mencap

City of Chelmsford

Annual Report 2025



















The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

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 2025, we maintained our commitment to strong governance through regular meetings, focused sub-committees, and careful oversight of all strategic and operational matters.

This year saw some changes to our Board's composition. We said farewell to two trustees: Rachel Scott and Phil Preston. 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 their work. Long-standing trustee Alan Stoppard also stepped down in order to become CCM's inaugural Patron with Lived Experience.

At the same time, we were delighted to welcome two new trustees: Lucy Burgess and Vivien Molulu. Both bring considerable skill and experience - in fundraising and governance respectively - and we are very pleased to have them as part of the team.

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

331

Members

312 in 2024

251

Service users

240 in 2024

62

Students

64 in 2024

5

Full-time staff

8

Part-time staff

5

Bank staff

1

Self-employed consultant

5

Self-employed tutors

23

Volunteers

28,500 hours

Individual learning delivered

940 hours

Community support

960 hours

Supported traineeships

11 placements

Mental health nursing / Occupational therapy students

1 placement

Social work university student

14 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 brought our team together to refresh core skills, explore new approaches to care, learning and inclusion, and ensure that pastoral care and active support is woven into every aspect of the Charity. This was complemented by a suite of online courses taken throughout the year, covering everything from GDPR to learning disability awareness. All staff and volunteers continued to receive regular safeguarding training and are supported to maintain high standards of professional conduct.

We are proud of our commitment to developing people from within. In 2025, CCM welcomed three new members of staff, all of whom had either volunteered or completed work placements with the Charity. The staff team was also delighted to celebrate Senior Support Lead Jules Cessford's 10th anniversary of working for CCM (see picture below).

Our volunteer community continues to grow in both numbers and impact, aided in 2025 by the development of our new volunteering brochure. 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.

We also extended our relationships with Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford College and University of Essex, offering placements to T-Level and Occupational Therapy students in addition to trainee social workers and nurses. This placement programme not only strengthens our delivery, but also enriches the life of the Charity.



CCM 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.

