

Annual Report 2024



Chair's Introduction

I am proud to report that City of Chelmsford Mencap has had a year marked by energy, commitment, and quiet transformation. Our staff, volunteers, trustees, and service users have worked with purpose and imagination to extend the impact of our services and strengthen the foundations of our Charity.

In 2024, we embedded new leadership roles within our support team, introduced tools to track the development of every lifelong learning student more closely, and broadened our curriculum and partnerships with real ambition.

This was also a year in which our outward-facing work grew markedly. Through partnerships with health, education and community organisations across Essex, our presence and influence in the community continued to grow. The voices of our service users and staff were heard at festivals, conferences and community meetings, and our message – that people with a learning disability have a right to rich, meaningful and ambitious lives – was heard loudly and clearly.

Our Board has remained dedicated and focused throughout the year, and we have been fortunate to welcome new trustees into the fold as others stepped down after years of committed service. I am deeply grateful to both departing and incoming colleagues for their generous contributions.

This introduction offers only a flavour of the information contained in the pages that follow. Many of the themes and highlights mentioned here – from governance and pastoral care to partnerships, placements and curriculum – are explored in fuller detail throughout the report.



Anthony North
Chair of Trustees



About City of Chelmsford Mencap

City of Chelmsford Mencap (CCM) is a registered charity which was established in 1951. It provides lifelong learning, social opportunities and specialist support for people with a learning disability in mid-Essex. We currently support more than 350 people.

CCM is affiliated to Royal Mencap Society (RMS) but is a wholly independent and autonomous charity and receives no direct funding from RMS or government. Instead, we are reliant on grants, donations and fundraising to supplement our income from service fees. The board of trustees has ultimate responsibility for setting our strategy, budget and priorities and ensuring we meet our obligations to the Charity Commission, our employees and our beneficiaries.

In 2020, City of Chelmsford Mencap received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest honour for voluntary groups. This award recognised the strong voluntary ethos that runs through our Charity, from the Board to the occasional voluntary supporter.

In July 2024, CCM fulfilled a long held ambition to transform into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), giving the Charity greater protection, flexibility and operational efficiency.

Our Vision

Every person impacted by learning disability, directly or otherwise, is empowered to live life to the fullest - without impediment, exclusion or disadvantage.



About Learning Disability

Learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities which is lifelong. It is often confused with learning difficulty and mental health issues. However, learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, do not affect intellect. Mental health problems can affect anyone at any time and may be overcome with treatment, which is not true of learning disability.

Learning disability can be caused by specific conditions, such as Down Syndrome, birth trauma or early childhood illnesses. Learning disability may be mild, moderate or severe and people may also have associated sensory and/or physical impairments.

CCM supports service users who have a wide range of conditions including Down Syndrome, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Global Development Delay, Edwards Syndrome and ADHD. Many of our service users also have mobility and/or sensory impairments and chronic health conditions such as diabetes, asthma and arthritis.

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complicated information and interact with other people.

It is important to remember that, with the right support, most people with a learning disability in the UK can lead independent lives and fulfil their potential.



