.

Day Resource—Our Day Resources in Herne Bay, Margate, Ramsgate and Sheerness are conducting some sessions virtually, and some in person with social distancing. Our Day Resource members have been grouped in ‘bubbles’, so that contact between people is limited to small numbers. We’ve increased our cleaning protocols, including having temperature checks when entering our building and with staff wearing PPE.

Community Support and Housing— We are continuing to support members in their homes and to access their local community safely, with staff wearing PPE and hygiene standards being kept high. We have recently supported members to move into vacant rooms in one of our properties and a property recently purchased by the charity, to receive additional support during lockdown.

Children and Youth—We are continuing to support children and young people with complex needs at our centres, with staff wearing PPE. We have reorganised rooms and office spaces in our buildings to provide a greater number of suitable spaces for this service, to ensure that social distancing is maintained.

GOLD—Our GOLD team are keeping in regular contact with their members, organising virtual social sessions, answering questions, giving advice and keeping everyone connected.

KARA—Many of our members are now using KARA tablets provided by Kent County Council, supported by East Kent Mencap. This is a new accessible way to communicate virtually, to keep in touch with friends, receive reminders, and access valuable support while shielding. Read on for more information!

Events and Clubs—We will not be holding large events or clubs this year, however we have an exciting calendar of virtual events planned for members to get involved with from home! Read on to find out more.

ScrapStore @ EKM— The ScrapStore @ EKM is now open virtually! Check out this new green initiative our GOLD team are running, offering craft supplies at affordable prices, on Instagram @scrapstore.ekm

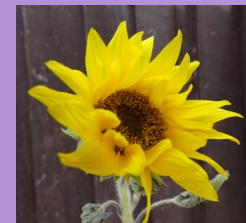
Funding this newsletter

A huge thank you to the Kent Fire and Rescue Service who raised an incredible £500 for us, which is funding this newsletter! A huge thank you to all those involved in the fundraising and Steve the Community Liaison for organising it.

If you know an organisation who would like to fund our next newsletter, please email funds@eastkentmencap.co.uk



Activities at our services



Gardening at Herne Bay Day Resource

Herne Bay Day Resource are transforming their outside space into a green haven, thanks to funding from Canterbury City Council and Tesco Bags of Help. Open spaces and gardens have become important during the pandemic as a place for staying fit or simply relaxing. Originally, the council agreed to fund a new fitness club but the virus meant all clubs had to be cancelled so EKM's Herne Bay Coordinators, Kelly and Louise, came up with the idea of a 'Green Gym', an outside area for exercise at whatever level suits the individual, from digging to pruning. Staff at Herne Bay will support members to plant flowers and produce. There will be a covered area for parents and carers when collecting people, to enable them to socially distance outside whilst waiting. There's a lot to do!

If you have a learning disability and may enjoy helping to create the garden, get in touch to arrange a Day Resource taster session.

We are also looking for donations of plants, compost, materials to create raised beds and seating, and people to help with dig and build. Get in touch on 01843 808 964 or info@eastkentmencap.co.uk



Virtual Day Resource sessions

Our Day Resource teams across East Kent have been running virtual Day Resource sessions during lockdown so that members stay connected and active.

Check out these wonderful images of the Thanet Day Resource members and staff enjoying their sessions!



Upcycling at Sheerness Day Resource

In Sheerness our upcycling group are picking up where they left off before lockdown. Here's Dennis, who put a lot of effort into sanding this chair with his fellow member Phil. Once he's painted this one, only three more to go! They're doing a brilliant job!



A walk by the sea in Thanet

Here are Joe and Daniel in Thanet enjoying the lovely sunny weather a couple of weeks ago. They decided between them where they wanted to go and chose to stop off for an ice cream and took time out to watch the jet skis.

Both Joe and Daniel really enjoy getting out and about and have taken every opportunity to have a walk and some exercise with staff support during lockdown.



Cooking at home

Our members Amy and Pierre have been cooking new things during lockdown. One meal they have made for the first time is egg y bread.

