

Winter Newsletter 2025



Disco Fun



Gym Sessions



Getting Crafty

Hello from our CEO Jason Gerlack



Welcome to our Winter Newsletter!

We hope you enjoy reading this edition as we reflect on a busy and, at times, challenging year.



Looking back, we are incredibly proud of the hard work and outstanding achievements across East Kent Mencap.



As we step into the New Year, we are excited to share news about the development of our services in Ashford and Folkestone. They will bring even more opportunities to the people we support.



Thank you for choosing East Kent Mencap and for helping us continually improve what we offer.



A heartfelt thank you to our amazing employees, volunteers, and supporters. It is you that makes everything possible.



Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Best wishes, Jason

Our Members' Committee

The Members' Committee started in 2018. The committee has been working for 8 years.



- They have helped the NHS make Easy Read documents.



- They have visited places as secret (covert) patients to check if services are accessible.



- They have spoken up for other members when they were having problems.

The committee makes sure members' voices are heard.

Thank you to all our committee members who make a huge difference in our community.

GOLD News



Some members of our GOLD project have been taking part in our Living Skills Affordable Cooking course, learning how to follow easy read recipes, work to a budget, and build practical skills like weighing, measuring and timing.

On 9th December, the group prepared a batch of cakes together.



Annija told us: “This is a very messy job,” as she carefully divided the mixture into cases.



Kirk shared: “This is me, mixing.” Dan added his own creative touch by decorating the cakes at the end.



The course supports members to grow in confidence, learn useful everyday skills and enjoy cooking in a relaxed, supportive space.



Our GOLD project also runs The ScrapStore, a green initiative that reduces waste in Thanet. Visitors can pick up affordable craft materials from our treasure trove of donated supplies.



The ScrapStore is run by volunteers with and without a learning disability. It is open Wednesday to Saturday, 10am to 2pm.



GOLD is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.



Our Ramsgate and Margate Hubs joined the Thanet Games for a brilliant day of activities at Dane Park.



Members enjoyed a mix of fun sessions, including learning CPR with the local ambulance service, and were delighted to receive their medals and prizes.

A big thank you to Thanet District Council for organising such an inclusive and enjoyable day.



Ronnie, from our Thanet Hubs Team, was celebrated at the Thanet Community Champions Awards for her work creating new opportunities for our members. She has been with East Kent Mencap for 17 years.

Ronnie said she was proud to receive the award and loves seeing members grow in confidence and independence.

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Iona and Tina have made great progress in our Stitch and Sew sessions. They worked on their Skirt Project and built confidence over the year. Both learned to use the sewing machine and improved their hand-stitching skills. The sessions support creativity, independence and the joy of making something by hand.



Ramsgate members visited Pegwell to pick blackberries. They then baked a delicious homemade crumble together.



The cookery session helped everyone learn practical kitchen skills and enjoy working as a team. It also supported learning about sustainability and reducing waste.



At our Margate Hub, Colin created a colourful piece inspired by local artist Margo McDaid's Swimmers artwork. His version captured the bold, graphic style of the original. He also added his own creativity and flair. The artwork shows how our sessions encourage confidence and personal expression.



East Kent Mencap was recognised at this year's KiCA Awards, having been shortlisted among organisations across Kent that deliver outstanding care and support.



Although we did not receive a trophy on the night, being named as a finalist was a meaningful acknowledgement of the commitment and passion our staff and members brought to our work every day. The recognition highlighted the impact of our services and the difference we made together for people with a learning disability across East Kent.



We are proud of this achievement and remain dedicated to providing high-quality support, creating opportunities and championing choice for our community.

Halloween Party Pics from across the hubs



We were treated to a visit from the Mayor of Margate, Katie Pope!



News - November



Every Tuesday morning, members from our Sheerness Hub visit the Sheppey Healthy Living Centre for their weekly gym session. The group has been building confidence, trying new equipment and focusing on the fitness goals that matter to them.



Emma told us: “I like my gym session and it helps me to feel healthier.”

These sessions are all about feeling good, enjoying movement and having the support to work towards personal goals.



Natasha has been proudly showing off the tomatoes grown at the Zion Place community dojo.

It has been another positive community partnership for members at 132 Northdown Road in Margate, and a lovely chance to spend time together outdoors.



A warm thank you to everyone who joined us at our Ashford Hub open day at The Ashford Cinema. It was great to welcome supporters, share our plans for the new hub opening in 2026, and meet partners interested in future opportunities.

Festive News

Herne Bay Christmas Market

On Friday 5th December, the Herne Bay hub team held an inspiring Christmas market, packed with handmade gifts, lovingly crafted by our members. Take a look at some of the pictures.



Support our Christmas Wishlist!

Help us provide more opportunities for adults with a learning disability at our hubs. Our hub managers have chosen items that make a real difference, including safe kitchen equipment, craft materials, activity kits and resources for creative sessions.

Every gift helps our members build skills, confidence and independence. Scan the QR code to view the wishlist and support East Kent Mencap today.



World News



26th November was Fuel Poverty Awareness Day, which raises awareness of people struggling to keep their homes warm in winter.

East Kent Mencap is working with SGN to provide free energy safety advice for people with a learning disability across East Kent.



Support includes help joining the Priority Services Register, information about locking cooker valves, carbon monoxide safety and free alarms, plus tips on saving energy at home.



For more information, contact Becky Walker:
Rebecca.walker@eastkentmencap.co.uk or 07936 607504.

budget



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In November, the government announced this year's Budget, which explains how public money will be raised and spent.



It covers funding for services like health and social care, benefits, education and transport, and how this will be paid for through tax.

Royal Mencap welcomed several parts of the Budget. There will be **fewer PIP reassessments** for people with a learning disability. There will be **more face-to-face assessments** for disability benefits, and the hope is that people can choose the type of assessment that suits them best.

Apprenticeships for under-25s will be free for small and medium businesses, which could open up more training and work opportunities. The government will also **end the two-child benefit cap**, which will help many families and reduce child poverty.

Scan to read more:

www.mencap.org.uk/blog/our-thoughts-budget



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