

In The Loop



March 2026



Norfolk LD Partnership

We're delighted to share that we are now the venue for the South Norfolk Locality Meetings for the Norfolk Learning Disability Partnership!

This is a fantastic opportunity for us to strengthen our connections with other organisations across the sector, learn from one another, and showcase the incredible work of our charity. We're proud to be hosting such an important forum and look forward to welcoming everyone to our space.

We'd love for you to join us at the next meeting on **Wednesday 11th March 2026, 1:30pm – 3:30pm.**



Come along, get involved, and be part of the conversation!

March Diary Dates

International Women's Day – 8th March

International Women's Day highlights women's achievements and the push for equality. Women with learning disabilities often face added barriers, including poorer health, isolation, and limited opportunities. This day calls for celebrating their strengths, amplifying their voices, and promoting safety, dignity, and independence.

World Down Syndrome Day – 21 March

World Down Syndrome Day is marked each year on 21 March (the 21st day of the 3rd month, representing the triplication of the 21st chromosome). It's a day to raise awareness, promote inclusion, and celebrate people with Down syndrome.

People show support by wearing colourful or mismatched socks, sharing stories and achievements, and backing inclusive education and employment initiatives.

A Message from Our Chair

At our AGM at the end of January, it was lovely to have so many people join us. I enjoyed the opportunity to talk with some members I had only ever seen on Zoom calls and, of course, enjoy homemade biscuits.

As you know, 2026 was always going to be an exciting time for Mid Norfolk Mencap. It was wonderful to be able to start the year with the new trustees meeting so many members of our paid team and charity members at the AGM. Our first full Board meeting will be held at the end of February and this will mark a major milestone for us. I am clear in what I hope we can do together over the course of the next year.

We want to be the organisation of choice for working with adults with learning disabilities. When Norfolk County Council, or any other organisation, wants to find support for someone, I want their first thought to be us. This means continuing the work to transform the charity so we support more people with learning disabilities in Norfolk.

We want to increase the social and recreational opportunities that we offer, supporting the volunteers in our organisation so that they also have the tools, training and support they need to do their work.

I am really keen that we address the need for support to families and carers of people with learning disabilities and I am already looking at this with Ciaran and Kerry.

Importantly, we will also be looking to improve the ways of bringing the voice of people we support into the running of our charity and make the Objects of our charity more relevant to people we support today. This will include looking at how we support members and how members can support us. More on that in the coming months!

As always, I am very happy to discuss any aspect of our work with you and can always be reached via chair@midnorfolkmenicap.org.

Sarah

Chair - Board of Trustees
Mid Norfolk Mencap

Meet Our New Trustees!

We were delighted to welcome **7 new trustees** to Mid Norfolk Mencap in January 2026. Each brings a wealth of professional expertise alongside personal commitment to improving the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families. Together, they strengthen our Board with experience across strategy, governance, service delivery, community leadership and lived experience.



Toby Kheng

An entrepreneurial HR and organisational change specialist, Toby brings strategic expertise in people development, governance and communication, alongside a passion for applying practical, outcome-driven solutions to support the charity's growth and impact.

Christopher Brown

With senior leadership experience across national youth programmes and strong personal ties to the learning disability community, Chris brings deep expertise in operations, safeguarding, inclusion and partnership working to support the charity's mission.



Lloyd Johnson

A retired CEO and experienced strategic leader, Lloyd combines governance expertise with lived experience as a parent of a young person with special needs, strengthening his commitment to advocacy and inclusive support.

Ross Chambers

A commercial leader and dedicated parent of two neurodiverse children, Ross brings strategic thinking, compassionate leadership and a strong commitment to championing inclusive environments for families.



Meet Our New Trustees!

Margaret Burnside

With over 30 years' experience in leadership and people development, and recent voluntary work supporting individuals with disabilities, Margaret brings strategic insight, coaching expertise and a strong people-first ethos to the Board.



Sandra Walmsley

A highly experienced social care leader with a background in social work, inspection, governance and national policy, Sandra brings strategic vision and a lifelong commitment to high-quality, inclusive support services.

Lawrence Thrussell

A senior leader in community mental health and social care, Lawrence combines over 15 years' professional experience with personal insight, bringing a strong focus on governance, service quality and long-term sustainability.



Together, their combined expertise and lived experience will help us think boldly, act responsibly and remain firmly focused on the people and families at the heart of our work. As a Board, they will provide thoughtful oversight, constructive challenge and strategic direction, ensuring that our charity remains sustainable, responsive and true to its values. Most importantly, their shared commitment to inclusion and dignity will help us continue building services, partnerships and opportunities that empower people with learning disabilities to live fuller, more connected lives within our community.

We look forward to seeing what the new Board will achieve!

Valentine's Afternoon Tea 2026

On 12th February, we were delighted to host a special Valentine's Afternoon Tea for our Merle Boddy House residents, joined by their friends and families.