Our member Stephen was supported at home in Deal to create this beautiful pie.

Our members are regularly supported at home to cook and bake, learning about health, developing new skills and having a lot of fun in the process!



Follow East Kent Mencap on social media to keep up to date with our services, virtual events and activities!

Search for @EastKentMencap on



Keeping safe and carrying on!

Social distancing

Our members have been keeping safe and social distancing, while carrying on with their lives and having some fun too!



In Thanet, our members Amy, Pierre, Robert and Neil had great fun playing games in the park together whilst keeping socially distanced. Support Workers have been explaining the Government guidelines to our members to help everyone understand why we have to do things differently at the moment.

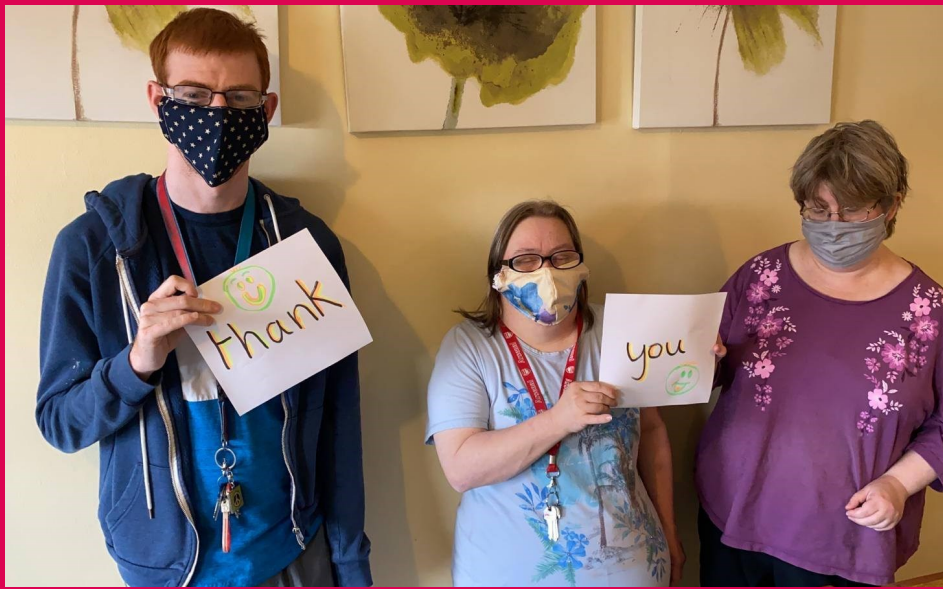
Wearing masks when shopping

On the Isle of Sheppey, our members Dennis and Phil wore their new East Kent Mencap face masks while shopping with EKM staff to buy food for their cooking session at our Sheerness Day Resource.



In Thanet, Maureen enjoying her shopping trip and wearing her mask.





Thank you!

Our members would like to say a huge thank you to one of our supporters, Linda, for making and donating these beautiful face masks! Here's a little token of appreciation from them.

Travelling safely

Sara travelled to Gillingham with staff support to see her friend who she hadn't seen for a while. Sara remembered all the safety precautions she needed to take and made sure she had her mask and hand gel with her all the time. They had a lovely packed lunch in the park before Sara returned home where she followed all the safety measures in place.

New communications service for members

East Kent Mencap was delighted to be chosen by Kent County Council to take part in their new service, KARA, providing vulnerable people across Kent with virtual care and support via video carephones. In partnership with RETHINK Partners and Alcove, Kent County Council launched the KARA service as part of a response to the coronavirus pandemic. Even those with little or no technical ability are now able to connect with loved ones and caregivers. KCC have commented that EKM was the 'most productive organization' taking part in the programme as our staff have so far supported the rollout of 75 units to members with tablets still going out. Members tell us they are making great use of their tablets!

The photo shows Natalie delivering a tablet to Robert, so they can chat to each other virtually whenever they like.



Events

We know how important our clubs, dances and events are to our members and wanted to keep you up to date.

