

STILL BUSTING MYTHS

Celebrating the achievements of people
with a learning disability



MENCAP MATTERS

Supporter magazine August 2023



mencap.org.uk/matters



WELCOME!

I'm Michael, a Mencap Myth Buster and cake company owner. Baking is one of my biggest passions! I want to see more people with a learning disability valued in business and other parts of society.

There are still barriers in the way, but Mencap is making a difference. They've helped me achieve my dreams, and other Myth Busters like Ellie. Her story is amazing, too! You can read it on page 3. Thank you for supporting Mencap. You're helping to create a more equal world for people like me.

There's a long way to go, but we can do it together!

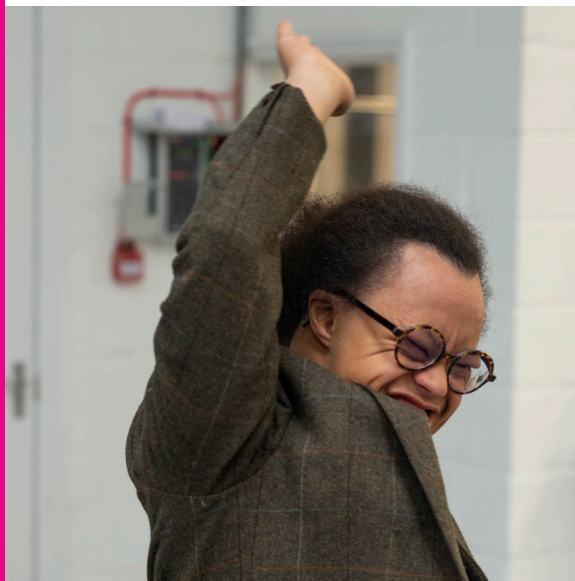
Best wishes,

Michael

FIGHTING FOR PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY TO BE SEEN AND HEARD

In your summer edition of Mencap Matters, we're putting our Myth Busters in the spotlight. They've been helping us spread the message that people with a learning disability can achieve their goals like anyone else. As well as Michael's story, we share an exciting update on fashion model Ellie. And there's more, including a lovely story about our Me Time group in Tameside publishing a book of poetry.

Thank you so much for your amazing support. You're making it possible for people with a learning disability to be valued equally, and have the chance to live a happy and healthy life.



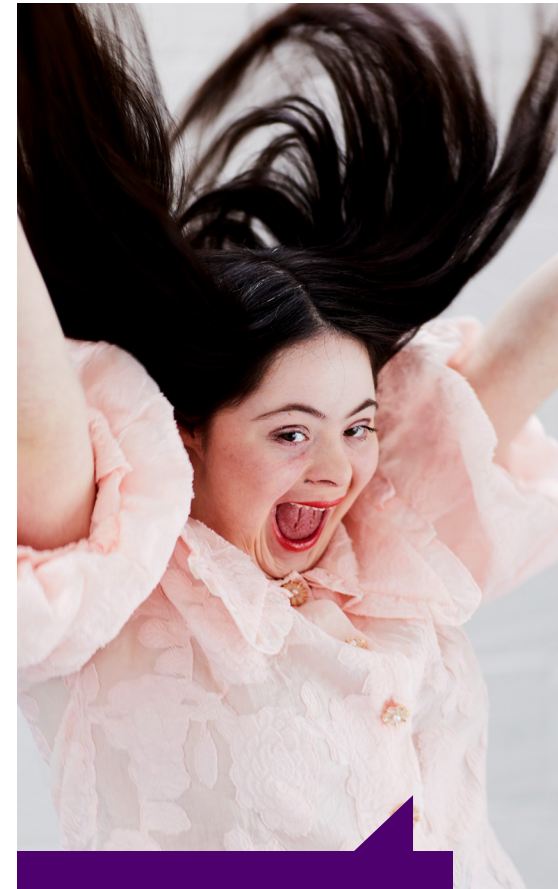
BEING ON THE COVER OF VOGUE HAS BEEN A DREAM COME TRUE!

AFTER SETTING THE WORLD ALIGHT IN A GUCCI BEAUTY CAMPAIGN, MENCAP MYTH BUSTER ELLIE HAS ACHIEVED HER ULTIMATE AMBITION.

It's been an incredible journey for 20-year-old Ellie, one of our wonderful ambassadors. The last three years have seen this cheeky lady's international modelling career go from strength to strength. And now she's made history as the first person with Down's syndrome to be on the front of Vogue magazine – what a fantastic achievement!

When Ellie became a Mencap Myth Buster, her goal was to show that people with a learning disability can be successful fashion models. And it's safe to say she's been doing an brilliant job of proving that. She's landed a string of jobs with big-name brands, while taking every opportunity to make her voice heard and speak up for people with a learning disability.

Well done, Ellie!



"I want to show you can achieve anything if you really want to. My disability never stops me."