Our Objects and Services

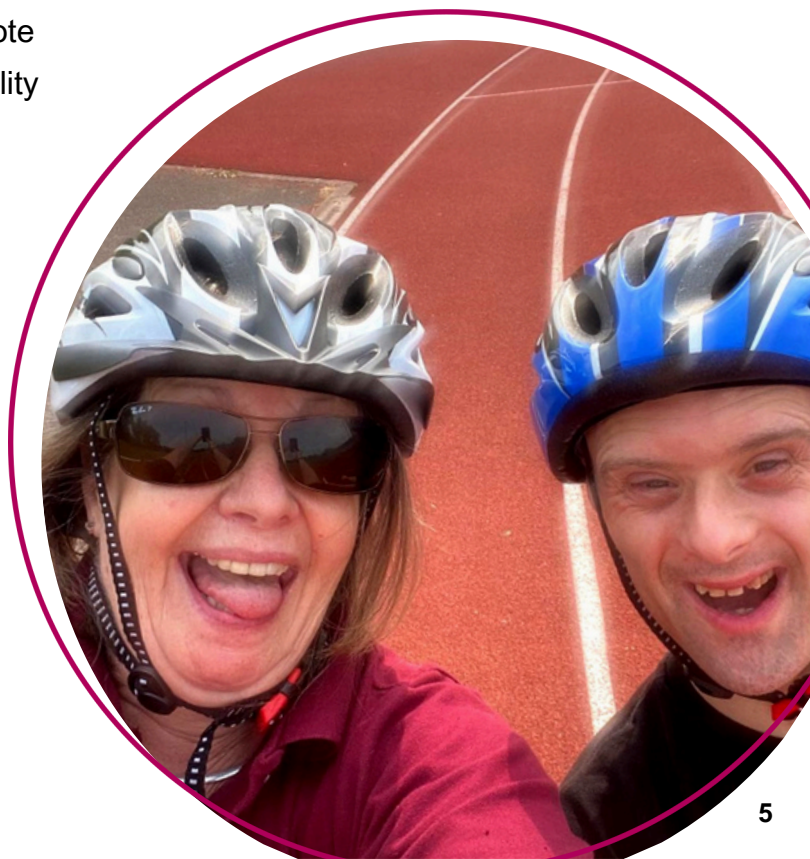
Under charity law, CCM is required to demonstrate that its governance and service provision is within the boundaries of its constitution. The Charity's objects are defined as follows: For the public benefit, to relieve the needs of people with a learning disability, their families, dependents and carers, by:

- a. providing or assisting in the provision of services, support and information, in order to enhance their opportunities to express their individuality, choice and control, improve their quality of life and fulfil their potential;
- b. promoting activities that advocate for a reduction in inequality of access to public services and justice for people with a learning disability.

In furtherance of that object but not otherwise, the trustees shall have power to engage in political activity provided that the trustees are satisfied that the proposed activities will further the purposes of the Charity to an extent justified by the resources committed and the activity is not the dominant means by which the Charity carries out its objects.

To fulfil its objects, City of Chelmsford Mencap develops, implements and reviews a range of services to support people impacted by a learning disability, either directly or indirectly:

- The Outreach Academy, a lifelong learning service which runs every weekday, 49 weeks a year. Courses develop students' social, work and life skills in a supported environment that enables them to reach their potential.
- Working Out, a work placement initiative.
- Enterprises and volunteering projects promote the talents of our service users and their ability to make meaningful contributions to their local community.
- An Advocacy and Community Support service covering central Essex enables service users to maximise their independence and resilience. It offers person-centred advice, information and advocacy regarding a range of issues, including benefits, housing and support planning. Monthly *Carers Connect* sessions give carers opportunities to learn and share information.



Governance and Board Activity

The Charity continues to be overseen by a dedicated and capable Board of Trustees. In 2024, we maintained our commitment to strong governance through regular meetings, focused sub-committees, and careful oversight of all strategic and operational matters.

Our relatively new sub-committee structure continued to flourish. Each plays a vital role in ensuring that issues are discussed in depth and that the Board is well-informed when it comes to the approval of key decisions. We would like to thank our trustees for the time, insight and care they bring to these discussions.

This year saw some changes to our Board's composition. We said farewell to two long-serving trustees: Sarah Sadler and Neil Barnes, each of whom gave exceptional service to the Charity. Their contributions – to both the day-to-day work of the Board and to the strategic development of CCM – were deeply valued. We thank them warmly for all they have done.

CCM is especially grateful to Sarah, who has served the Charity with distinction as trustee, Vice Chair, and Acting Chair during challenging periods in our story. Her knowledge, determination, and collaborative spirit were invaluable, and we benefited enormously from her leadership. We are delighted that Sarah remains actively involved with CCM in her role as our much-loved yoga tutor, where she brings energy, care, and personalised challenge to each of our students. We continue to value everything she contributes to our community.

At the same time, we were delighted to welcome two new trustees: Ruth Thompson and Sharon Symon. Both bring considerable skill, experience and a deep commitment to the Charity's mission, and we are very pleased to have them as part of the team.

In response to interest from supporters and service users alike, we also overhauled the *Meet the Board* page on our website, helping to demystify trusteeship and make our governance team more visible and accessible. CCM is a big supporter of the



national Trustees Week to recognise and celebrate the incredible voluntary contribution made by trustees to charities of all sizes. CCM simply could not operate without the skill, passion and dedication of our own board of trustees.

