

Summer Updates



Movie Makers



Adventurers



Boxers



A Message from our CEO on behalf of the Board of Trustees and Directors of East Kent Mencap

This is one of the saddest moments in East Kent Mencap's recent history. After an extensive period of careful review, our Board has taken the extremely difficult decision to close our specialist Hub for people with complex needs. This is a decision none of us wanted to make and was reached only after carefully exploring the reasonable options available to sustain the service.

The specialist Hub has been much more than a place where support is delivered. For the people who attend, their families and carers, and our employees, it has been a community built on trust, valued relationships and years of shared experiences. We fully recognise the sadness and uncertainty this decision will bring, and our thoughts remain with everyone affected.

The proposed final day of service delivery is 26 October 2026. This period is intended to allow transition arrangements to be carefully planned and to minimise disruption as far as possible.

We have already been speaking directly with the people affected and their families and carers. We will continue to listen to them and work constructively with the Local Authority and other relevant professionals so that each person's needs, preferences and circumstances are understood and appropriately reflected in transition planning. We will do everything reasonably within our role to support a carefully planned and compassionate transition.

Our first responsibility is to the people East Kent Mencap supports, both now and in the years to come. The funding available for this service is no longer sufficient to meet the cost of providing the safe, high-quality and person-centred support people deserve. Continuing to operate a service that is not financially sustainable would place the wider charity, its other services and the many people who rely upon them at significant risk.

This is not a challenge unique to East Kent Mencap. Charities and care providers across the UK are experiencing significant and sustained financial pressures.

The costs of delivering safe and effective care have risen considerably, while available funding has struggled to keep pace. We believe this difficult moment should contribute to a wider and necessary conversation about how care and support services can be sustainably resourced and made viable for the future.

While this Hub is closing, the wider East Kent Mencap team continues its work. Our other Hubs remain open, and our Community Support, Housing and wider Charity Services continue to support people every day. Our mission remains unchanged: East Kent Mencap exists to help ensure that people with a learning disability have the same opportunities, rights and quality of life as everyone else.

I would also like to pay tribute to our employees. Their professionalism, compassion and unwavering commitment to the people we support have been exceptional, often in increasingly challenging circumstances. We are immensely proud of the difference they have made to so many lives.

If you have general questions about this announcement, please contact info@eastkentmencap.co.uk and a member of the team will respond as soon as possible. People directly affected by the closure should continue to use the contact arrangements already provided to them so that individual matters can be handled appropriately and confidentially.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank everyone who has supported East Kent Mencap: our members, the people who use our services, families and carers, employees, volunteers, commissioning partners and supporters.

This is an incredibly difficult chapter in our history, but it will not define our future. We remain determined to ensure that people with a learning disability are supported, valued and empowered for many years to come.

- Jason Gerlack, CEO, East Kent Mencap

Members' committee news



We are currently arranging the next members' committee meetings, which will take place during September and October. Monthly meetings are currently on hold, but members continue to be contacted directly when managers and the Senior Management Team (SMT) would like their views and feedback.



Members' voices continue to play an important part in our decisions. Earlier this year, the members' committee was consulted about plans to improve the road at our Swale site. Following further discussions and approval, the work went ahead and has greatly improved accessibility.



For Vanessa, the improved access has been particularly important. It has enabled her to move into one of our supported living bungalows, where she says she feels safe and enjoys spending time in her new garden.

Since moving, Vanessa has been developing her independent living skills, including cooking and batch cooking, and building her confidence using public transport.

Vanessa said: "Now I have moved, I enjoy spending time in my new garden."

The improvement is a great example of how listening to members can lead to meaningful changes in the lives of the people we support.

Members have been enjoying a range of cooking activities, while building confidence and practical skills in the new Herne Bay hub kitchen - made possible thanks to funding from Kent Community Foundation.



Herne Bay Hub member Shorne enjoys his sessions and the variety of activities on offer. During cooking sessions, he has grown in confidence and now uses knives independently without finger guards.