In the current situation, to protect everyone's health, we cannot bring large groups of people back together because this could spread the virus.

For this reason we will only hold virtual events this year for larger groups of people

We will continue to follow the Government advice and how we can return these popular events safely.

East Kent Mencap is extremely proud of how many people we have supported online and are developing even more opportunities.

This decision does not affect our plans to continue supporting people in their homes or the community which have carried on since the outbreak.

We have been able to keep some day services running all the way through the crisis and are now welcoming back more people in small groups. We look forward to seeing more of you in the next few months.

For details of all our services, call:

01843 808964

or email:

info@eastkentmencap.co.uk

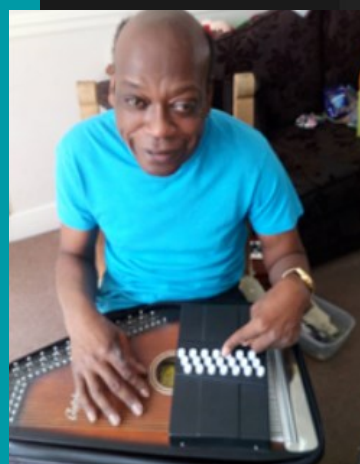
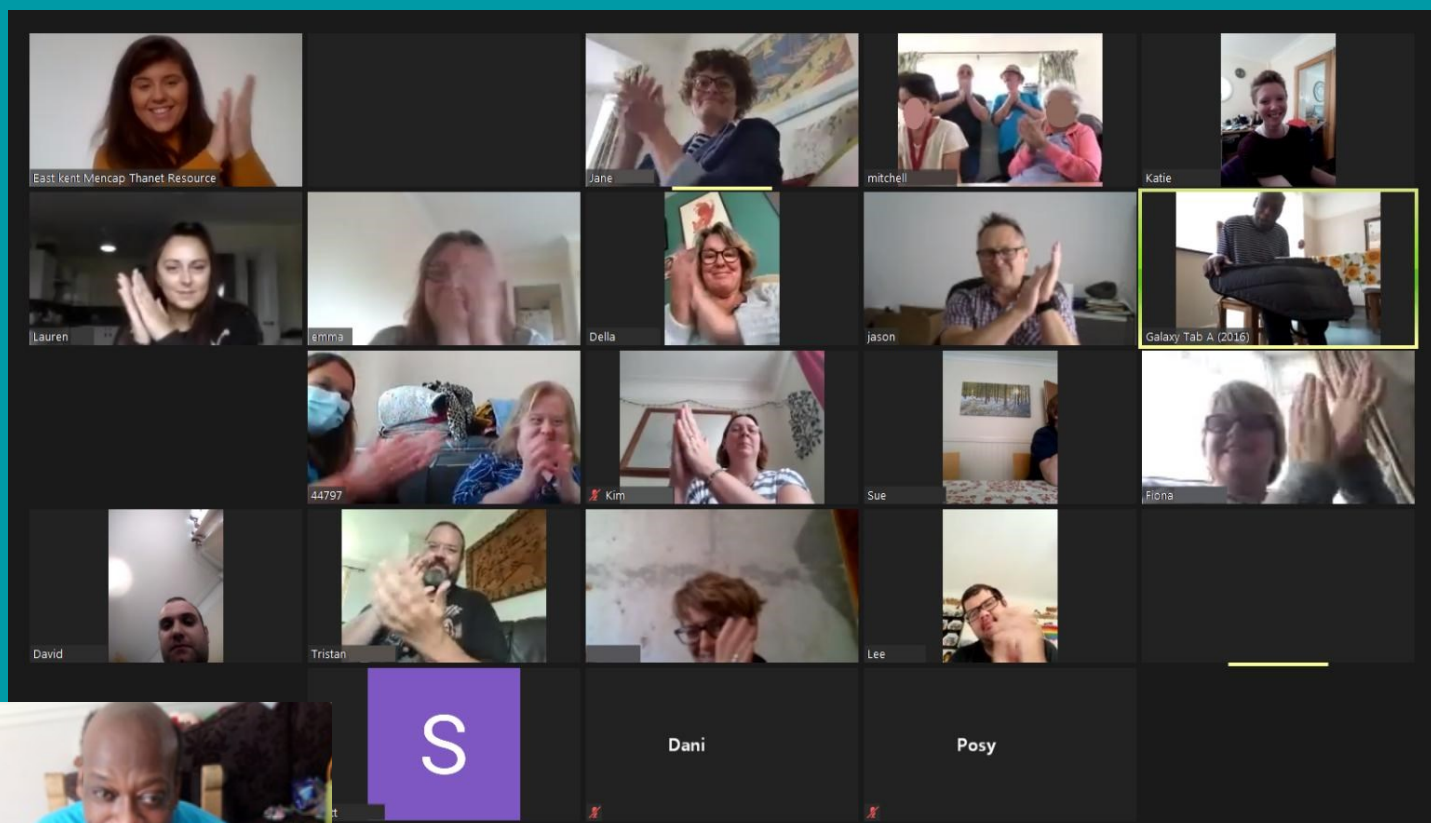