The Board also oversaw the final stages of our transition to Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status – a major governance milestone that reflects our maturity and ambition as a charity. This new legal structure gives us greater operational flexibility and a clearer legal identity, while preserving everything that makes CCM distinctive.

Our CIO conversion in July was the culmination of years of hard work and dedication by many current and former trustees and Chairs. CCM places on record its thanks to all of them for their contributions towards achieving our new status.

We remain fully committed to best practice in governance and continue to benchmark ourselves against sector guidance, including that provided by the Charity Commission. We believe that strong governance is an enabler of great service delivery – and that every decision made in the boardroom should ultimately benefit our service users and community.

Our Mission

To nurture, empower and celebrate every individual impacted by learning disability, enabling their own unique sense of belonging, dignity, resilience, independence and achievement.



Key Metrics

312

Members
266 in 2023

240

Service users
210 in 2023

64

Students
60 in 2023

4

Full-time staff

9

Part-time staff

3

Bank staff

1

**Self-employed
consultant**

4

**Self-employed
tutors**

16

Volunteers

28,500 hours

**Individual
learning delivered**

940 hours

**Community
support**

974 hours

**Supported
traineeships**

16 placements

**Mental health /
adult nursing
university students**

1 placement

**Social work
university
student**

9 placements

**Health & Social
Care college
students**

Staff and Volunteer Development

Staff and volunteer development remains central to our ethos at City of Chelmsford Mencap. We believe that those who give their time, skills and care to our service users deserve just as much investment and encouragement as the service users themselves.

Our annual training week, held in January, brought our team together to refresh core skills and explore new approaches to care, support and inclusion. This was complemented by a suite of online courses taken throughout the year, covering everything from safeguarding and GDPR to communication, mental health, and learning disability awareness. (See page 22)

We are proud of our commitment to developing people from within. One notable example this year is Abbey Collins who began with us as a placement student and, over time, grew into the role of Support Lead – a testament both to her dedication and to the environment of encouragement we aim to foster.

Our volunteer community continues to grow in both numbers and impact. We are always pleased to welcome new volunteers, whether they can spare a few hours occasionally or offer a more regular commitment. Each contribution matters, and all are valued.

In 2024, we were particularly proud to see one of our volunteers, Henrietta Tyler, recognised at the Chelmsford Mayor's Awards for Volunteering. Henrietta received the Young Volunteer of the Year award – a fitting acknowledgement of her energy, positivity and generosity of spirit. Henrietta has continued her commitment to the Charity and now works for us as educational commitments allow.

We also deepened our relationships with Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford College and University of Essex, all of which continue to provide us with brilliant students on placement. Their presence not only strengthens our delivery, but also enriches the life of the Charity.

City of Chelmsford Mencap has always been a place where people grow – and we remain fully committed to being as supportive and ambitious for our staff and volunteers as we are for our beneficiaries.

Advocacy and Community Support

Our Advocacy and Community Support service continues to be a vital part of CCM's work, ensuring that the voices of our service users, families and carers are heard – and that people with a learning disability are fully included in decisions that affect their lives.

Throughout 2024, our Advocacy and Community Support Manager (Jan Hewett, pictured below) led a wide range of initiatives within Mencap Centre and in the wider community. She provided tailored support to service users and families, contributed to sector conversations, and forged links with organisations that share our values.

Our *Carers Connect* sessions, now well established as a monthly fixture, offered accessible, up-to-date information and emotional support to family carers. Topics included local housing options, social care systems, and building healthy friendships and relationships. These sessions often featured speakers with lived experience, who added real insight and value.

Alongside this outward-facing work, the service played a key pastoral role within CCM. Our Advocacy and Community Support Manager worked closely with the senior management team to respond to the needs of individual students and their families, offering practical advice and warm, informed support at times of challenge.



This service is about voice, inclusion and care – and in 2024, it continued to be at the forefront of our service delivery.

Pastoral Care and Safeguarding

Pastoral care is not a separate strand of our work – it is woven into every aspect of the Charity. From the classroom to the café, the allotment to the advocacy session, our team is focused on helping each individual flourish.

Pastoral care sits at the heart of everything we do at City of Chelmsford Mencap. In 2024, we continued to deepen our commitment to the emotional wellbeing, safety and personal development of every student.

