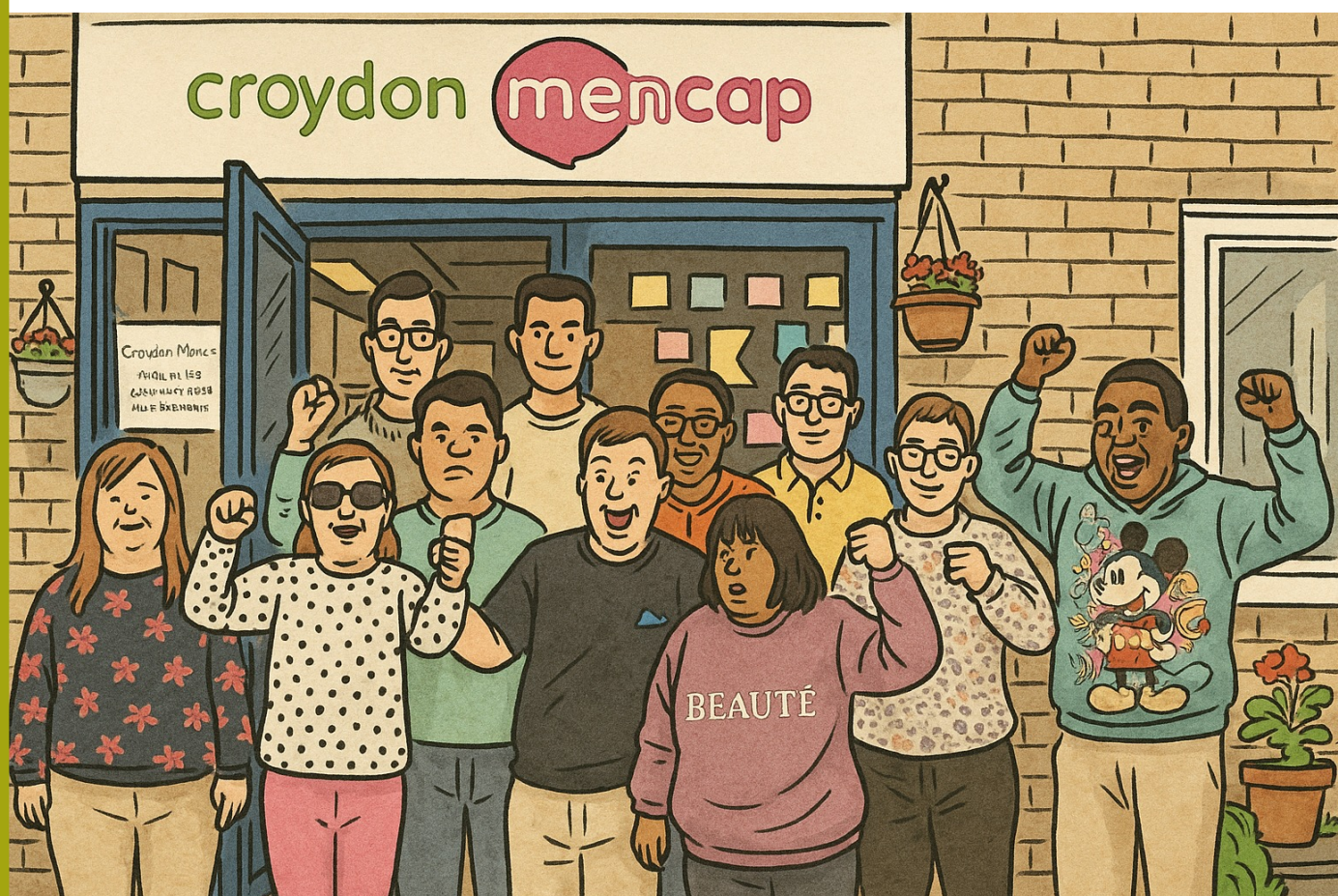


Our Big Plan



Full
Version



Our five-year strategy

2025 to 2030

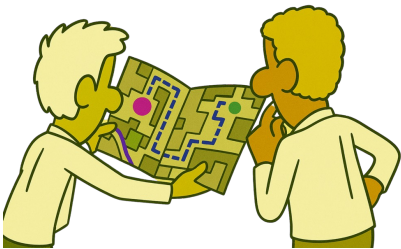
Our Big Plan: An Easy Read Story



At Croydon Mencap, we support people with learning disabilities and their families.



We want everyone to feel included, safe, and confident about their future.



This plan is what some people call a 'strategy'. A strategy is like a map – showing where we want to go and how we'll get there.



People with learning disabilities helped us shape this as well as other groups and people in the borough, like the Learning Disability Alliance, Willow Learning for Life, carers, councillors, and SEND teachers.



Our vision is that Croydon is a place where people with learning disabilities have the power, voice, and support to make their own choices and live life their way.

Our Big Plan: An Easy Read Story



Over the next few years, we will focus on a few important things which we are sharing with you here.

You can watch the video at:
www.croydonmencap.org.uk/BigPlan

1



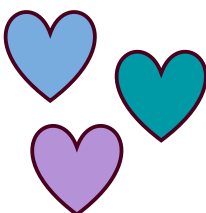
Understand and show what is working so we can do more of it

2



Bring in more money that we can use freely across our charity

3



Keep safe the things we love

Our Big Plan: An Easy Read Story



4



Be clear about who needs us most and make sure they get our support

5

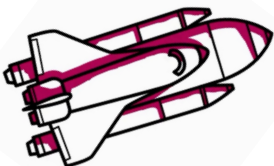


Show people who we are and promote the full range of support available across Croydon

6



People with learning disabilities build their confidence, use their strengths, and lead the way



Now that our plan is ready, we're excited to get started.



We'll share our goals and work hard to make them happen – step by step, together.

ABOUT OUR WORK



Our Approach

Croydon Mencap was set up by local parents of children with learning disabilities in 1952 in the London Borough of Croydon. Over the last 73 years we have increased our activities in response to the needs of residents with learning disabilities and their carers. In 2020, we expanded our support to include people who may have autism, with or without a learning disability, in response to local need. Through developing this strategy, it became clear that we need to work in partnership with organisations that specialise in supporting neurodivergent people to meet those needs in Croydon. We also support people with learning disabilities from the surrounding areas of Croydon.

We provide advice, information, and support, through a range of projects and services. Together with individuals with learning disabilities, we influence to make life better for people with learning disabilities, their families and carers.

Our work extends beyond individuals with learning disabilities – we support whole families and communities. Time and again, we have seen trust, friendships, and positive experiences flourish, reminding us of the significant impact we can make when we work in partnership with those who may have faced lifelong challenges, often unseen.

We advocate for and support the social model of disability, recognising that societal barriers frequently shape an individual's experience of disability.

Where We Are Now: Approximate Snapshot at 31 March 2025*

Turnover	£1.209 million	Employees	43
Expenditure	£1.013 million	Volunteers	5
Reserves	£180,000	Reach	2,756

*These numbers for 2024 to 2025 had not been fully checked at the time this went to print by our external auditors. They might change slightly after the final check is done.

Current Teams

Central Services	Family Support and Carers	Enterprise Lounge	The Saturday Club
Monday Night Social Club	Community Team	Support To Live	Volunteer Buddies
Early Positive Approaches to Support (EPAts) Trainers	Chill and Chat	Out and About	

Current Grant Funders and Commissioners

National Lottery Community Fund	Reedham Children's Trust	SGN
Department for Education	Royal Mencap	Croydon Council

ABOUT OUR WORK



Key Achievements During Our Previous Strategy



Celebrated our 70th birthday in July 2022 marked by community events, fundraising, and a reflection on our deep roots and future ambitions.