Shorne said: "I have learnt the colours of the chopping boards and what they are used for. I have learnt to cut things up safely. I'm getting more confident at cutting onions by myself. I enjoy taking part with the group and working together to make bakes and meals. I get a lot of enjoyment out of it."



Member Adam has also made great progress in the kitchen. With practice and support, he can now crack an egg into a bowl independently.

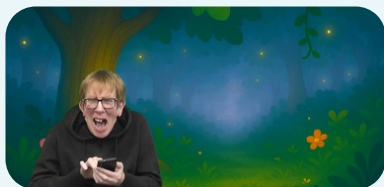
Adam said: "Learning makes me feel great and I love the baking."



Members also marked national food days, including National Fish and Chip Day and Ice Cream Day. They learned about different foods and enjoyed some delicious taste tests along the way.



A huge thank you to Star Fish Bar in Herne Bay for cooking up a storm!



Our Ramsgate hub members have created their very own film - If You Go Down To The Hoods Today.



Set in a fairy tale world, we follow Little Red as she navigates everyday life while avoiding the Big Bad Wolf and his scamming wolf pack. She's helped along the way by a heroic team called The Interceptors, and guided by her wise grandma.



In April, Ramsgate hub hosted a special premiere to celebrate the film and showcase the work of our members.



Members have been enjoying inclusive boxing sessions with local gym T50 Boxing & Fitness Academy. For many members, the sessions have helped them develop their confidence, strength and independence.



Alex Stockley, Head Coach and Director at T50 Boxing & Fitness Academy, said: "Coming to see East Kent Mencap's members each week is truly rewarding and inspiring. Watching their confidence grow alongside their boxing skills makes us incredibly proud. Every week we leave with smiles on our faces."



Member Loretta has improved her upper core strength and says she enjoys the sessions immensely. Member Allegra says the inclusive approach makes a real difference: "Alex and the team make it feel inclusive for me. It gives me an 'I can do it' attitude."

Ashford hub

Our brand new **Ashford hub** at Kennington Parish Room will support people with a learning disability to make friends, learn new skills, build confidence and connect with their local community.

What's on offer?

-  Arts and crafts
-  Cooking and baking
-  Health and wellbeing activities
-  Sports and physical activities
-  Life skills development
-  Getting involved in local projects
-  Social events and friendship-building activities
-  Nature-based sensory sessions



Come and see us!

We're excited to invite you to our special opening events!



**Saturday
19 September
10am - 2pm**

Grand opening

Explore the hub, meet the team, enjoy activities, refreshments and celebrate with us.



**Friday
25 September
10am - 12pm**

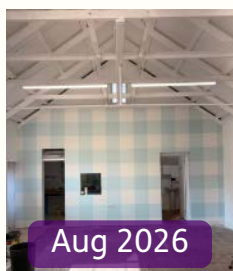
Networking lunch

Meet local organisations and businesses, connect with East Kent Mencap and see what's on offer.

Our progress



Jan 2026



Aug 2026

Stay up to date

Want the latest news from our Ashford hub?

Scan the QR code to sign up to our newsletter.



Folkestone hub

Our new **Folkestone hub** provides a friendly, inclusive space where people with a learning disability can make friends, learn new skills and enjoy activities that support independence and connection.

What's on offer?



Arts and crafts



Cooking and baking



Access to a sensory room



Health and wellbeing activities



Sports and physical activities



Life skills development



Getting involved in local projects



Social events and friendship-building activities

Recent highlights

Health and nature sessions



Hapa zome art, created with fresh leaves



Members have been enjoying time outdoors, exploring local green spaces, creating hapa zome art and so much more.

These sessions are generously supported by Kent County Council Nature's Way to Wellbeing Health & Nature Fund.



There are lots more exciting activities and opportunities to come as our Folkestone hub grows.

Watch this space!

Stay up to date

Want to hear what's happening at our Folkestone hub?

Scan the QR code to sign up to our newsletter.



