



# Wirral Mencap Newsletter



February 2026

[www.wirralmencap.org.uk](http://www.wirralmencap.org.uk)

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## Christmas Party 2025

Our Christmas Party was one of our most successful ever, and it truly went off with a bang! 🎉

It was a brilliant day filled with festive cheer, laughter, and the joy of coming together as a community. Everyone had a fantastic time celebrating together, enjoying great company and making special memories that really captured the spirit of the season.

We were so pleased to see so many people come along to join in the fun, and we want to say a huge thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the day so special.

Your enthusiasm, smiles, and festive spirit made the event what it was.

It was a wonderful way to celebrate the festive season together, and we're already looking forward to doing it all again next year! 🎄🌟



## AGM 2026

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) is

Thursday 26 February 2026

The Liberty Centre, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead, CH41 2QS

Come at 1.30pm Have a cup of tea Have some cake

The meeting starts at 2pm

Call the office to book your space 0151 666 1829

Everyone is welcome - but you must be a member to vote



# It's the Wirral Mencap AGM 2026!



It's the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on **Thursday the 26th February** at The Liberty Centre, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead, CH41 2QS. It's near McDonalds.



Come at 1.30pm for a cup of tea and some cake.

The meeting will start at 2pm



One of the main things we need to do at the AGM is vote for our Board of Trustees for 2026.

We can also meet up with our Wirral Mencap friends.



## What is a Trustee?

- Trustees are the people in charge of a charity, like the bosses or directors.
- They make important decisions about how the charity works, spends money, and helps people.
- The Trustees are volunteers and do not get paid for being a Trustee.



## What Do Trustees Do?

- Make sure Wirral Mencap does the things it was set up to do and is following its own rules about working with members and other people.
- Make sure Wirral Mencap does not break the law and that people are safe and check we are spending money responsibly and on the right things.
- Tell people about what we do and listen to ideas from other people.



Come to the AGM and use your membership vote. Only people who have paid their membership can vote at the AGM.

If you have still to renew your membership, then come into the office before the 26th February and sign up. Your vote matters.

# Meet Our Trustees



Hello, my name is Karen Blair and I'm a charity chief executive. I previously worked for many years as an advocate for people with a learning disability, and I'm passionate about supporting people to live with dignity, choice, and opportunity. I wanted to support Wirral Mencap because of its strong commitment to people and families across the Wirral. As a trustee, I contribute through governance, strategy, and my experience in the voluntary sector. A fun fact about me is that almost everyone calls me Kazzabee – except my parents.



My name is Esther and I've spent the past 20 years working in Health and Social Care. I began as a support worker supporting people with learning difficulties and autism, and what started as a short-term plan became a career I love. I've held a range of roles across different settings and local authorities. I enjoy working with Wirral Mencap because they are values-driven and truly make a difference. My experience helps me support improvement and growth alongside fellow trustees and the leadership team. Outside of work, I love the gym and walking on the beach.



Pat joined Wirral Mencap as a Trustee in Autumn 2024. She is Legal Director and Company Secretary for a national charity supporting people with learning disabilities, autism, and mental health needs. Passionate about social care after caring for her parents for 19 years, Pat enjoys reading and walking in the Wirral countryside. She says: "I am so proud to be a Trustee of Wirral Mencap, a fabulous charity providing essential activities for those who need it most."



My name is Clare Newton and I am Chair of Trustees at Wirral Mencap. I began as a volunteer when the organisation was based in a small office at the Laurie Centre, and it has grown significantly since then. Having a sister with Down's syndrome, I understand how vital Wirral Mencap is in representing and supporting people with a learning disability. Alongside my trustee role and governance responsibilities, I continue to volunteer in the office, , and help at events. Outside of this, I enjoy gardening, reading, and travelling, especially somewhere warm.



Darren has been on the board of Wirral Mencap since February 2024. Darren has worked closely with Wirral Mencap for a number of years, engaging in fundraising activities each year – including the stand-up comedy challenge, where Darren and Engage Web have either entered, filmed or won the event. Having helped Wirral Mencap as a trustee for the last 12 months, Darren would like to continue doing so for at least another year.