Purchased Enterprise Lounge – our day service building which we have rented since 2009. This secured an investment for the charity and long-term stability.



Secured new and renewed funding, including an 8% uplift from social services for our Enterprise Lounge service, an NHS grant for wellbeing activities in partnership with local organisations, and National Lottery funding to continue our Volunteer Buddies project.



Established new partnerships, including welcoming Croydon Parent Carer Forum to Croydon Mencap in 2021, and partnering with the newly formed 'Learning Disability Alliance'.



Increased influence by hosting a high-impact Croydon Mayoral Election Hustings in 2022 led by people with learning disabilities in partnership with local charity Willow Learning For Life, raising their political voice.



Expanded our reach and support, delivering 39,000 hours of support through Enterprise Lounge, supporting 2,268 parent carers, extending Monday Club with up to 70 members attending each time, increasing membership to Saturday Club, and enabled 2000 hours of volunteering over three years.



Delivered great impact including: 75% of our support volunteers securing regular volunteer roles; helping families secure £81,000 in additional benefits; tackling social isolation and inactivity through Monday Club, Saturday Club, and Out and About; and supporting carers through tribunals and emotional crises.



Invested in a new electric mini-bus, new database, new website, and significantly reduced our infrastructure expenditure by removing ourselves from a long rental lease.

Our Definitions

Term	Definition
Learning disability ('LD')	Read here .
Member	An individual with a learning disability who uses our services, or a carer.
Carer	Someone who provides unpaid care.
Croydon and surrounding areas	Surrounding areas only where there is an identified need and no opportunity to work in partnership with a local provider.
Partner	An organisation we work with to deliver shared aims.

HOW WE CREATED OUR STRATEGY



For our new strategy, we wanted a fresh approach developed in close consultation with the community, moving us towards true co-production. We've consulted and engaged with people with learning disabilities, their families, carers, and key organisations whose work affects their lives, working hard to put their voices at the centre of this process.

To support this, we brought in Croydon-based 'Inside Impact', enabling more community consultation and surveys. Their independent perspective also helped highlight blind spots and encouraged open challenge to our existing practices.

Meetings, Interviews and Focus Groups

- In person focus group with the **Learning Disability Alliance**
- In person focus group with **Willow Learning For Life**
- Meeting parents, carers and executive members of **Croydon Active Voices**
- Online focus group with Croydon Mencap's **Carers Group** during Elevenses
- Meeting the **NHS Community Learning Disability Team** in Croydon
- Meeting **A Collective**
- Meeting the Head of Adult Social Care & Health Improvement at **Croydon Council**
- Interviewing the Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care at **Croydon Council**
- Interviewing the Head of Disability & Transitions Service at **Croydon Council**
- Interviewing **former MP and trustee of Croydon Mencap**
- Interviewing **Queer Croydon** executive members
- Meeting **StartUp Croydon**
- Interviewing the CEO of **Willow Learning For Life**
- Meeting the CEO of **Croydon Voluntary Action**
- Interviewing the CEO of **Garwood Foundation**

Surveys

- Of **people with learning disabilities attending Croydon Mencap** services
- Of **parents and carers of school-age children with learning disabilities** not currently accessing Croydon Mencap
- Of **teachers and staff at SEND schools** in and around Croydon
- Of **262 members of the Croydon public** on Croydon high street

Key Document and Data Reviews

- A review of **Croydon Mencap's Enterprise Loung** yearly member reviews
- **'Big Learning Disability Survey 2022'**, Mencap
- **'The Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Health and Loneliness of People with a Learning Disability'** (2022), Mencap
- **'Walk In Our Shoes'** (2017), The Public Office on behalf of Croydon Council
- **'Croydon Health and Care Plan 2022-2024'**, South West London Health & Care Partnership
- **'LB Croydon Public Health Peer Review'** (2024)
- **'Croydon Carers' Strategy 2024 to 2029'**, One Croydon
- **'Croydon SEND Local Area Strategy 2023-2026'**, Croydon Council
- Croydon's **'Learning Disabilities Action Plan'**

Internal Discussions

- Away Day with all staff and trustees
- In person and online focus groups with **staff**
- Online focus group with **trustees**
- Two deep dive sessions with **trustees** (one in person and one online) for strategy feedback
- Two sessions with **staff** (one in person and one online) for strategy feedback

It is possible there are important organisations or people that we missed. If you feel your voice has been left out, **we still encourage you to speak with us and help shape our annual business plans as we implement our strategy:** info@croydonmencap.org.uk

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES



We have updated our vision and mission statements in response to feedback from consultation. These guide our strategic aims.

Vision (what we want to be true)

A Croydon where people with learning disabilities have the power, voice, and support to make their own choices and live life their way.

Mission (how we will get there)

To work side by side with people with learning disabilities, families and carers to build better services and friendlier communities.

Shared Ambition

While our mission and vision reflect the unique role of Croydon Mencap, **we continue to be deeply inspired by the vision of Social Care Future.**

It underpins our broader ambitions for how society should work for people with learning disabilities of all ages, their families and carers. It acts as a shared destination that we and many others across the UK are working towards.

“We all want to live in the place we call home, with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing the things that matter to us.” That’s the #SocialCareFuture we seek.

Help us grow this future together.

Values

Aspiring – we learn, improve and grow to be the best we can be

Everyone belongs – we involve and work with lots of different people and organisations

Caring – we care about each other

Trusting – we are trusted because we always do what we say. We listen and explain what we are doing and why we are doing it, we are honest

Valuing – we value individuals with learning disabilities equally

Enabling – we don’t do things *for* people; we help people find their own way

OUR SIX STRATEGIC AIMS FOR 2025 TO 2030



1. Understand and show what is working so we can do more of it

2. Bring in more money that we can use freely across our charity

3. Keep safe the things we love

4. Be clear about who needs us most and make sure they get our support

5. Show everybody who we are and promote the full range of support available across Croydon

6. People with learning disabilities build their confidence, use their strengths, and lead the way

These six aims are based on what we heard from people with learning disabilities both members and potential members; carers; partners and potential partners such as staff in other charities, SEND teachers, council workers and NHS staff; members of the Croydon public; and Croydon Mencap colleagues and trustees throughout our consultation.

For each aim, we've identified the steps we believe will get us there over the period from 2025 to 2030.

Some actions are marked as 'aspirational', which means they reflect what we'd love to do if funding or capacity becomes available, but they're not guaranteed. **This approach gives us focus while staying flexible and realistic.**

1

Strategic Aim 1:

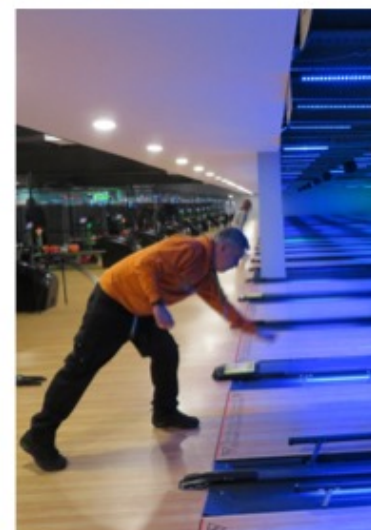
Understand and show what is working so we can do more of it

Why this aim

From our consultation, we heard real pride in Croydon Mencap's work from staff, members and carers who see the difference we make every day. We demonstrate impact well to our funders and commissioners in applications and reporting. But we also heard from partners a shared desire to go further: to better show what we do, how it helps different people, and how we can grow our impact. They also want to see us communicate our impact with more and varied audiences.