REFERRALS OPEN FOR BOTH HUBS!

Contact us to make a referral or find out more:

✉ info@eastkentmencap.co.uk



In a recent upcycling session, Swale hub member Mark made a water dropper irrigation bottle to help keep the plants watered during the warmer weather. It's a simple but really effective idea that makes a big difference in the garden.



The project gave Mark the chance to reuse everyday materials while learning how to make something practical for the garden.

Mark said: "I like making new things that are useful. It helps me to learn new skills."



Over the past few months, Swale hub members have been taking part in Scenes on Sheppey, a series of sessions exploring the local area and discovering more about the places and communities around them.

As part of the sessions, members visited Rose Cottage of Curiosities, where they learned more about the local history and explored the fascinating collection.



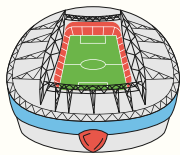
The team at Rose Cottage kindly donated some books to our members, which they can continue to enjoy and learn from.

Swale hub member Luke said: "Our visit was amazing and I learnt history. It was very interesting."

Dennis and Ian score a goal for independence



Dennis and Ian recently achieved a goal they had been working towards for a long time.



The pair travelled independently to Emirates Stadium to watch Arsenal play Newcastle. They planned the journey, organised their tickets and travelled to and from the match on their own.



This was a goal discussed during key worker meetings. With support from East Kent Mencap employee Martine, Ian planned the journey, worked out the costs and booked the tickets.



When they arrived, they had a problem with their tickets. Together, they sorted it out independently.



Dennis said: "I loved the atmosphere when the goals were scored and singing along to the chants."



Ian said: "A supporter hugged me when Arsenal scored. It made me feel part of the experience."



After the trip, Ian set himself a new goal: to attend an Arsenal match independently in the future. Well done Dennis and Ian!



GOLD Celebrations



In June, we celebrated the wonderful impact of GOLD and looked back at members' highlights from over the years. We were joined by Raushan Ara, Mayor of Ramsgate, and Leo Britcher, Mayor of Margate, who helped us mark the occasion.

After 11 years, GOLD (Getting On with Learning Difficulties) has now come to an end. The project supported people with a learning difficulty in Thanet to build confidence, become more independent and stay connected to their communities. Through 1-to-1 support and group activities, GOLD helped people with everyday challenges, build friendships and take part in community life.

Impact and achievements

GOLD has supported a wide range of outcomes across Thanet, from increased independence to education, employment and advocacy opportunities. In the last three years alone, GOLD has:



Helped over

100

people with a
learning difficulty
in Kent



Successfully
supported

5

PIP tribunals resulting
in backdated
payments being
awarded



Supported

2

people into paid
employment



Helped

14

people access
regular voluntary
work

This includes people moving into charity shop roles, taking part in co-research work with the University of Kent Tizard Centre, and contributing to training sessions with Canterbury Christ Church University for nurses and doctors.

Fundraise for us

Did you know there are around 38,000 people living with a learning disability in Kent?

At East Kent Mencap, we support people to develop skills, build confidence, make friends and live more independently in their communities.

As we continue to grow our services and open new hubs across Kent, we're looking for supporters to help us raise vital funds.

There are lots of ways to get involved:

Take on a local challenge

Sign up for a run, walk, cycle ride or fundraising event in your area.

Create your own fundraiser

From bake sales and quiz nights to sponsored challenges, every effort helps make a difference.

Make a donation



If fundraising isn't for you, a donation can help us continue supporting people with a learning disability to thrive.

Visit our JustGiving page to support our work:

www.justgiving.com/campaign/ekm

Vicki takes on London Marathon in support of East Kent Mencap

and Suicide Prevention UK

Our Herne Bay hub coordinator, Vicki, is taking on the London Marathon to raise £5,000 for East Kent Mencap and Suicide Prevention UK.

Funds will be split equally between both charities, with our share helping create more opportunities for people with a learning disability across East Kent.