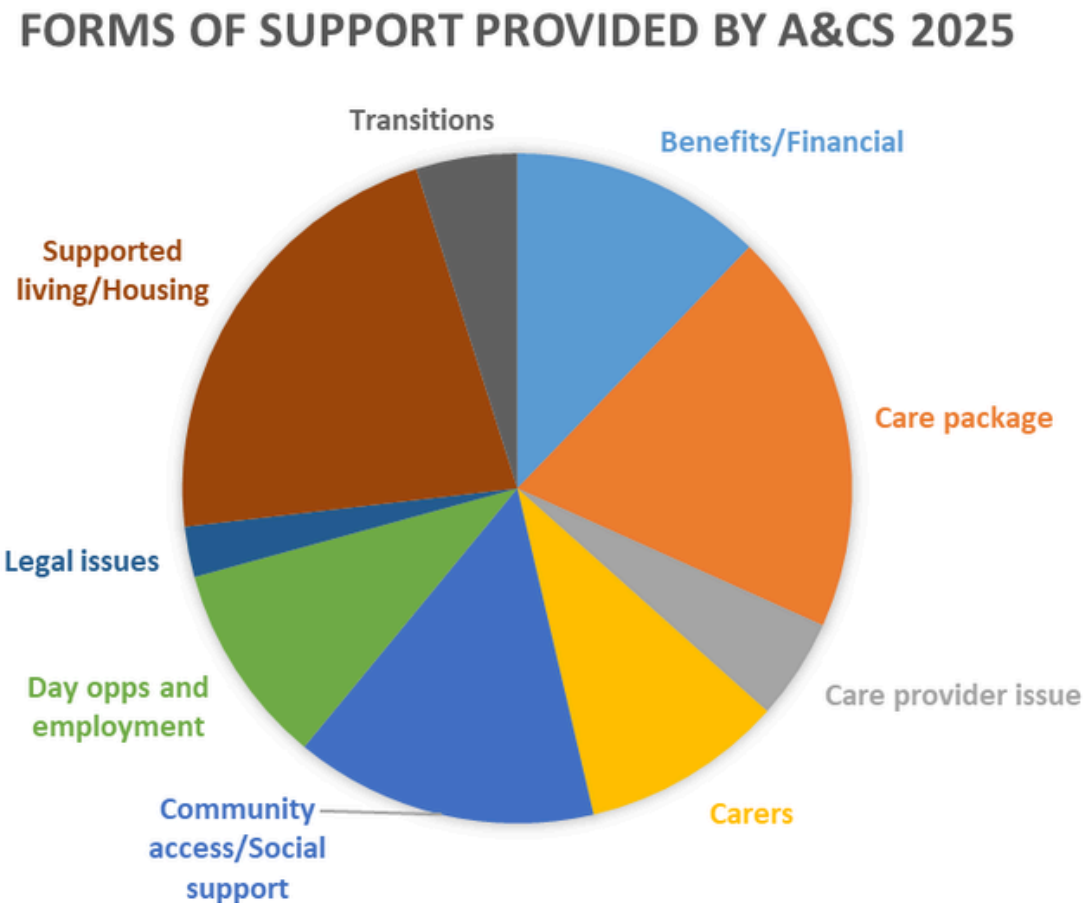
Advocacy and Community Support

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 2025, our Advocacy and Community Support service provided tailored support to service users and families facing a wide range of issues (see below), 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 inclusive employment, technology enabled care, ageing well, and communication. 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 colleagues in 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.



Lifelong Learning: The Outreach Academy

Our Outreach Academy continued to offer a vibrant and inclusive learning environment throughout 2025, where students developed skills, confidence and friendships in equal measure.

Our first cohort of Gateway Award participants completed their Bronze programme, which included independent living skills, outdoor activities and challenges, and community volunteering projects with local organisations including Kinder Chelmsford and St John's Church. We are grateful to Essex County Council for funding elements of this programme.

In late 2024, we were delighted to join the Beyond Words Book Club scheme, which uses wordless books to facilitate discussion and learning about a range of health and relationships topics. This year, as the Book Club proved so popular, it became a key part of our new *Well Me* programme on Friday afternoons. We have further strengthened our focus on health and wellbeing by developing *Enable Me,* a programme of occupational therapy, mindfulness gym, specialist yoga and health education sessions.

Our partnership with Adult Community Learning Essex continued, with students working towards certificates in *Creative Art* and *Employability & Enterprise*. Both courses supported students along our progression pathway, teaching skills and values that prepare them for our *Active in the Community and Environment (ACE)* volunteering programme, *In!* enterprises, and *Working Out* work experience initiative.

Whilst health, wellbeing and employability featured prominently again this year, our curriculum continued to offer a rich blend of creative, academic, life-skills and therapeutic sessions, delivered by talented and passionate staff.



We are fortunate to work with a team of tutors who bring expertise, imagination and empathy to every session. Special thanks go to Amanda, Becky, Carole, Dave, Jean, Sarah, and our many guest tutors whose contributions across the year were consistently thoughtful and inspiring.



Learning

Creative Art course

13 students completed a course in Creative Art, learning skills that benefit their social enterprise, In!Designs, and their own personal development as artists.
Thanks to tutor Becky and ACL Essex for delivering this course.



Working out

CCM's work placement initiative enabled 15 students to progress into supported traineeships in catering, retail and horticulture. The development of our PopUp Cafe @ Mencap Centre is enabling more students to develop work skills.



Gateway Bronze Award

19 students achieved their Gateway Bronze Awards after completing five different elements over 18 months - Lifestyle, Fitness, Hobbies, Volunteering and Challenge. From independent living to Couch to 5k, they have taken every opportunity to develop their skills, confidence and community involvement and we are so proud of them.

Outcomes



Employability

12 students successfully completed Part 1 of a bespoke course in employability and enterprise. This is enabling them to develop their own social enterprise and to gain skills in product design, crafts, marketing and business.