Understanding and showing our impact doesn't just help us do better work, it helps us make stronger decisions, attract more support from funders and donors, and use our time and money more effectively.

That's why this aim must come first: with stronger evidence, we'll be better placed to choose the actions that make the biggest difference in line with our vision, mission and values.



1

Strategic Aim 1:

Understand and show what is working so we can do more of it



Where we are now in 2025

We create yearly impact reports celebrating our successes using mainly case studies, attendance data and self-reported change. We listen to people's experiences and share these stories to understand how our services are working and use photos and more recently videos to tell the story of our work.

All our impact reporting is done in-house by a few key staff using different technologies but often with a lot of manual processes.

Some services have their own logic models, theory of change, indicators or other plans for creating impact.

We measure the difference made across services and report to funders but do not have a single approach or framework that applies to all our work as all teams are self-managed.

We think there is more we could learn about the impact we have by having a more consistent approach across all services, and more we can do to share it by making better use of technology and communications.

Where we will get to by 2030

We look at the numbers to see what difference we're making. Every service will feel confident to use a range of outcome evidence that includes quotes, anecdotes, case studies, self-reported change, before and after surveys, and potentially comparisons to control groups.

New technology and better use of existing software will save us time and make reporting on our data much simpler.

We will adopt a 'theory of change' approach across the whole organisation showing the change we want to see. It will link what we do (activities) to the difference it makes (outcomes), step by step.

We will have a single monitoring and evaluation framework for the whole of Croydon Mencap and a central database for all impact data. We will commission independent evaluations to check what we think we know.

We will make data-informed decisions about what people with learning disabilities love, have the freedom to try new ideas, and communicate well what is happening.

1

Strategic Aim 1:

Understand and show what is working so we can do more of it

How we will get there

Year 1

April 2025
to March
2026



Year 2

April 2026
to March
2027



Year 3

April 2027
to March
2028



Year 4

April 2028
to March
2029



Year 5

April 2029
to March
2030

- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation costs are written into any funding application or budgets, starting from a 10% rule of thumb and adjusting from there so that good impact practice is feasible for every new project and programme and to allow for commissioning independent evaluations
- Create a central monitoring and evaluation framework that contains all current impact reporting requirements (planned outputs, outcomes and their indicators) across all services that will be continually updated for improved oversight
- Develop a theory of change that represents the work of the whole organisation
- Develop new ways to measure outputs, outcomes and impact if the theory of change shows gaps in understanding and start new data collection, updating the monitoring and evaluation framework
- Explore the best software (either existing or new) to capture all impact data in one place so we have 'one source of truth', automating processes where appropriate to give more time back to colleagues
- Work with colleagues to develop internal training on impact practice to standardise approaches, including videos, templates and examples so every colleague can own their impact and still work consistently together
- Consider using validated tools like SWEMWBS or ONS4, especially for carers, to show the difference our support makes by compared to other groups, and highlight need by comparing with the wider population
- Develop before and after assessments for new members and carers to assess outcomes for individuals over time in addition to current retrospective measures

Aspirationally

- Explore more advanced methods of evaluation like the randomised control trial we are currently part of with the University of Birmingham's 'Early Positive Approaches To Support' project, or economic evaluation to show our social value

Critical assumptions

- That funder requirements for impact reporting match what we feel is appropriate and necessary
- That stakeholders value our investment in impact practice to strengthen frontline work
- That people with learning disabilities and carers trust us enough to share sensitive data

2

Strategic Aim 2:

Bring in more money that we can use freely across our charity**Why this aim**

As well as contracts and grants for projects, we need money that we can choose to spend where it's most needed. We've successfully grown our income through project-specific ('restricted') funding in the last few years, allowing us to deliver more services. However, this type of funding usually ends after a few years.

Even commissioned work isn't guaranteed as we saw in 2025 with when we were unable to apply to continue our long-standing carers contract. In response to carers' concerns, we used our very limited unrestricted funds to keep a skeleton service, buying time to try raise new funding. Unrestricted income means we can keep good work going even when project-specific funding ends.

Project-specific funding only covers a small part (if any) of core costs like admin, staff support, running our spaces or IT. This is especially challenging with rises to Employer's National Insurance and the living wage. Without unrestricted income, we can't invest in leadership, infrastructure or staff development, putting pressure on teams and limiting us finding more efficient or effective ways of working. To sustain what works and grow what's needed, we must find new models to increase unrestricted income.

We want to protect and sustain the things that matter most.



2

Strategic Aim 2:

Bring in more money that we can use freely across our charity



Where we are now in 2025

We have a balanced budget after many years of funding cuts, making tough sacrifices in pursuit of financial sustainability, by reducing our infrastructure.

We have reduced our overheads moving from rented offices to long term investments like purchasing Enterprise Lounge.

We have project-specific funding from the likes of NHS, SGN and National Lottery, but our unrestricted income is limited, coming mainly from the small surplus from Enterprise Lounge income or legacy and individual donations.

2025 marks the first year we receive no direct grant or contract funding from Croydon Council bringing both challenges and opportunities.

Where we will get to by 2030

We still have a balanced budget but with a greater proportion of income from unrestricted sources.

We have a reliable model for generating predictable levels of unrestricted income, having explored several options to find the best.

We have been able to improve our infrastructure: more strategic capacity and support, better processes and technology, training for staff, and improved governance, thanks to unrestricted income.

Services are at less risk of funding cuts because we can sustain or subsidise them through unrestricted funds.

We will have greater financial sustainability through unrestricted income and be less affected by changes to funding 'fashions'.

2

Strategic Aim 2:

Bring in more money that we can use freely across our charity

How we will get there

Year 1

April 2025
to March
2026



Year 2

April 2026
to March
2027



Year 3

April 2027
to March
2028



Year 4

April 2028
to March
2029



Year 5

April 2029
to March
2030

- With adults with learning disabilities, pilot developing social enterprises that might become a separate trading arm with its own advisory board across the next five years. Feeding profits back into the charity whilst providing entrepreneurial, training and employment opportunities to individuals with learning disabilities, and improving visibility of learning disabilities within the community
- Start lean when piloting the social enterprise with a one-page vision, a business plan and recruiting a board of advisers, making the most of business expertise in the Croydon community and testing concepts before scaling
- Work with business and charity partners in the community such as StartUp Croydon to support our enterprising efforts
- Explore how to make the most of our wonderful asset that is our Enterprise Lounge building, including the potential to rent the space to other organisations outside of day centre hours or run paid workshops to the wider community out of the space
- Work with fundraising consultants to scope what unrestricted grants might be available to us to apply to and how successful we are likely to be if we invest time or money in applying
- Explore how to maximise our current individual donations for example, encouraging people to switch to recurring monthly donations, doing more to promote our Local Giving pages, and making sure all our marketing materials contain an ask for support
- Develop an 'impact readiness' plan which sets out how we would prioritise spending unrestricted income if we suddenly found ourselves in receipt of income from an unexpected legacy donation, for example

Aspirationally

- Deliver a legacy fundraising campaign if we have already established a successful social enterprise which meets member outcomes and can afford to wait for longer lead times

Critical assumptions

- That we can access the right expertise (we do not currently have extensive experience in trading)
- That we have something that is valuable that we can offer to the market
- That members want to and are able to participate in enterprising activities

3

**Strategic Aim 3:
Keep safe the things we love****Why this aim**

During our consultation, people currently accessing our support repeatedly spoke about the deep value of what already works at Croydon Mencap: from the warmth and trust built by long-standing staff, the social connection of the Monday Club, to the impact of the Family Support Team and the joy found in the Enterprise Lounge: not just “services” but “lifelines”. We are ‘family’ since some colleagues, trustees, members and carers we have known not years but decades. The charity’s continuity brings much needed stability and consistency to people’s lives, whilst new partnerships bring in new ideas and influence.