Scan to donate



CCCU Business Games raise over £3,000

A huge thank you to Canterbury Christ Church University's Estates, Facilities and Sport Directorate for choosing East Kent Mencap as its Charity of the Year, and for kicking off the partnership with a fantastic day at the Vice-Chancellor's Business Games.

In June, local businesses came together at Polo Farm Sports Club for a day of teamwork, friendly competition and networking, taking on a range of fun and inclusive challenges.

Together, the event raised more than £3,000 for East Kent Mencap with more still coming in as further activities take place. This fantastic amount will help us continue creating opportunities and supporting people with a learning disability to live the lives they choose.

Thank you to Christ Church Sport & Active Health for organising the event, and to every team, sponsor and volunteer who helped make it such a success.

Congratulations to Canterbury Rugby Football Club, who won the Business Games, and Keep Talking Services, who received the Fair Play Award.

We're excited to continue working with Canterbury Christ Church University throughout the year and see what else our Charity of the Year partnership brings!



Fundraising updates

Thanks BNI Online Canterbury

A huge thank you to BNI Online Canterbury for their fantastic support over the past year. Through fundraising initiatives such as their fish and chip eating challenge, generous donations to our Amazon Wishlists, referrals that have led to funding opportunities, and valuable introductions to local contacts and businesses, BNI members have made a real difference to the people we support. Their encouragement, generosity and commitment to our work have helped us equip our hubs, strengthen our community connections and create more opportunities for people with learning disabilities across East Kent.



Thank you to our funders

We are incredibly grateful to the organisations, businesses and individuals who have supported East Kent Mencap with funding over the past few months.

A huge thank you to B&Q (£10,000), whose support will help transform the garden at our Halfway House in Swale, creating an improved outdoor space for the people who live there.

In Folkestone, Roger De Haan Charitable Trust (£5,000) is helping us continue our health and wellbeing project, while Cantiacorum (£2,000) and Folkestone Ward Councillors (£927) are supporting new equipment for our Folkestone hub. Kent County Council's Health & Nature Fund (£3,600) has also supported our health and wellbeing work in Folkestone.

Elsewhere, Tesco (£1,000) is supporting our Herne Bay Saturday Club, Sheerness Town Council (£500) is funding a litter-picking project, and Ashford Rotary (£250) is supporting our new hub at Kennington Parish Room.

We are also grateful to Ramsgate Town Council (£6,000) for its support and Mencap (£4,000) for funding activities for our members.

Together, this funding totals more than £33,000, supporting projects, activities and spaces across East Kent and creating more choice, opportunities and meaningful experiences for people with a learning disability. Thank you for your support.

Thank you for your support!

 funds@eastkentmencap.co.uk

The ScrapStore

Reduce. Reuse. Relove.



Open Wednesday-Saturday, 10am-2pm



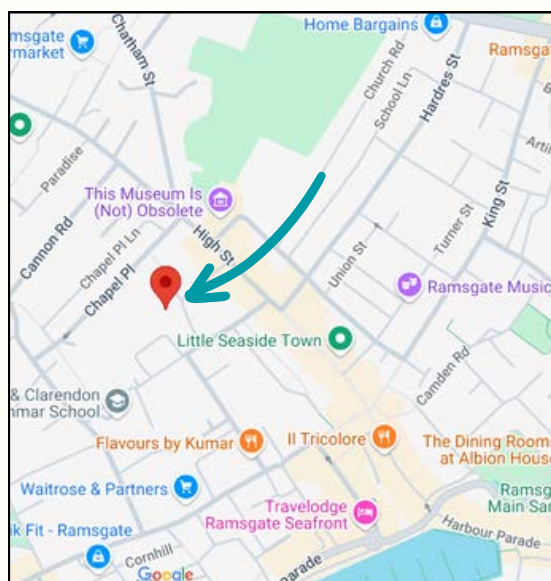
A treasure trove of donated crafting materials