Virtual Fun Day

We had an amazing Virtual Fun Day recently on our Facebook page, run by our Community Fundraising Officer, Demi! It was a whole day event, featuring activity videos by some of our Support Workers including cooking and gardening, an exercise video from Your Leisure, music performances by our brilliant supporter Jen Barlow, and a virtual disco by GEMS nightclub!

Demi provided members with party packs before the big day, which included activity resources, flower garlands and sunglasses, to help everyone to get into the party spirit. Check out all the wonderful photos on the previous page of our members getting involved in the Virtual Fun Day from home.

39 members and staff got involved in the day from home, and we've received so many brilliant comments about it that we're planning more virtual events—Stay tuned on our social media channels for the announcements!



Stephen's autoharp concert

We have also recently hosted an autoharp concert by our member Stephen on Zoom, which was watched live by a highly enthusiastic virtual crowd of 34 members and staff—and you can now watch the recording on our YouTube channel!

Upcoming virtual events! Get involved

Natalie's story, online film premier! - Wednesday 7th October, midday

Join us on Facebook or YouTube to watch the premier of this special film by our Support Workers to celebrate Natalie's amazing journey during the last six months as she recovers from Covid-19.

EKM's Got Talent 2020—Monday 19th—Friday 23rd October, throughout the day

Join us on Facebook or YouTube to celebrate the amazing talents of our members! We will share videos of members performing every day during this week, with winners announced on Friday!

A new home brings a new start

Two of our members are looking forward to a new start after East Kent Mencap purchased a house for them!

Our member Stephen originally asked EKM for advice for him and his flatmate, Nick, as they were having some problems with their current home. Housing Manager, Kim Dorman, commented that, 'finding good

rental properties in Thanet can be tricky, so the best solution was to buy a house that suited their needs where they could live for as long as they wanted. We were fortunate to find the ideal property in Ramsgate, not far from where they



were living. It even has a small garden they can enjoy during good weather. Our homes are even more important at the moment and we were delighted to be able to help Stephen and Nick find their perfect home.'

Despite the ongoing crisis, the purchase went ahead at the end of March. There was some work to do on the house before the tenants could move in, which was carried out with due care to social distancing.

East Kent Mencap has a number of properties for people with a learning disability with support ranging from 24 hours to a few hours a week, enabling tenants to live as independently as possible. It is undergoing a period of modernisation, upgrading its older properties and investing in new housing across East Kent.

Stephen and Nick have now moved in and are delighted with their new home saying, 'it is much bigger than our flat and it will be lovely to sit in the garden with a beer!!'



Fundraising

Did you know? **Give as you Live Online** is a free and easy way to raise money for EKM by shopping online! You can enjoy shopping online while making a difference to people with a learning disability!