Our long history since 1952, culture, values, people, supporters, services, processes, partners, and credible brand cannot be taken for granted. We need to work to protect them or risk losing them, particularly through transitions of leadership or funding.

We must secure what’s working now before stretching our capacity to do more.



3

Strategic Aim 3: Keep safe the things we love



Where we are now in 2025

Several of our services have time-limited funding that we will wish to protect.

Newer initiatives like the partnership with the Learning Disability Alliance, the Learning Disability Carnival, and SGN Keep Warm campaign team are as well-loved, as well as long-standing projects such as Monday Club.

Colleagues have built great ways of working and we have amassed a lot of documentation and knowledge over the years, but these are not always captured in a central place or digitally.

Our move out of Portland House has stabilised finances but made it harder for colleagues and partners to find a suitable space to connect – something which is valued and missed.

Members and carers see trustworthiness as what makes the charity uniquely special.

We want to keep people, knowledge and services that work safe and protected.

Where we will get to by 2030

We will have clear data about which of our services and which parts of our services are most crucial to preserve if we ever need to make trade-offs due to funding limitations.

We will have our knowledge and processes captured digitally in a place that can be easily accessed by all colleagues.

Great staff and volunteers will want to remain working with us and find space to grow and develop within the charity.

We will once again have time and a suitable space where colleagues and partners can easily connect.

People who access our support will continue to see our values played out, especially trust.

We will see greater continuity in our work and support, and be able to build on past lessons and current assets rather than re-invent.

3

Strategic Aim 3: Keep safe the things we love

How we will get there

Year 1

April 2025
to March
2026



Year 2

April 2026
to March
2027



Year 3

April 2027
to March
2028



Year 4

April 2028
to March
2029



Year 5

April 2029
to March
2030

- Be more transparent in external communications and set expectations about when services have funding to – acknowledging a desire to keep services safe even if it's not financially possible
- Keep a running log of which services are funded to when, flagging ones nearing the end of guaranteed funding, sharing with the board for clearer oversight
- Develop funding profiles for all services. These profiles will encompass impact data, case studies, feedback, relevant quotes, and key statistics. They will serve as a quick reference tool, ensuring we have all necessary information readily available when funding opportunities arise
- Become compliant with NHS information governance to reassure funders
- Develop a business continuity plan in case of interruption to services regardless of the cause (cyber attack, civil unrest, natural disaster)
- Carry out video interviews with key staff or trustees who are leaving to capture their institutional memory and give colleagues a chance to ask questions
- Agree a system to capture Standard Operating Procedures digitally and centrally so that any task can still be carried out consistently if a colleague is absent or leaves
- Focus on building infrastructure for impact measurement first to learn what works well and demonstrate the need to funders for preserving these services
- Introduce more ways for colleagues to connect across all services
- Maintain flexible working opportunities to help retain good staff and morale, including potential home-working allowances
- Enable colleagues to set up skills-sharing, peer support and networking opportunities with colleagues outside the learning disability space in Croydon to support personal development and maintain good staff
- Build time with colleagues to explore safeguarding and incident case studies and how they would respond, and more debrief opportunities to help us protect

Aspirationally

- Invest in archiving and digitising historic records to learn from our past and revere our legacy
- Develop partnerships with training providers and businesses through CSR to help staff learn for free

Critical assumptions

- That we can secure continued funding by proving what works
- That being open about risks to what we love helps sets expectations more than it causes worry

4

Strategic Aim 4:

Be clear about who needs us most and make sure they get our support

Why this aim

Consultation showed we need to define who our support is for more clearly - many partners and professionals are unsure if we support people with autism without a learning disability, or what level of need we are best placed to help.

We need to focus our efforts where we can have the biggest impact, using clearer assessment, better signposting, and support mainstream services or charities to adapt to include individuals with learning disabilities.

At the same time, partners, people with learning disabilities, and carers asked us to expand into new areas, like holidays, digital and assistive technology skills, and more age-specific or interest-based activities that respond to unmet needs in the borough.

This aim needs to come after Strategic Aims 1, 2 and 3 which build strong foundations on what works well, before we consider how to adapt or improve our support.



4

Strategic Aim 4:

Be clear about who needs us most and make sure they get our support



Where we are now in 2025

All members who require support are assessed before we provide services to check that we are best placed to meet their needs, but we could go further in communicating what level of need someone is most likely to find us suitable for.

We changed our charitable objects to include supporting autistic people without a learning disability, though our expertise is still learning disabilities. This created confusion about who we support. We stepped down from the Autism Partnership Board, recognising we need to work in partnership with those better placed to lead on this.

We have started to develop strong partnerships and provide infrastructure support to organisations like the Learning Disabilities Alliance and Croydon Active Voices to ensure we each can play to our strengths, creating a community of support so people get the support they need from the right place.

Where we will get to by 2030

We will have a clear definition of who we support and how we assess and prioritise need, with this information understood by all and available publicly.

Decisions about where we can make the biggest difference will use impact data and advice from people with learning disabilities and carers.

Signposting and referral systems will be streamlined and more widely used, with staff confident and consistent in offering next steps.

We will expand support into areas identified by people with learning disabilities and carers as improving their wellbeing the most.

We will have strengthened existing partnerships and established new partnerships with autism-specific and non-disability organisations.

It will be easier for people to get the support they need when they need it.

4

Strategic Aim 4:

Be clear about who needs us most and make sure they get our support

How we will get there

Year 1

April 2025
to March
2026



Year 2

April 2026
to March
2027



Year 3

April 2027
to March
2028



Year 4

April 2028
to March
2029



Year 5

April 2029
to March
2030

- Clarify the level of need we are best placed to support across all communications, marketing and platforms
- Support colleagues to set up a central log of signposting and referral options and processes
- Build more partnerships to refer neurodivergent individuals with no learning disability or co-deliver services where our approach meets the need
- Explore micro-enterprise opportunities with people with learning disabilities
- Reach more people with learning disabilities by collaborating more with non-learning disability organisations like faith groups or mental health services where people might need our support but not know about us
- Target support to underserved groups, particularly young adults in transition periods and those with a suspected learning disability without diagnosis
- Work more consciously to understand all aspects of members' identities including faith, sexuality, gender identity, race, culture, class and refer members to support them to explore all aspects of their identity beyond learning disability for example to 'Queer Croydon'
- Establish learning disability-specific sessions with mainstream community providers
- Expand Individual Service Fund (ISF) service 'Support to Live'
- Explore establishing a training arm to provide training to recipients and managers of Direct Payments (DPs) drawing down funding through Skills For Care
- Scope holiday and respite provision (in-house or via partners) including abroad

Aspirationally

- Become a provider of 'Supported Living' – a housing and support service
- Use technology to monitor the internet for new, outdated or incorrect information about us

Critical assumptions

- That potential partners exist to meet needs that are not our focus
- That the funding, resources and skills will be available to expand into areas of unmet need

5

Strategic Aim 5:

Show everybody who we are and promote the full range of support available across Croydon

Why this aim

This aim has three parts. First, to boost the visibility of learning disabilities in Croydon, because members and carers told us that learning disabilities are still misunderstood and overlooked, leading to stigma and exclusion. There is confusion around learning disabilities' relationship to mental health and neurodivergence.