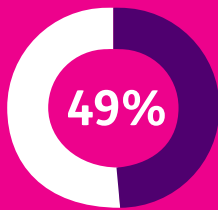
OUR FIRST HEALTH INEQUALITIES SUMMIT



IT'S NO SECRET THAT PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY CONTINUE TO FACE SHOCKING HEALTH INEQUALITIES. IN FACT, RECENT FIGURES SHOW THAT, ON AVERAGE, THEY STILL DIE 25 YEARS YOUNGER THAN THE REST OF THE POPULATION. AND THAT'S WHY WE'RE BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Whilst the stats are saddening, there has been some progress in recent years. We're proud to have played a part in the introduction of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism, and the increase in people with a learning disability getting an annual health check. But we were never going to stop there, and last year's Learning Disability Mortality Review was a reminder of how much more needs to be done.

It revealed that a staggering 49% of deaths of people with a learning disability were judged as being avoidable.



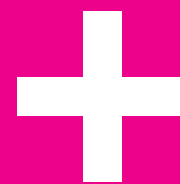
At our first Health Inequalities Summit in April, held at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, we brought together health leaders, campaigners and our patron HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh. Lots of issues were discussed, including life expectancy, avoidable deaths and barriers to healthcare. Our hope is that the annual meeting will help us to develop joint, long-term plans of action to tackle healthcare inequality.

Michelle Ornstein, Treat me well campaigner and summit attendee, said:

"I'm part of a group of people with a learning disability that promote annual health checks. I feel very strongly that other people with a learning disability need to know what a difference some small steps can make to their lives. It was very special to see everyone working together to make changes."

Dame Carolyn Fairbairn, Mencap chair, said:

"Health inequalities cannot be ignored. People with a learning disability have a right to good quality healthcare that meets their needs. By working together, we hope to tackle the shocking levels of premature death and health inequalities we continue to see."



1,200
people with a learning disability die avoidably every year.

Help us keep on campaigning for equal healthcare today!



ME TIME POETRY PROJECT LEADS TO A PUBLISHED BOOK

IT STARTED WITH ONE WORKSHOP AND GREW INTO SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER!

Earlier this year, members of Mencap's Me Time group in Tameside took part in a poetry workshop. Funded by Pears Foundation, with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) through the Volunteering Futures Fund, the workshop enabled participants to get creative and have fun with words.

Afterwards, members Paul May and Joan Woods jumped at the chance to write more poetry. Then an increasing number of participants got involved and the idea came up to create a book. And with help from some of our friends, we made it happen! Each member of the group received a copy of the book, 'Poems Are Us', and can now proudly call themselves published poets, including the talented James Bowes!



My Loves, by James Bowes

*I'm 34 years old and I have a disability
But I'm so full of love for living*

*My aunty and uncle take care of me
I'm so grateful for all of their giving*

*All of my mates come to Mencap
Covid restrictions left us all scared*

*Not being able to see my mates
Or the staff here, hit me so hard*

*I just wish it was open on Saturday and Sunday
Because I'd come at the weekend too*

*I love all of the staff, my mates, the activities
I love having a chat and a brew*

*I really love coming to Mencap
I've made so many friends it's true*

*The difference that Mencap makes to our lives
Without it, I don't know what we'd do.*



A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

"My daughter, Nicola, has a learning disability. When she decided to leave home and live more independently, the process of making that happen was quite daunting. I had no experience of the sorts of things we were encountering.

Getting support from Mencap's helpline was like a light in the darkness.

After a long road with lots of challenges, Nicola moved into supported living accommodation. She's made a home for herself, and I'm really proud of her.

With the help and support that Mencap has given me and Nicola, why wouldn't I try to leave some sort of legacy for other families like us who will need support in the future?"

– Paul, Mencap supporter.

Gifts in Wills fund our helpline in England, allowing us to continue to offer guidance and support for families like Paul and Nicola. If their story has inspired you, please consider leaving a gift in your Will to Mencap. You'll help people with a learning disability live happier, healthier lives.

Did you know as a Mencap supporter you can use the National Free Wills Network to write your Will for free with a local participating solicitor?

Scan the QR code or visit mynetworkportal.org/mencap to request your information pack, including a list of local participating solicitors, today.



ONE PHONE CALL TO OUR HELPLINE CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING

Sometimes, finding the right support can feel impossible for people with a learning disability and their families. For many, it can be hard to know where to even start. Mencap's helpline across England offers expert advice, as well as much-needed comfort and reassurance. A recent caller told one of our staff members:

"I JUST WANTED TO SAY, THANK YOU SO MUCH. I REALLY COULD NOT HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT YOU. WE KNOW YOU AS THE ANGEL AT MENCAP"

Last year, we answered over **8,000 calls** from people with a learning disability and their families.



Social care, money and benefits, and mental capacity are among the most common issues affecting our callers.



Whatever the issue, our helpline is a vital source of support. Whether it's a concern about community care, money, or getting a diagnosis, we're here to help – **and that's thanks to supporters like you.**

PLEASE DONATE TODAY

By giving now, you'll be supporting us to continue our work. It's not an easy battle but, if we work together, more urgent change is possible in 2023, so people with a learning disability can lead happy, healthy lives.

How to give

You can use the donation form in your pack, scan this QR Code or go to **mencap.org.uk/matters**. Thank you!