The afternoon was filled with sweet treats, thoughtful decorations and many warm, heartfelt moments. From delicious homemade cakes to a beautifully decorated room, it was a wonderful celebration of love and togetherness.

It was especially meaningful to see residents surrounded by those closest to them, sharing stories, reflecting on treasured memories and looking ahead to new journeys. The event provided a lovely opportunity to celebrate friendships and wish everyone well for the future.

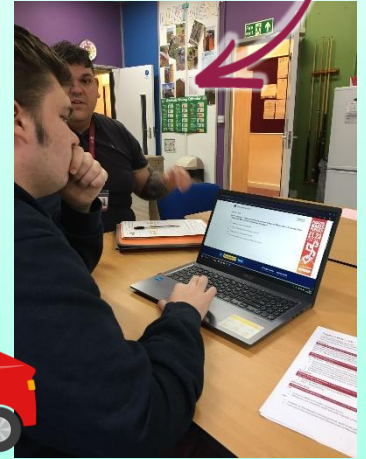
Our sincere thanks go to our dedicated staff and the people we support for preparing so many delicious treats and for helping to decorate the room so beautifully. Their hard work made the afternoon truly special.



What's been going on in the Community Outreach Support service?

Gavin has set himself the goal of passing his driving test to gain more independence, and we're proud to be supporting him on that journey. Recently, he completed his first mock theory test and achieved a fantastic result, especially for a first try. He showed great focus and determination, and he's keen to keep practising with the aim of booking his official theory test soon.

Mark spent time being supported to write his Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). Together, Mark and his support worker talked through different emergency situations, how he might react, and the steps that would be taken to support and reassure him if something unexpected happened. He was able to share his thoughts and ask questions, helping him feel more informed and confident.



James made the most of the snowy weather with a peaceful walk outside. He enjoyed feeling the snow between his fingers and had a brilliant time making snowballs.



Jade recently showed great kindness and creativity by designing and making a special birthday card for a terminally ill child who had asked to receive cards for his big day. She then went to the post office to send it on its way.



Danny recently enjoyed a visit to Redwings, spending time with the horses, donkeys and ponies. He connected with one gentle horse in particular, happily stroking him as he stood calmly by his side. As Danny walked away, the horse came back over to see him again. Danny was delighted by the interaction and left with a big smile on his face.



Dereham & District Gateway Club

RELAUNCH PARTY – 17TH MARCH 2026!

We are delighted to announce that Dereham and District Gateway Club is returning — and we're kicking things off with a **Relaunch Party on 17th March 2026!**

Over the past month, the club has been temporarily suspended while we took time to carefully review how Gateway Club is run and how we can best support our fantastic team of volunteers. Gateway Club is incredibly important to so many of our members, and it was vital that we used this time to ensure it returns stronger, well-supported and organised in the best possible way.

As part of this fresh start, we have decided to move Gateway Club to Mid Norfolk Mencap's Tavern Lane Hub, making full use of our existing facilities and fantastic resources. We're confident this move will provide a great environment for members and volunteers alike.

We are also very pleased to share that Jo, one of our Community Outreach Support Workers, has recently been appointed as our new **Volunteer Club Coordinator**. Congratulations to Jo on her new role, we are delighted to have her on board helping to lead Gateway Club forward. Jo is working closely with our dedicated volunteers to ensure the club runs as effectively as possible and continues to provide a fun, safe and supportive space for everyone.



We're excited to return this month with a fantastic new schedule of events, beginning with a disco to celebrate our relaunch!

Event details:

Gateway Re-Launch Disco!

Tuesday 17th March 2026, 7:00pm – 9:00pm

At Mid Norfolk Mencap, 1a Tavern Lane, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1PX



£3.00 entry (plus money for refreshments and raffle)

We can't wait to welcome everyone back!



We know how much our members have missed their weekly Gateway Club sessions — the friendships, the activities and the fun. We cannot wait to welcome everyone back and see Gateway Club return even better than before.

NORFOLK LEARNING DISABILITY PARTNERSHIP

www.norfolkldpartnership.org.uk

Open to the public and can include:

- People with learning disabilities and their families / carers
- People who work at the County Council, including County Councillors
- People who provide services for people with learning disabilities
- People from the local area who want to help



SOUTH NORFOLK Locality Meeting

Next meeting:

Wednesday 11th March 2026,
1.30pm-3:00pm

Venue:

Mid Norfolk Mencap,
1a Tavern Lane
Dereham, NR19 1PX

WEST NORFOLK Locality Meeting

Next meeting:

Thursday 28th May 2026,
1.30pm-3:00pm

Venue:

Forward 33 Shop,
33 Broad Street,
Kings Lynn, PE30 1DP

NORTH NORFOLK Locality Meeting

Next meeting:

Wednesday 20th May 2026,
1.30pm-3:00pm

Venue:

About With Friends
22D Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9JW

NORWICH Locality Meeting

Next meeting:

Wednesday 13th May 2026,
1:00pm-2:30pm

Venue:

Lazar House, Sprowston Road,
Norwich, NR3 4HX



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