I am delighted to join the Board, bringing experience from local government and the voluntary sector. As Cabinet Member for Housing and Social Care at Wakefield MDC, I helped lead the council from Special Measures to a Good rating and oversaw the UK's largest housing stock transfer. I have many years' experience in community advocacy, including as founding Chair of Healthwatch, a School Governor, Parish Councillor, and in supporting independent living for people with learning disabilities. I live in New Brighton, have two granddaughters, and remain hopeful of rock 'n' roll stardom. I look forward to supporting the work of Wirral Mencap.

# What has been happening on our courses?



Our groups have had lots of fun so far on our courses. Our Friendship group have worked with different group members to learn about others in the group, and to help make new friends. Our walking footballers have played a variety of games, matches and penalty shoot outs and our cookery group have learned about health and safety whilst cooking as well as making fruit salad and different wraps for lunch.

## Courses coming up...

We have photography, cook healthy food, boccia, cycling and our walking groups.

Call the office to book your space! 0151 666 1829

The Power of

## Social Clubs...

Winter can be tough, and dark days can affect our mood. Spending time with friends really helps.

At our Social Clubs, you'll find a warm welcome, friendly faces, and plenty of fun to keep the winter blues away.

### Lunch Club

Every Monday | 12-1:30pm

£2 – bring packed lunch

Rek41, Market Street

Games: Bingo, Music Quiz



### Crossbow Club

Wednesdays | 7-9pm

£2 entry (cash only)

The Liberty Centre, Whetstone Lane

Timetable of activities | Café on site

### Pub Night

1st Thursday of each Month | 7-9pm

Free – bring money for food & drink

The Swan, Holm Lane, Prenton

Eat, drink, or just be merry!

## Goodbye Rachel

I want to say a huge thank you and farewell as I leave Wirral Mencap after seven truly amazing years.

It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside and supporting so many incredible people and I feel very lucky to have been part of such a wonderful organisation.

I leave with so many happy memories that I will always treasure.

Goodbye  
& Good Luck



# Information, Advice and Advocacy Update

## Lived Experience Team in Action at LDE Conference

We are proud to share that some of our Lived Experience Team will be at the Learning Disability England Conference in Birmingham on 4th March.

They will co-deliver a session on co-production.

Co-production means working together with everyone's ideas and experience being equally important.

The conference theme is Being Seen, Being Heard.

Find out more at: <https://www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk/>



## Easy-Read Child Protection Resources

Our Lived Experience Team have coproduced easy-read documents with Wirral Council to help parents going through the child protection process. These documents are available on the Family Toolbox website: <https://familytoolbox.co.uk/childrens-social-care-easy-reads/>

## Well done Laura!

Laura one of our Lived Experience Trainers has been given the paid opportunity of becoming an Advisor for Local Authority Commissioning with Learning Disability England. Here is what she had to say: "I feel very privileged, feel surprised I got chosen for the role and privileged to be making a difference going forward".



## STAR Awards 2026 - Autism Together & Wirral Mencap

We are excited to be working with Autism Together to bring you the STAR Awards 

The STAR Awards celebrate the amazing achievements of the people we support.

When is the event? Thursday 16 April 2026

Who can attend? People who are shortlisted and award winners

 Nominate someone

 Anyone can nominate

 Nominate from: 9 January – 9 February 2026

 Message us on our socials for the online link

 Or fill in a form at reception and give it to Luca

 Award categories

Personal Achievement

Co-Production

Creative Spark

Positive Attitude

STAR Award (open category)



Help us celebrate people who are  STARS  in our community

# Fundraising Highlights



## December Success!

December is always a big time for fundraising, and this year we were really busy!

Our One Gift, Twice the Impact campaign raised a whopping £6,000!

A massive thank you to all those who donated. And special thanks to: Reed Foundation, The Johnson Foundation, Wallasey Lions, North Wirral Round Table, Aspect Electrical Services, Mmunic Mail, Wallasey Rotary Club, Cook Legal, and GAD Legal.

Lots of our members and supporters took part in the Santa Dash and raised £615. It was a rainy day, but we had a lot of fun and raised lots of money. Well done, everyone!



We raised awareness at Tesco in Bidston with our fundraising collection. A big thank you to Geoffrey, Michael, Alistair, Arnie, and Tom for volunteering! And thank you to the shoppers at Tesco who stopped for a chat and gave a donation.