Enterprises

15 students have progressed to our In!Enterprises. The In!Catering team provided homemade lunches for external partners' events, In!Spades continued to fulfil gardening contracts, and In!Designs developed their seasonal Fayres.

Well Me

Our Well Me programme benefitted 16 students in 2025. It features Gentle Gym, delivered by a specialist multidisciplinary coach, and our Beyond Words Book Club, which encourages reflection, discussion and learning about a broad range of health and wellbeing topics.



Events and Community Engagement

CCM has always placed great value on being an active and visible part of the local community, and 2025 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 Community Gardening Event (with lunch provided by our In!Catering enterprise) 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 a social media campaign *Do you see me?* celebrating the achievements of individual service users.

We started Christmas at Tiptree's fabulous Fayre, organised by supporter Evelyn Hicks, and we returned to 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 Essex Carers Network, Havens Hospices, Kinder Chelmsford, Old Chelmsfordians and St John's Church, creating new opportunities for engagement and advocacy.

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 2025 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 £280,350. Our net expenditure and movement in funds was 2.7% lower than in 2024 at £24,225. Income from charitable activities increased by £34,260 (17.8%) to £226,597, which helped to offset the continued increase in expenditure, particularly staff costs, the principal expenditure for the Charity at £214,666. CCM endorses the principle of paying staff a living wage, however this has resulted in significant staff cost increases over the last three years as we make sure everyone has a living wage and then maintain parity throughout the pay scales. In 2025 we continued to work towards a higher cost band for our lifelong learning service, knowing that historically we have been 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 £40,748, including generous gifts from Anthony North, the North family, The Hawthorne Charitable Trust, Rotary Chelmsford Phoenix and Rotary Club Mildmay. We were also grateful to again receive support from RSM Chelmsford, who brought gifts throughout the year, including Easter eggs and toiletries sets.

In 2025 we were thankful for donations given in memory of Ms Mason, and two cherished and much missed students, Michael Childs and Allan Seagar.

We were fortunate to benefit from community fundraising efforts by friends of CCM. Simon Cuthbert (pictured on page 13) bravely took up our charity place in the London Marathon and raised an amazing £3,300. Our tennis coach, Piers Nightingale, impressed everyone in the Suffolk Five Rivers Ultra and raised £1,500. One of CCM's long-term supporters, Evelyn Hicks, continued her creative fundraising efforts and raised £730 in 2025. We were delighted to be made the chosen charity for Caprice's Spring concert, which raised £1,500.

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 2025, receiving £17,049 in total. Many thanks to Essex County Council's Locality Fund, Walter Farthing Trust, Essex Community Foundation, and Chelmsford City Council's Community Funding Scheme for supporting our services.

Although the summary financial position for 2025 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 2025 Accounts		
	2025	2024
Income from charitable activities	£226,597	£192,337
Total income	£280,350	£259,895
Support costs associated with charitable activities	£266,084	£248,313
Total expenditure	£306,903	£285,038
Fund balances at 31st December 2025	£642,369	£666,595



Chris Newson
Treasurer in 2025

Our grateful thanks to supporters who donated in 2025:

Mr and Mrs Clement
Mrs D Mountford
Anthony North
The North Family
Bryan and Pearl Powell
The Schultz Family
Mike Wall



Meet the 2026 Board



Chris Newson

Chair of Trustees

Chartered Accountant



Lucy Burgess

Vice Chair

Fundraising Manager



Vivien Molulu

Secretary to the Board

Programme Management Office Lead - Health System Transformation



Ruth Thompson

Trustee since 2024

Dementia Support Services Manager



Sharon Symon

HR Lead

Speech and Language Therapist, Community Learning Disability Team



Tracey Schneider

Safeguarding Lead

Co-opted April 2026

Head of Strategic Commissioning

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

Horticulture and Hospitality Enterprise Lead



Emma O'Riordan

Senior Support Lead

Learning Facilitator

Gateway Award Programme Lead

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

Charity Information



Bryan Powell
Honorary President



Alan Stoppard
Patron with
Lived Experience

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