Second, to raise the profile of Croydon Mencap, as many families and professionals still don't know what we offer or how to access support. Partners would like to see us have even more visibility in the community. Only 6% of the general Croydon public is aware of what we do.

Third, to raise the profile of other organisations that can provide support, so that more people can find the right help, whether or not it involves us working alongside them.

This aim both runs alongside all other aims and comes as a result of Strategic Aims 1, 2, 3, 4.



5

Strategic Aim 5:

Show everybody who we are and promote the full range of support available across Croydon



Where we are now in 2025

We benefit from the national Mencap brand which gives us credibility with local authorities and greater awareness amongst the general Croydon public. But people who only know our name cannot guess what we deliver. Some people think we are the national Mencap charity with far more resources than we actually have, leading to unrealistic expectations.

We support events in the community like the Learning Disabilities Carnival to raise awareness, but these are limited.

Many partners feel we do good work but could do more to let people know we are out there.

We have a growing number of partners and cross-referring is improving but more could be done to cross-promote organisations' work especially non-learning disability organisations.

Where we will get to by 2030

Croydon Mencap will be recognised and trusted by more families, professionals, partners and the public as a key source of support.

More people will know how to access support thanks to clearer information, stronger signposting, and social prescribing.

People with learning disabilities will lead awareness activities, including workshops, talks, and social media content.

We will have a shared language to describe and strengthen our partnerships with others. Other local groups offering relevant support will have a higher profile in part from our support.

Our communications will reach wider audiences, using creative formats and new platforms co-produced with members.

We will be a strong local brand alongside our partners and have contributed to a greater understanding of learning disability by the public.

5

Strategic Aim 5:

Show everybody who we are and promote the full range of support available across Croydon

How we will get there

Year 1

April 2025
to March
2026



Year 2

April 2026
to March
2027



Year 3

April 2027
to March
2028



Year 4

April 2028
to March
2029



Year 5

April 2029
to March
2030

- Develop a shared vocabulary around the different types of partnerships we have including: providing infrastructure support, contract delivery partners, formal referral pathways, informal signposting and those we aspire to connect with
- Create 'Mutual Support Agreements' with appropriate organisations that set out basic terms and boundaries of how we can best support each other even in informal relationships so we can make the most of what we have to offer
- Keep a centralised partner log with links to individual agreements that all colleagues can access so we see more cross-referring and cross-promotion
- Begin a school or community-based learning disability awareness campaign
- Develop and scale workshops that people with learning disabilities can deliver to the public to raise awareness of learning disability and the support available
- Develop work on learning disability awareness literature and workshops, having people with lived experience as the spokesperson or trainer wherever possible, and working in partnership with the organisations with similar goals like the NHS' Community Learning Disability Team, for example
- Meet with community class providers to educate on how to design LD-specific sessions
- Raise our social media profile with member-led content
- Raise our profile in person by attending more community events, having members become ambassadors, and talks in the community by members about our work
- Consider investing in marketing exercises such as a paid, targeted social media campaign (e.g. Facebook) or door-to-door leafleting
- Invest in more branded items for events and outreach to grow awareness

Aspirationally

- Launch or contribute to issue-related campaigns such as on national welfare policy reforms
- Expand social prescribing through Simply Connect and healthcare partnerships

Critical assumptions

- That members will want to take on public-facing roles and be happy to promote our work
- That organisations are open to deeper collaboration and share our values and standards

6

Strategic Aim 6:

People with learning disabilities build their confidence, use their strengths, and lead the way

Why this aim

Croydon Mencap was originally set up by carers of those with learning disabilities, not by people with learning disabilities themselves. We saw in consultation that a lack of representation from people with learning disabilities in our own organisation could hold us back from achieving our desired impact. We need to move our legacy on. We know this may take many years to perfect with small steps and require outside support.

Leadership means people being able to lead their own lives, make their own decisions, feel confident to say no. Leadership also means that people with learning disabilities are also staff, trustees and involved in governance structures that help us make decisions as an organisation. And leadership also means leading in the community: as ambassadors, spokespeople, changemakers, advocates and in roles of authority.

This aim influences all other strategic aims. We will look for leadership opportunities in every aim, prioritising actions that offer the greatest chance for people with learning disabilities to lead.



6

Strategic Aim 6:

People with learning disabilities build their confidence, use their strengths, and lead the way



Where we are now in 2025

Reviews are conducted yearly with day centre members. They set personal goals.

There are different chances for people with learning disabilities to shape our work. Some services like Out And About are mostly co-designed with members deciding activities. Others might just have time to inform or consult people. We lack a consistent approach service-wide.

There is currently no formal governance structure such as a committee or learning-disabled trustee that we know of, where the voice of someone with lived experience is guaranteed. A past attempt with our Looking Forward Group was not sustained.

We are ready and willing to make big changes to our organisation to ensure people with learning disabilities are consistently guaranteed a voice in decision-making.

Where we will get to by 2030

We will have proudly continued our individualised approach to member and carer support, with them leading us in what they need and want.

We will have all services rating themselves against the 'Ladder of Involvement' to understand how people with learning disabilities are shaping services. We will aim for every service to be consistently operating at true 'co-production'.

People with learning disabilities will have guaranteed decision-making power in our governance through our board or a dedicated committee, with representation reflecting the full diversity of identity, not just disability.

We will have an inclusive governance and operating model that is in the most part co-designed, where the voice of people with learning disabilities is guaranteed to shape our decisions consistently across the organisation.

6

Strategic Aim 6:

People with learning disabilities build their confidence, use their strengths, and lead the way

How we will get there

Year 1

April 2025
to March
2026



Year 2

April 2026
to March
2027



Year 3

April 2027
to March
2028



Year 4

April 2028
to March
2029



Year 5

April 2029
to March
2030

- Develop what a 'Ladder of Involvement' would look like for Croydon Mencap with examples for each rung of the ladder
- Work with colleagues to assess each service's current position on the ladder, realistic goals, and what's needed to reach them, then re-assess and check progress yearly
- Ensure that any new or proposed services or projects are planned using the Ladder of Involvement
- Meet with and learn from organisations with strong co-design models to shape our own approach.
- Aim to have at least one trustee who has disclosed having a learning disability, providing any additional support required such as preparation or debrief time, or producing Easy Read governance documents
- Target any future trustee recruitment at other underrepresented groups too
- Take on projects that have staff costs for roles that could be delivered by people with learning disabilities
- Encourage disability disclosure, make reasonable adjustments and use Access to Work or Charity Status Employment when working with candidates and employees with a learning disability
- Ensure contracts and other employment documentation are available in Easy Read
- Explore establishing a committee of individuals with learning disabilities and carers to help make decisions
- When expanding services, consider what support could improve people's self-leadership including how to set boundaries, consent, healthy relationships

LADDER OF INVOLVEMENT

Coercing

Educating

Informing

Consultation

Engagement

Co-design

Co-production

Critical assumptions

- That people with learning disabilities want to and are able to lead with the right support
- That colleagues and systems will adopt and embed the Ladder of Involvement
- That inclusive employment and governance practices will increase diversity and representation

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles help us make decisions and act on our strategy, especially when things get complicated. They help us stay grounded in our values, navigate trade-offs, and respond to challenges in a way that reflects who we are. A strategy is only useful if people can use it in real life. **These principles help bridge the gap between plans on paper and the messy reality of delivery.**

They also ensure that everyone across the organisation is **making decisions and taking action in a consistent way**, so people who come to us for support get the **same level of care and clarity** no matter who they speak to or work with.