Our Senior Management Team (SMT) continues to make pastoral care a key focus. Across all areas of service delivery, staff are supported to recognise and respond to the individual needs of students – whether emotional, behavioural or practical – in ways that are compassionate, informed and person-centred.

This year saw the introduction of *Support and Learning Trackers* for every student. These are designed to help staff monitor progress across a range of areas – from communication and independence to confidence and wellbeing – and to ensure that each student receives truly tailored support and learning.

We also enhanced our staffing structure, appointing a second Senior Support Lead and expanding our full-time support team. These additions have helped to maintain consistency, increase capacity, and ensure that our approach to safeguarding and care is robust and responsive.

All staff and volunteers continued to receive regular safeguarding training and are supported to maintain high standards of professional conduct. We are proud of the culture of safety and trust that exists across our Charity and are committed to ensuring that every student feels secure, valued and supported in their journey with us.





Multiply Maths workshops

24 students completed short courses in a range of practical maths skills including: Time and distance; Maths in everyday life; Understanding food labels; and Maths for Cooking. Thanks to ACL Essex for delivering these workshops.

Working out

CCM's work placement initiative enabled 14 students to progress into supported traineeships at our PopUp Cafes and In! Spades enterprise and at Havens' charity shop. Trainees developed catering, retail and horticulture skills, with personalised monitoring of progress and achievement.



Gateway Award: Fitness

24 students completed the *Fitness* element of their Bronze Award by participating in our Couch to 5k challenge. 75% of students demonstrated significant improvements in stamina and fitness. Participants also completed a specialist yoga course focused on foot health and mobility.

Outcomes

Employability

11 students completed a course in work and employment skills. They developed their proficiency in exploring employment opportunities, preparing for and learning from interviews, and positive attitudes and behaviours at work.



Keeping safe

22 students completed a course in keeping safe at home and in the community and created posters and easy read leaflets to demonstrate and disseminate their learning. Thanks to Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue, Chelmsford City Council and the PFCC's Community Safety Fund.

Gateway Award: Lifestyle

24 students completed the *Lifestyle* element by developing independent living skills through completion of household tasks including cleaning, ironing and bed-making. All students increased their independence and these new abilities were shared with carers to ensure skills transfer.



Lifelong Learning: The Outreach Academy

Our Outreach Academy continued to offer a vibrant and inclusive learning environment throughout 2024, where students developed skills, confidence and friendships in equal measure.

The year began with our *Spring into Wellbeing* initiative – an inspiring series of workshops and experiences designed to promote both physical and mental health. From alpaca trekking to art classes, students were encouraged to try new things and care for their own wellbeing in creative and enjoyable ways. We are grateful to Essex County Council for funding this programme.

Health and wellbeing remained a focus throughout the year. Students benefited from a range of physical activity sessions delivered in partnership with Bright Ideas for Tennis, Old Chelmsfordians, and Sport for Confidence. We were also delighted to host physiotherapy-led *Move It* sessions at Mencap Centre, supported by a student from Anglia Ruskin University.

We continued to broaden our curriculum. In partnership with Adult Community Learning Essex, students took part in Multiply workshops focused on practical maths, as well as courses in Employability and Creative Art. Meanwhile, becoming a Beyond Words Book Club allowed us to explore sensitive topics through storytelling without text – a valuable and inclusive learning tool.

In September, another key development was our registration as a Gateway Awards centre. After months of preparation, 24 students began working towards their Bronze Award, building life, work and social skills in a structured and rewarding way.

Our Live & Learn students also took part in *V is for Voting!* sessions ahead of the general election, helping them to better understand the democratic process and their role in it. We are proud to support civic participation among our students in accessible and meaningful ways.

The Outreach Academy continues to be led by a strong team of staff, tutors and volunteers who bring energy, care and imagination to every session they deliver. Our curriculum remains shaped by our students' individual interests, needs and potential and is designed to enhance both capability and confidence.

Curriculum and Tutors

Whilst health, wellbeing and employability featured prominently in this year's programme, our curriculum at CCM remained broad, balanced and engaging across all areas. We continue to offer a rich blend of creative, academic, life-skills and enrichment sessions, delivered by a talented and passionate team.