Every penny raised supports people with a learning disability



Find us at Foresters Hall, Meeting Street, Ramsgate, CT11 9RT

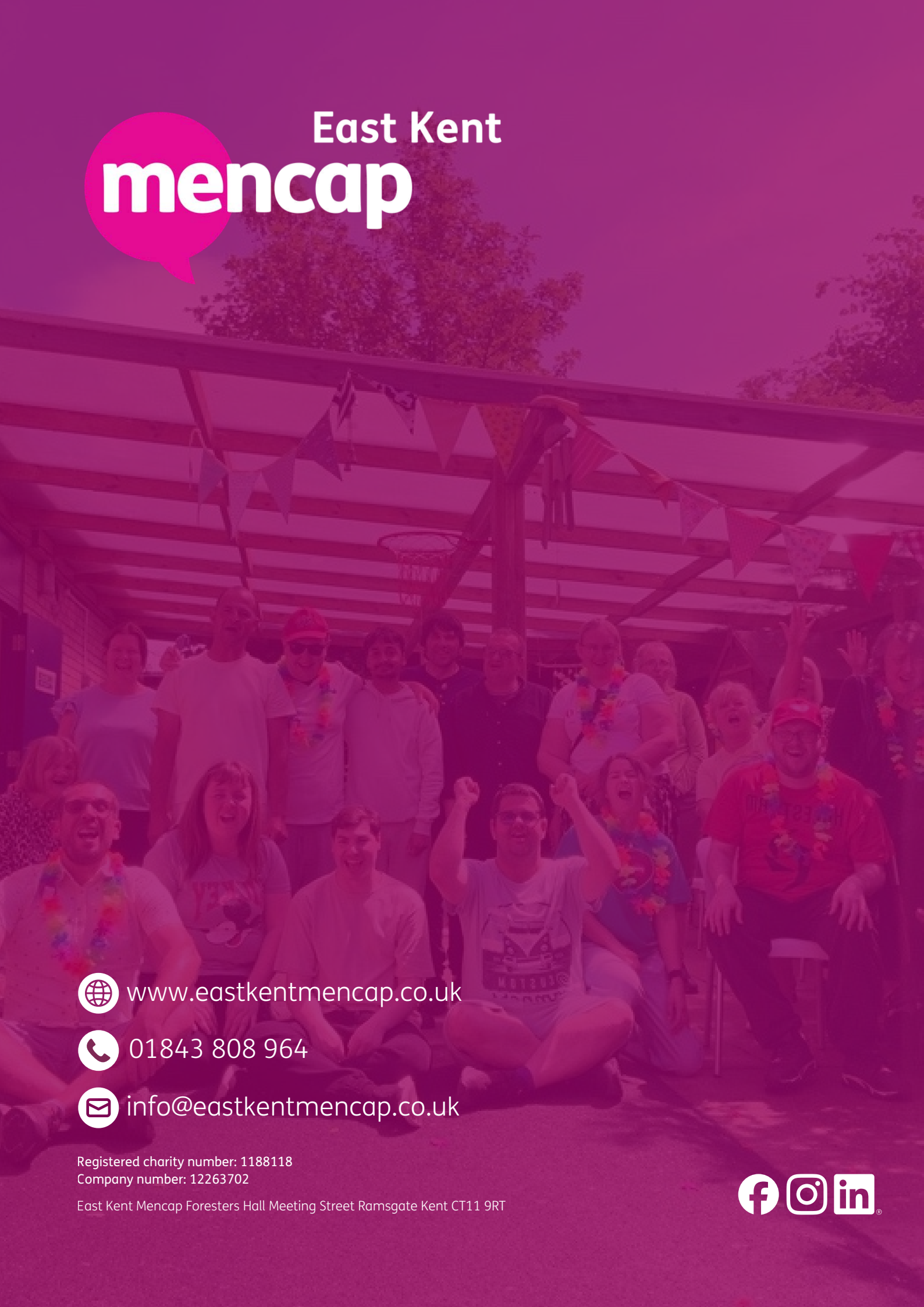


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