1. We balance needs

There are four groups whose needs we need to consider when making decisions about how best to implement our strategy: **members and potential members, our staff and volunteers, partners and potential partners, and the organisation itself.**

We need to aim for a rough balance between all four needs because **together we are an ecosystem** where each group plays a vital role. Just like in nature, if the needs of one group are met at the expense of another, our ecosystem might fail.



Example 1

If members ask for a new service but we don't have extra funding, running it could drain our savings and put the charity at risk. It would also increase pressure on staff, who are already working hard, and risk burnout. Even if there's a clear need, we should focus on securing funding first before committing to deliver a new service, as one option.



Example 2

If staff only want to deliver services 9 to 5 on weekdays, it might help their wellbeing, but it could exclude members who need evening or weekend support. It could also limit partnership opportunities and reduce the organisation's impact. Even if it's easier for staff, we should consider a rota where staff work one weekend a month, as one option.



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2. We are not worried about perfection - we welcome challenges and new ideas

We recognise that the communities we serve are diverse, complex and dynamic. No single approach will work for every person or situation. Sometimes, despite our best intentions, we will get things wrong, especially when it comes to communication. When that happens, our focus is not on blame, but on learning and improving.

3. We talk to people instead of guessing what they need

We don't rely on assumptions or reading body language alone. We create space for people to speak for themselves, in their own time and ways, and we listen. This means staff listening to each other, members listening to each other, trustees listening to staff, staff listening to members – it is not based on hierarchy. We expect everyone to listen and give space for people to speak their needs. Once we know the situation, we can address it better.

“What's left unsaid cannot be transformed.”

4. We respond like people, not policies

When someone tells us they've had an unsatisfactory experience, we don't hide behind processes. Instead of defaulting to a formal complaints system, **we try to respond as people first – with honesty, care and curiosity.** Our communication isn't always perfect, but we can keep our trust and relationships strong by listening, explaining our thinking, getting better at understanding other experiences and differences, and showing we care.

We know the people we support value honesty and empathy more than polished words, so we'll keep showing up with openness and a genuine willingness to make it right. **Our processes, procedures and policies will still be there as a safety net if all else fails.**

5. We accept we have to make trade-offs and we get comfortable with this

We are committed to meeting the needs of our members, staff, partners and the organisation. But we can't meet everyone's needs all the time in the ways we would like. Sometimes we need to make difficult choices. We'll do this transparently, weighing up the impact and explaining our reasoning. And we will all support this.

When resources are limited, we will prioritise actions that make the biggest difference for people with learning disabilities in Croydon – but without compromising our values, harming staff or volunteers, or risking the organisation's future.

Examples of trade-offs we have to make every day with no 'right' answers

- We can prioritise admin and reporting to secure future funding, but that means less time with members or colleagues in the short-term.
- We can trial new activities that might benefit some members, but that may mean pausing a well-loved session or limiting it to certain groups.
- We can take time to co-design something properly with members, but that may delay when it's actually delivered.
- We can be more inclusive of people with complex behaviours, but we might need more staff present, reducing our capacity elsewhere.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS



This is our initial framework. It will change with progress towards our aims. We will evaluate our Key Performance Indicators each year and introduce new measures as we progress with our strategy.

We will evaluate our progress by commissioning an external independent evaluator against this strategy when we reach the end in March 2030.

Our Framework

STRATEGIC AIM	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	REPORTING FREQUENCY
1. Understand and show what is working so we can do more of it	• Proportion of services that have and are using consistently a monitoring and evaluation framework	Quarterly
	• Progress towards having an organisational theory of change, consistent data collection tools, and a central database for all impact data	Quarterly
2. Bring in more money that we can use freely across our charity	• Percentage of income that is unrestricted and the sources	Quarterly
	• Return On Investment (ROI) ratio for generating unrestricted income. This means for every £1 spent on generating unrestricted income, (time and effort) we get back £x in unrestricted income.	Yearly
3. Keep safe the things we love	• Proportion of services that have funding for the next 12 months	Quarterly
	• Capacity for each service and the percentage of places filled	Quarterly
	• Staff and volunteer turnover rate	Quarterly
4. Be clear about who needs us most and make sure they get our support	• Average change in personal wellbeing of parents and carers using the ONS4 measures	Quarterly
	• Number of members achieving planned outcomes	Quarterly
5. Show everybody who we are and promote the full range of support available across Croydon	• Average before/after change in awareness, knowledge, skills and attitude for interventions in the community related to understanding and supporting learning disabilities	Quarterly
	• Percentage of Croydon public who have heard of Croydon Mencap and know what it does	Every three years
	• Number of partners we have Mutual Support Agreements with	Quarterly
6. People with learning disabilities build their confidence, use their strengths, and lead the way	• Percentage of staff, trustees and other volunteers who disclose a learning disability	Quarterly
	• Number of members who have a role representing the community (e.g. on our governance, on a Croydon partnership board or committee, trained as an ambassador)	Quarterly
	• Movement of each service on the 'Ladder of Involvement' towards co-production	Yearly

DECISION-MAKING FILTER



Strategic Aims Filter

1. Understand and show what is working so we can do more of it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence to suggest this could have a big impact? How will we measure the impact?
2. Bring in more money that we can use freely across our charity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will this give us additional income to spend as we choose? How would this be funded?
3. Keep safe the things we love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this help us keep something that's highly valued going? How will we maintain the benefits or record the knowledge or processes gained through doing this?
4. Be clear about who needs us most and make sure they get our support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this expand or target the areas of greatest need? Is it clear who this is for? Is there evidence that this is where we can make a difference?
5. Show everybody who we are and promote the full range of support available across Croydon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this raise awareness of learning disabilities, Croydon Mencap, our partners, or any other support available? How can we help educate, promote or raise awareness through this?
6. People with learning disabilities build their confidence, use their strengths, and lead the way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this provide an opportunity for people with learning disabilities to lead, influence or represent? How can we move this closer to co-production?



Guiding Principles Filter

We balance needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this risk harming members, staff, partners or the organisation? What will the effects be for each of those four groups?
We are not worried about perfection, we welcome challenges and new ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are we avoiding doing things differently because it feels risky or messy? How can we allow room for learning, testing or adapting as we go?
We talk to people instead of guessing what they need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have we asked the right people rather than guessed? How are we allowing space for conversations, feedback and engagement?
We respond like people, not policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would someone affected by this decision feel it's fair and human? How can we communicate in a way that feels empathetic?
We accept we have to make trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a trade-off that would be unacceptable to make? What are we gaining and losing in this decision?



Outcomes Filter

How can we design or deliver this to maximise the number of outcomes this could help achieve for people?

For example, help people to:

Feel happier	Try new things	Make new friends
Have more fun	Eat more healthily	Go to new places
Exercise or move more	Learn how to do new things	Do things independently more
Feel less lonely	Feel more confident	Improve life overall

APPENDIX 1: Consultation and Research Insights


The national to local picture


Royal Mencap estimate that 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability. In a population of over 68 million, that means 2.2% of people have a learning disability. This includes 1.2 million adults (2.16% of the adult population) and 349,000 children (2.5% of the child population).


Among children, demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) soared by 140% in the last decade - but the government does not fully understand why, limiting the system's ability to cope. In Croydon, 29% of EHCPs are for mental health and 25% for autism which we know are often (but not necessarily) interlinked with learning disabilities. The learning disability is not always identified as the primary need, and sometimes not even diagnosed or spotted when other conditions present.