Once you've signed up, you can browse over 4000 popular stores on the Give as You Live website and find one you wish to shop with. Click 'Shop & Raise' which will take you to their website and you can shop as normal. It's completely free! You will be kept up to date with how much you're raising for us.

As you prepare for Christmas, help us to prepare for another year of providing life changing opportunities for adults and children across East Kent. To get signed up, head to: www.giveasyoulive.com, select East Kent Mencap, and shop while making a difference!



Christmas Appeal

We know that this year is going to be different with the restrictions in place. We want to start planning early to make sure we can support all our members to enjoy some festive cheer. Please consider including a gift to East Kent Mencap on your Christmas List. It's easy to donate using the 'Make a Donation' button on our website, by calling or posting a cheque to us. Here are five more ways you can help:

1. Buying presents on line? Please use EKM's Give As You Live link (details above). ❄️ ❄️ ❄️
2. No Christmas Party? Donate some of the money you've saved on drinks to EKM.
3. Doing a Christmas supermarket shop? Pop in a box of chocolates or biscuits as an EKM raffle prize.
4. Not sure what to buy for a craft loving cousin? How about a gift voucher from our ScrapStore? Find out more about the ScrapStore on our website www.eastkentmencap.co.uk
5. Writing your Christmas wish list? Put EKM on it and spread the Christmas Cheer.

Thank you for your support from everyone at East Kent Mencap.

Thank you for supporting us!

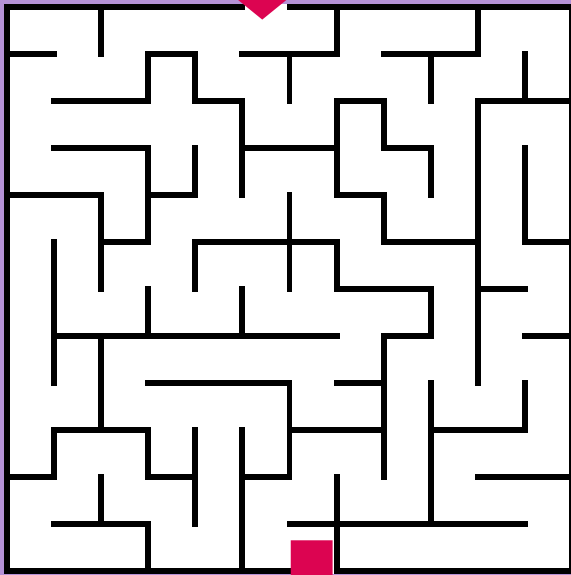
- £500 from Fire Officers
- Barbara Barber
- PPE from Sisters at Minster Abbey
- £24,984 from Architectural Heritage Fund to design and apply for planning permission to refurbish our listed Ramsgate premises, providing vital extra space as face to face services re-open.
- £1,500 from Tesco Bags of Help for Day Resources in Ramsgate and Sheppey for activity packs delivered to members homes, and in Herne Bay to create a garden.
- £2,000 from Kent Community Foundation for PPE.
- £28,892 from the Lottery to fund an IT system that allows our staff to communicate with people from home securely.
- £3,235 from Natalie's 39 Steps Challenge! As Natalie continues to recover from COVID, her mother Linda set up a Go Fund Me page inviting people to sponsor Natalie to take 39 steps and raise £2,000 for East Kent Mencap. In September, Natalie celebrated her birthday by not only managing to complete the walk but also by smashing her fundraising target! Huge congratulations to Natalie, her family and supporters for this extraordinary achievement.
- Laptops from Computers4Charity
- The Harrington Family



Games Zone!

As some of us are starting to leave the house more, see if you can find your way from home to East Kent Mencap in this maze!

And then try and find words about spending time with family and friends in this word search!



Q	A	O	R	Z	C	S	P	N	M	C	N	E	M
U	G	T	E	O	M	N	P	U	A	F	G	S	B
E	F	T	H	O	O	N	R	W	O	E	B	O	T
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Registered charity number: 1188118
Registered company number: 12263702

East Kent

Find out more about our virtual events and services by getting in touch or visit our website

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