In 2024, students took part in classes covering literacy, numeracy, communication, art, dance, cooking, digital skills and current affairs, among many other subjects. The curriculum was designed not only to teach practical skills, but to build confidence, spark curiosity and foster self-expression.

We are fortunate to work with a team of tutors who bring expertise, imagination and empathy to every session. Special thanks go to Jean, Dave, Sarah, Carole and our many guest tutors whose contributions across the year were consistently thoughtful and inspiring. Their ability to tailor lessons to individual learning styles and needs remains one of the great strengths of The Outreach Academy.

Alongside scheduled classes, students took part in creative projects, exhibitions, performances and group discussions that gave them the chance to explore their ideas, express their views and celebrate their progress.

Learning at CCM is never just about a classroom setting. It is about empowering each individual to thrive, belong and grow - and our curriculum remains a powerful vehicle for achieving that.



Supported Traineeships: Working Out initiative

Our supported traineeships and social enterprises continue to offer students meaningful, supported pathways into work, creativity and community contribution.

In 2024, our Working Out initiative and In! enterprises remained a cornerstone of our employment-focused provision, helping students to build confidence, develop transferable skills and engage with the world of work in structured, supportive environments.

Our four In! enterprises once again gave students opportunities to lead, create and serve:

- In!Production, our film and media enterprise, was commissioned by Essex County Council to produce a series of short films on themes including consent, relationships and LGBTQIA+ awareness. One of their educational films was used as the introductory video for a major event held at Colchester United's conference centre.
- In!Spades, our horticulture and maintenance team, continued to grow their contract with Essex Community Foundation, enhancing and maintaining their grounds.
- In!Designs products, designed and produced by our talented artists, were sold at a variety of in-house and community events and concessions.
- In!Catering, our catering enterprise, enjoyed a particularly dynamic year. Starting 2024 at the Chelmsford Community Café (a joint initiative with Chelmsford CVS and Chelmsford Indoor Market), the students built a loyal customer base while learning key hospitality skills. Later in the year, the team relocated to St John's Church in Moulsham Street to run our popular Wednesday PopUp Café.

We also sustained our successful partnership with Havens Hospices, enabling four students to continue trainee placements in one of the charity's local shops. These placements offer real-world experience in a community-focused retail environment, and are valued by trainees and Havens alike. As ever, we are grateful to all our external partners who make these opportunities possible.

Through these enterprises and partnerships, our students are not only developing work-related skills, but also contributing meaningfully to their community and gaining pride in their achievements.

Events and Community Engagement

CCM has always placed great value on being an active and visible part of the local community, and 2024 was another year of lively participation, partnership and public celebration.

We were delighted once again to take part in projects and events organised by Chelmsford CVS, including their Chelmsford 100 arts initiative and Volfest, the city's annual celebration of the voluntary sector and its importance to our community.

In June, we marked Learning Disability Awareness Week with an exhibition of service users' powerful *I, Too, Am Able* photographic work in High Chelmer Shopping Centre.

In December, we were back in Chelmsford Cathedral for our annual Christmas Concert, this year joined by the wonderful Chelmsford Singers. The performances that evening were hugely memorable and our own choir (Awesome Beats Collective) and soloist (Charlotte Fieldson) ensured that everybody left feeling suitably festive, whilst aware of the important work we undertake in the community.

We continued to develop strong partnerships with external organisations, including the Royal Mencap Society, and others, strengthening our network and creating new opportunities for engagement and advocacy. We were grateful to be invited to talk about our work at two of the local Rotary Clubs and at other sponsored events.

Events like these help to keep us connected, raise awareness of our mission, and ensure that CCM remains not just a service provider, but a vibrant part of Chelmsford's civic and cultural life.



Fundraising and Finances

The 2024 financial year saw the Charity receive various generous donations and grants along with a steady income from our lifelong learning service, The Outreach Academy.

Our total operating income for the year was £259,895. Our net expenditure and movement in funds was 32% lower than in 2023 at £24,894. The improvement of £12,087 was due to increased income from charitable activities which has been offset to a large extent by increasing staff costs, the principal expenditure for the Charity (£198,076). CCM endorses the principle of paying staff a living wage, however this has resulted in significant staff cost increases over the last two years as we make sure everyone has a living wage and then maintain parity throughout the pay scales. We continue to push for higher fees for our lifelong learning service, knowing that we are significantly cheaper than other providers in our space. However, our overriding objective is to always be affordable to our service users.

