

The East Kent Mencap interview: Maria Kourellias, Senior Support Worker.

Maria shares in five minutes what it is like to be a Support Worker and how she can't wait for the forthcoming drama performance.



Natalie and Maria

As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we are interviewing key people who have been involved with the charity, including members of our award-winning staff team. Maria Kourellias has been at East Kent Mencap for 9 years.

Describe your role at East Kent Mencap?

I am a Senior Support Worker. Alongside the manager, I oversee the Ramsgate Hub and I also sometimes work at our Margate Hub. I organise and take part in daily activities supporting people with a learning disability.

What's the first thing you do when you get to work?

I start the day with a coffee and a croissant, then I am ready to go! I always check the diary first and make a plan for the day.

What's the best thing about your job?

I enjoy working with lots of different people, both in the community and at East Kent Mencap.

It's great to be able to provide amazing opportunities through our community partnerships for individuals with a learning disability, to broaden their horizons, whether that's at our Hub or in the local area.

What's the worst thing about your job?

Paperwork! I am such a people person and I love being hands-on. However, it must be done as it is a very important part of the job.

What's up next for you?

We have an exciting new drama production 'East Kent Mencap Goes Cruising' and we will be performing on Thursday 27th July at Holy Trinity Church, Margate. We have been practising for months and it will be fantastic to watch the group perform on stage to all their friends and family.

What would you say to someone thinking of starting a career as a Support Worker?

Don't think about it, do it! It will bring you so much joy and happiness. It is extremely rewarding to support and provide opportunities

to people with a learning disability and then see them flourish and achieve great things.

What inspired you to work at East Kent Mencap with people with a learning disability?

My brother was born with Spina Bifida, so I have always had an understanding and affinity for people with additional needs.

I started my career training in the additional needs sector, but then I took a different path working with young homeless people. It was many years later that I joined East Kent Mencap, originally it was just for 3 months, but 9 years later I am still here and couldn't imagine doing anything else.

If you have a story to share about your experience with East Kent Mencap, please do get in touch at funds@eastkentmencap.co.uk.