Why Croydon needs a strong response

Croydon in Numbers


 398,000 people live in Croydon – the largest population of any London borough


 Highest number of care homes in South London


 7,500 adults with learning disabilities on the Learning Disability register kept by GPs


→ **That's 2.7% of the population – double the national average (1.3%)**

Health and Social Care Pressure

 2nd highest referral rate for learning disability health support in England

 2nd smallest NHS learning disability team (per 100 patients) out of 57 NHS trusts

 Among the largest adult social care spenders in London

 **An outer London borough facing inner London levels of inequality**

What This Tells Us

Croydon has a long-standing concentration of adults with learning disabilities, partly due to years of placements from other boroughs into an area with more space and affordable housing.

We're dealing with **deep inequality**, high demand, and **limited statutory capacity**.

As a borough, Croydon is a **high-need, high-pressure environment** for people with learning disabilities and their carers. Services must reflect that complexity.

Insights from our survey work

We asked parents and teachers of school-age children with learning disabilities how many also had an autism diagnosis – a much larger percentage than we expected said yes (the majority). **We are now reassessing our own member data to understand this link better.**

Both parents and teachers identified **long waiting lists as the biggest barrier** to accessing support outside the school which aligns with the data about demand on Croydon services.

Parents and teachers both felt **the needs of children were better met than those of their parents.**

For the parents who are not accessing Croydon Mencap's support, they rated their life satisfaction level at an average of 5.73 out of 10, considerably lower than Croydon's average at 7.47 in Croydon. **1 in 4 are living below the 'wellbeing poverty line' at 4 or less out of 10.**

CONSULTATION INSIGHTS - STRENGTHS



Members at Croydon Mencap

"Staff is [sic] really nice, helpful."

"Croydon Mencap is a happy place."

"Everyone is friendly. I made new friends."

"I get a lot of support, and I meet new friends."

"Helpful."

"Croydon Mencap makes me happy."

"All the staff are friendly, and they are really helpful."



Carers at Croydon Mencap

"Croydon Mencap is very lucky to have its team – you can be a star, but they are the star stars with the X factor."

"The staff... are our glue, our rock."

"We'd all be lost without the Croydon Mencap group – we'd feel so much alone and isolated."

"If it wasn't for Croydon Mencap's support, I'm pretty sure there would be catastrophes left, right, and centre."

"It starts and ends with Croydon Mencap."



Staff at Croydon Mencap

"We talk as team – we're like a jigsaw puzzle."

"We're the connection. A large number of people with learning disabilities would never have met other learning-disabled friends without us being here."

"As a team, I feel all four of us are really invested in the work we do and do it more for the love than the money."



Partners and Professionals

"Croydon Mencap are doing a brilliant job. I'm grateful to have them as partners."

"I think Croydon Mencap are the prime example [of effective work] – there are examples of good practice throughout."

"It's very important that they keep that buzz and commitment because it was very impressive."

"I like the partnership between Croydon Mencap and the LDA."

CONSULTATION INSIGHTS - STRENGTHS



Public Perception Survey Results

We surveyed 262 members of the Croydon public. We asked them to name any charities other than Croydon Mencap in Croydon. All the most frequently cited charities have a presence in Croydon but are a national brand and all have at least one charity shop in Croydon. **This suggests that being linked to a national brand is important for awareness.**

Charity 'in Croydon' with most mentions	Number who Cited	% of Respondents
British Heart Foundation	25	10%
Salvation Army	21	8%
Oxfam	7	3%
Scope	7	3%
Cancer Research	6	2%

Member Survey Results

100%

100% of members surveyed said they would tell other people that Croydon Mencap is a good service, equivalent to a Net Promoter Score of 100.

Strengths Summary

- Having the 'Mencap' brand benefits us on the whole. It helps people who do not know us to guess at what we do and it gives an immediate level of credibility with professionals. Even though a couple of people raised in consultation the unfortunate origins of the name, they felt it was up to Royal Mencap to drive an update in name. **We derive many benefits from the Mencap brand, even though it comes with downsides.**
- **Our staff are passionate, driven and talented.** This is recognised by members and carers who consistently highlight the staff as one of the best things about Croydon Mencap.
- **There is a high level of trust amongst people who access our services with Croydon Mencap,** which they openly struggle to gain with other providers.
- **Our history is a major asset** – the consistency in our support has meant that families have grown up together with us, some over decades. It also brings a level of confidence from our partners.
- **We are financially stable for the first time in many years** after leaving a rental contract with high overheads and purchasing an asset: our Enterprise Lounge building.
- Despite major decreases in council funding and the loss of the contract to deliver support to carers, **we have kept our turnover increasing in recent years** and are able to bring on big partners like the National Lottery and SGN. **We have been strong at winning grant funding in a tough fundraising climate.**
- **Our partnerships, particularly with the Learning Disability Alliance have been flagged as a positive move,** and we desire to keep building our work in partnership.
- **We are increasing the number of staff with a learning disability and have a few areas of services which are co-designed.** Whilst we still have far to go, we are headed in the right direction.

CONSULTATION INSIGHTS - WEAKNESSES



Members at Croydon Mencap

What members would like more support to do:

"Nights out and holidays."

"Teach us how to become independent."

"Ice-rink, cycling, tennis, swimming, playing pool."

"Respite and future living arrangements."

"Support to read phone messages and emails."

"Holidays with friends."

"Football and tennis."

"Swimming and horse-riding."



Carers at Croydon Mencap

"When you go there, it's so busy and packed."

"Last year we could go down the coast for the day, but that hasn't happened this year."

"We used to come for help with benefits but that stopped. That's not really Croydon Mencap's fault but I don't know why it stopped."



Staff at Croydon Mencap

"We don't get the community involved enough."

"We need more 'away' things."

"Why aren't members on our Board?"

"There are 25 members here [at Enterprise Lounge] all with different needs, but only 5 staff."

We need to have a respite service set up – it needs to be a proper job.



Partners and Professionals

"I appreciate funding is tough and there are not enough staff."

"They don't do enough for disabled young people."

"They need to be more diverse in their staffing and trustee Board."

"They need to advertise more."

"Members don't get to interact with others in the community."

CONSULTATION INSIGHTS - WEAKNESSES



Public Perception Survey Results

262 members of the Croydon public were surveyed about Croydon Mencap



30 or **11.5%** of them had heard of Croydon Mencap



15 or **5.7%** of them could correctly identify what Croydon Mencap does

SEND Teacher Survey Results

1 in 20

Only 1 in 20 SEND teachers surveyed knew that Croydon Mencap is a separate charity, and a much smaller one than Mencap (or 'Royal Mencap') which is a national charity.