In addition to our main income stream, we received donations totalling £28,324, including gifts from our Chair of Trustees, Anthony North (totalling £15,600), our Treasurer, Chris Newson (£3,000), Rotary Club of Chelmer Bridge (£1,000) and the Masonic Charitable Foundation (£500). We were also thankful for donations given in memory of Tony Read and David Crombie.

We were fortunate to benefit from community fundraising efforts by friends of CCM. Our trustee Neil Barnes was joined by his friends Jude and Tim to complete the Chelmsford 10K and raised a fabulous £1,962 and our tennis coach, Piers Nightingale, impressed everyone with both his ultramarathon result and his fundraising (£1,376). One of CCM's long-term supporters, Evelyn Hicks, continued her creative fundraising efforts and raised £1,042 in 2024. We were delighted to be made the chosen charity for Chelmsford Musical Theatre Choir's Spring concert, which raised £1,000 and resulted in a wonderful visit by some of the choir to Mencap Centre for a special music session, and by New City Voices, whose High Chelmer performance raised £515. We were also grateful to the Six Bells Boreham for continuing to make us a regular beneficiary of their famous quiz nights!

CCM's Christmas concert has always been a highlight in the calendar and we were relieved to be able to reinstate this event in 2023, after an enforced hiatus due to the pandemic. In 2024, with the help of sponsorship from Chelmsford For You, we were pleased to raise £1,222.

CCM's additional revenue streams continue to enhance our income and to enable us to reinvest funds into our In! enterprises for further purchases of resources, etc.

We were also successful in applying for grants in 2024, receiving £29,980 in total. Significant grants included Essex County Council's Locality Fund, Chelmsford City Council's Community Funding Scheme, and John Lewis.

Although the summary financial position for 2024 reads well, with only a small shortfall, we are mindful that, in these challenging times, the situation could have been very different without the generosity of our donors, community fundraising and generous grants. CCM also continues to owe a huge debt to our volunteers and trustees who contributed significantly to the Charity, giving possibly the most valued commodity of all - their time.

Summary of 2024 Accounts		
	2024	2023
Income from charitable activities	£192,337	£142,925
Total income	£259,895	£200,719
Support costs associated with charitable activities	£248,313	£206,731
Total expenditure	£285,038	£237,700
Fund balances at 31st December 2024	£666,595	£691,489



Chris Newson
Treasurer

**Our grateful thanks to
supporters who donated
in 2024:**

- Mr & Mrs A
- Chris Newson
- Anthony North
- Mr & Mrs R
- David Saville
- Karen Smith
- Mike Wall
- Shakey Wheelhouse



Closing Statement

As we reflect on 2024, what stands out most clearly is the energy, care and integrity with which this Charity continues to operate. At every level – from the classroom to the boardroom – CCM is shaped by people who believe deeply in the rights, strengths and potential of individuals with a learning disability.