And we raised just under £1,500 on our Christmas Prize Draw! Thank you to everyone who bought a ticket.

We would like to thank everyone who supported us this Christmas, and throughout 2025. Your support keeps us going. Here's to an amazing 2026!



## Inspiration on the Menu



Have you bought your ticket yet?

Enjoy a three-course meal, a glass of fizz, and inspiring stories from our guest speakers.

JUL 17 Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March

⌚ 1pm - 5pm

📍 Thornton Hall Hotel & Spa

Scan the QR code or come into the office to get your tickets!

## Learning Disability Week



We are starting to plan for Learning Disability Week 2026 and we are so excited!

We will need volunteers to help set up events, sell raffle tickets, raise awareness at Arrowe Park Hospital, and more.

Express your interest in volunteering. You don't need to commit yet. Just tell us you are interested and we will contact you nearer the time.

Contact us on 0151 666 1829, email [info@mencapwirral.org.uk](mailto:info@mencapwirral.org.uk), or pop into the office to ask for your name to be added to the list.



# Gateway News

The Tuesday group have been cooking up a storm at The Hive! The group made a delicious tuna pasta bake while developing confidence in the kitchen.

We also began our Independent Living Skills course, focusing on practical household jobs that build everyday independence.



Wednesday's group have seen some Drama in action! Our drama session with Becky explored freeze-frames and improvisation, sparking creativity and teamwork.

We also launched our Successful Artist course, taking inspiration from world-famous artists as we begin creating our very own masterpieces.

Thursday's group completed a variety of mixed sports, with a special shout-out to Ann-Marie, who won Woman of the Match during our football session!

The group also kicked off our Money Skills course, discovering whether we're savers or spenders and what we already know about handling money.



The Friday groups welcomed the ladies from Shadow Dance, who delivered soothing meditation sessions that left everyone feeling calm and connected. Andrew impressed the Friday group during our meditation session by performing an advanced shoulder stand.

Our Friday group has also begun their Volunteering Course, learning what volunteering involves and exploring ways to get involved in the community.

## Gateway Spotlight

We're delighted to shine a spotlight on one of our incredible volunteers, Abbie! After completing her Gateway Award in June last year, she started volunteering with our Thursday groups in September, and what an impact she has made! She has been a great support to our members and is always ready to help with a smile.

Well done, Abbie and thank you for everything you do!

## Welcome to Melissa

'Hello! My name is Mel and I am the new Day Service Coordinator for the Gateway Award. I am so happy to be joining the Wirral Mencap team and looking forward to meeting everyone on the programme.'

We are very excited to have Mel join the Wirral Mencap Team



# A big thank you to....



Green Blade Singers who did some carol singing around pubs and cafes in West Kirby. They raised £200 for Wirral Mencap.

Thank you to Wirral Lift Engineering who have generously sponsored our Race Night for £200. We really appreciate your support!

And to Karen Blair, Alliance Self Storage, Andy Edwards, Chester Business Centre, Hubtivity and Safety Panda Ltd who have each sponsored a race at our Race Night for £30.

And to Tyres4U Wirral who is generously acting as a Community Sponsor at our Inspiration on the Menu event for £250.

Thank you also to Unilever who raised £100 for us to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities!

THANK  
YOU!

## Dates for your diary...

**SAVE  
THE DATE**

February

11

### Valentine's Disco

Get your dancing shoes on! Our Valentine's Disco is at the Liberty Centre, 7pm - 9pm. Get your ticket for £3 in the office or on the door.

March

8

### Inspiration on the Menu

Join us to celebrate local women and raise funds for Wirral Mencap! Get your tickets online or in the office.

April

TBC

### Bananas Bingo

Keep your eyes peeled for a confirmed date for our next Bananas Bingo! The date will be shared on our Facebook and our website.

May

15

### The Wirral Mencap Invitational

We are hosting a Golf Day on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May at Bidston Golf Club! Get in touch to find out more - 0151 666 1829 / info@mencapwirral.org.uk

June

15

### Learning Disability Week

We are looking forward to Learning Disability Week in 2026! Get ready for a week full of exciting events! More details to come.

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