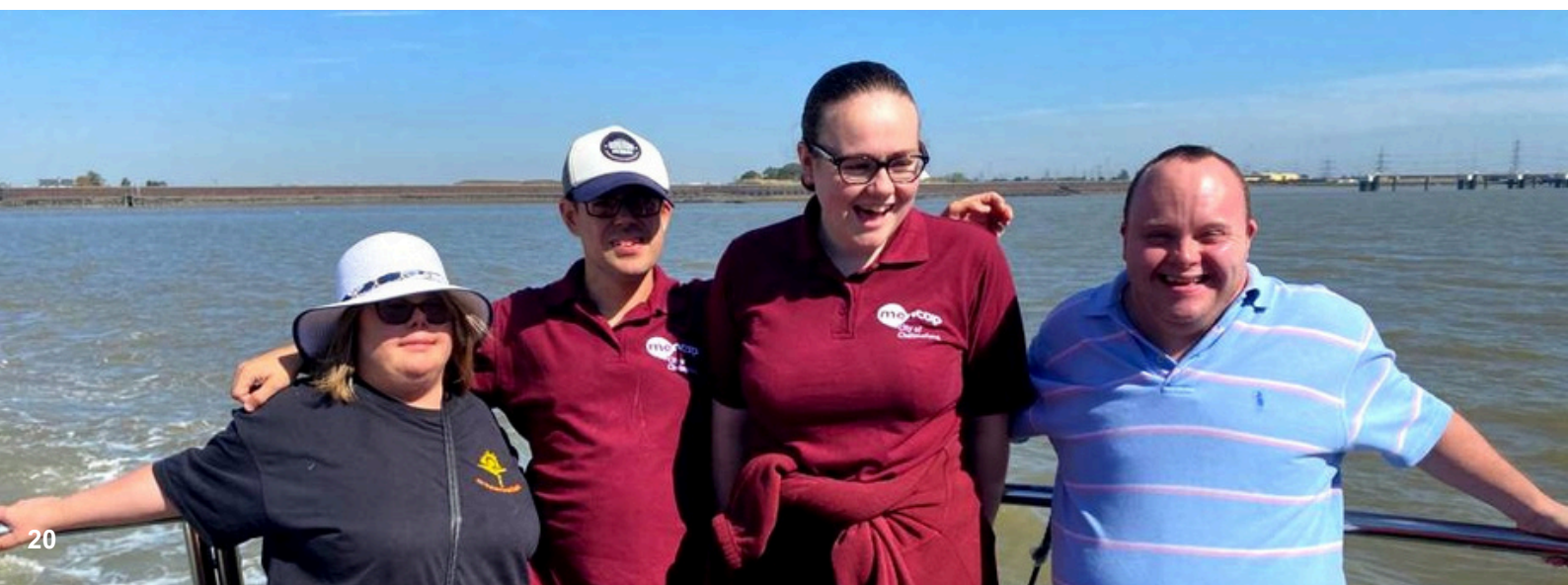
I hope this year's report captures the daily creativity, connection and support that takes place within our walls and beyond. Our service users remain at the heart of all we do, and it is their resilience, curiosity and humour that drive us forward.

Throughout 2024, we have continued to adapt and grow, responding to the needs of our community while staying rooted in the values that define us. Whether through curriculum innovation, partnerships, advocacy or support, our team continues to demonstrate what's possible when people work with purpose and imagination. Our priority in 2025 is to accelerate this momentum whilst developing our reporting and governance models to an even higher standard.

As always, I extend my heartfelt thanks to our staff, trustees, volunteers, families, funders and friends. Each of you plays a part in CCM's ongoing story – and I look forward to all that lies ahead.



Anthony North
Chair of Trustees



Meet the 2025 Board



Anthony North
Chair of Trustees
Trustee since 2019
Communications Director



Chris Newson
Treasurer and Vice Chair
Trustee since 2022
Chartered Accountant



Vivien Molulu
Secretary to the Board
Co-opted in April 2025
Programme Management Office
Lead - Health System
Transformation



Abigail Krone
Trustee since 2021
City Finance Director



Lucy Burgess
Co-opted in April 2025
Senior Trust and Statutory
Fundraising Officer



Ruth Thompson
Trustee since 2024
Dementia Support
Services Manager



Sharon Symon
Trustee since 2024
Speech and Language
Therapist, Community
Learning Disability Team

Read our trustees' full profiles at www.cityofchelmsfordmencap.org.uk/board-of-trustees

Senior Management Team



Grace Lidstone
Services Manager
Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Bernadette Bass
Financial Administrator



Jan Hewett
Advocacy & Community
Support Manager



Jules Cessford
Senior Support Lead
Onsite Supervisor,
university placements



Emma O'Riordan
Senior Support Lead
Onsite Supervisor,
college placements

Read our SMT's profiles at www.cityofchelmsfordmencap.org.uk/senior-management-team

Training 2024

Report writing
Moving and handling
Emergency first aid
Equality and diversity
Dysphagia
Safeguarding adults at risk
Personal and intimate care
Record keeping
COSHH
Dignity in care
Understanding autism
Mental health awareness
MCA and DoLS
Risk assessment
Supporting individuals with LD
Positive behaviour support
Care planning
Food hygiene
GDPR
Health and safety
Falls prevention
Effective communication
Person centred approach
Diabetes awareness
PREVENT

Charity Information



Bryan Powell
Honorary President



Alan Stoppard
Patron with
Lived Experience

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City of
Chelmsford
Mencap

Registered charity number
1171835