Weaknesses Summary

- Over 1 in 10 people in Croydon have heard of Croydon Mencap but only 1 in 20 knows what Croydon Mencap does. Our charity partners also want to see us raise our visibility. **We can do more to promote the work of Croydon Mencap amongst the general public, in addition to the main awareness-raising event: the Learning Disabilities Carnival.**
- Only 1 in 20 SEND teachers surveyed knew that Croydon Mencap was a separate charity from the national Mencap charity. There is still widespread misunderstanding across the whole Croydon community that Croydon Mencap has the resources of the national charity. Our turnover and staffing is considerably smaller with only a CEO, Finance manager and HR assistant in central posts (turnover of £1.2m vs £228m at 31 March 2025). **We need to do more to manage expectations about the resources available to us.**
- There are lots of new activities and services members, potential members and carers would like to see us do but that **we do not currently have capacity or the funding to provide.**
- There is confusion about exactly who we support: if we support autistic people without a learning disability, and what level of support needs (mild, moderate, severe, profound) for learning disability we are best equipped to meet. **We need to be clearer in our communications but also as organisation who we make the biggest difference to.**
- Our current governance structure is not appropriately representative of the community we serve. This is recognised both internally and externally. **We can go further to make sure people with learning disabilities and their whole identity are represented in decision-making.**
- We support babies and toddlers, as well as their parents, and we support young adults, older people and their carers, but we do not currently have services aimed at school-age children. **There is a need for support beyond what schools can deliver for this group that we would like to address.**
- Some parts of our infrastructure are 'thin': we have very few staff available for strategic or back-office work, frontline staff capacity is stretched, we do not currently have a Theory of Change for the whole organisation, and there is more we could do with technology with the right expertise, time and money. **We need to grow our infrastructure alongside any growth in reach or services.**

APPENDIX 2:

PESTLE

Analysis

STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND RESPONSE



To make good decisions about our future, we need to understand the world around us. A PESTLE analysis helps us do this by looking at six key areas that shape the environment we work in: **Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors.**

By exploring each of these, we can spot risks and opportunities, understand what's changing for our members, carers, staff and partners, and make sure our strategy is grounded in reality. This context doesn't tell us exactly what to do, but it helps us prepare, adapt and focus our efforts in ways that make the biggest difference – especially in times of uncertainty.

Below we highlight some of the biggest external trends affecting Croydon Mencap and the people we support, and explain how we respond to them through our strategy.

P

Political

The UK has a majority Labour government with Keir Starmer as Prime Minister. The next UK election must be held by 15 August 2029.

Labour have set tough fiscal rules tightening public sector spending and some policies around welfare and aid are at odds with prior Labour stances.

We expect to have the same government in place for most of our strategy to 2030 giving some level of consistency in context.

Whilst the actions that support our strategic aims do not currently prioritise issue-related campaigns, this may need to change if a new government policy would be devastating to our aims.

Global security is currently very volatile from the UK's role in the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Gaza war, to the US trade tariffs causing shocks to global markets, to the rise of nationalism in the West. [Global political instability and tensions](#) have repercussions for [UK security](#).

Whilst we cannot affect global outcomes, we can ensure we are prepared for risks and volatility. We will strengthen our business continuity plans so we are confident responding to sudden changes like power cuts, orders to stay at home, or interruptions in supply chains, just as we did in the pandemic.

From our consultation, we know that Croydon Council is moving towards more 'holistic' strategies. For example, there is no separate strategy for 'young carers' now – all are included with a single carers' strategy.

Partnerships like One Croydon Alliance have a holistic approach now too, addressing physical health and mental wellbeing as one, not separately.

Croydon Council wants to see more organisations working in partnership and aligning themselves with existing Council strategies on carers, dementia and mental health, for example.

Croydon Council strategies formed part of our research. We will continue to sit on relevant Partnership Boards within the council where it still helps us achieve our aims.

Our strategy aims to support the 'whole' person – helping address a full range of needs by improving our referral pathways and acknowledging people's identity beyond just a learning disability or being a carer.

We also put a strong emphasis on the value of partnership working, having made good progress in the last few years and wanting to go further still through this strategy.

E

Economic

Personal finances are challenging for many people in a UK 'cost of living crisis' following inflationary pressures and changes to public spending.

JRF research shows 88% of low-income households who receive disability benefits went without essentials in the 6 months to October 2024. Potential welfare changes such as to Personal Independence Payment could make finances harder for disabled people.

The SEND system is chronically underfunded but the Department for Education is due a £1 billion investment in SEND.

Social care reforms are likely not due until 2028 but are needed urgently now.

Labour's current fiscal policy has meant raising taxes for employers rather than employees. This has resulted in increases to Employer's National Insurance and Minimum Wage from April 2025. This has huge effects on the care sector where many staff are paid minimum wage, and the charity sector failed to secure an exemption from NI increases. Delays in Access to Work payments are also putting financial pressures on employers.

Closures and pausing by grant organisations alongside increased demand for grant-funding is fueling lower success rates for charities, with many fundraisers experiencing burnout.

Croydon's own high street economy is shrinking with uncertainty over its future.

The National Procurement Policy Statement highlights the value charities bring, with the number one requirement on economic growth being to maximise procurement spend with small businesses and the voluntary sector.

We help tackle individual hardship through advocacy. Our volunteering buddy project can be a path to employment. We will grow enterprise options as another way to earn.

To stay financially sustainable, we must charge for some services, but we balance this with fundraising to subsidise or keep others free. Most members use personal budgets, and we have a Hardship Fund for those who couldn't otherwise access support.

We will monitor need for our support as public sector spending changes are made. We expect to see increased demand for our work. Our advocacy work for families will remain just as important as it always has been, if not more as families struggle to get adequate support.

Generating unrestricted income will become even more important as we face increased staffing overheads. We are already a committed London Living Wage employer and commit to reasonable pay lifts annually, so staff are not reliant on minimum wage. We keep our non-staff overheads as low as possible to achieve this. As we increase our number of staff with lived experience, we will monitor Access to Work delays as a risk.

We must be very selective about the funding applications we make, using external expertise to guide us on where we have the biggest chances of success if necessary, or bringing in additional grant-writing capacity.

When we pilot enterprise opportunities for members and for Croydon Mencap to generate income, we must carefully assess viability if the model relies on high street footfall.

We will continue bidding for new contracts and may consider commercial contracts if they play to our strengths and support us to meet our social aims, not just our income goals.

S

Social

The mental health of the UK's workforce is at risk with 79% of UK workers are experiencing moderate-to-high stress levels and 63% show signs of burnout. Croydon Mencap staff in consultation also noted work pressures, particularly around capacity to deliver against demand.

Our colleagues are our greatest asset. As a small organisation, we can't eliminate all stress, but we can build a culture that supports wellbeing and makes it safe to speak up early. We will continue offering flexible working where possible, encouraging open conversations about workload, and investing in reflective spaces like team debriefs. As we grow, we'll factor staff wellbeing into service design, and how we pace change. We want people to feel valued, not stretched.

Croydon has a higher-than-average crime rate for London and that is increasing. High profile violent crimes have also dominated headlines, fueling the perception of Croydon as a dangerous place to be. During consultation, several groups highlighted feeling unsafe in some areas of Croydon with it affecting the support they choose to access if they have to travel across Croydon.

Whether perceived or actual, we need to be mindful of how threats to safety affects those we support. Working towards co-design should help. For example, Out And About already has members leading on decisions about where to go so they can choose accessible places they feel safe in and getting to. We need to continue to give space for colleagues to be able to identify and support those they feel are at risk of or might be victims of crime. We must be mindful when we encourage leadership and visibility that we are not putting people at risk of bullying. We continue to strengthen our approach to risk and safeguarding in our strategy.

Disability hate crime has also risen 43% in the last year and 4 in 10 people with a learning disability say they don't go out because they are worried, mainly because of bullying from the public.

There is growing demand from people with learning disabilities for greater visibility, influence, and leadership – moving beyond participation into co-production. This was highlighted in consultation by members, community team staff and partners alike.

We know there is always more we can do to ensure people with learning disabilities are leading. We recognise that others are further ahead of us in facilitating this and we look to learn from them as we push closer to co-production. We recognise this will take time though, which may feel frustrating for some.

Croydon is a borough with a growing and highly diverse population, including more young people with complex needs and more older adults with learning disabilities. There's also a rising number of carers who are themselves ageing, needing dual support for themselves and their family members.

We will continue adapting our support to reflect Croydon's changing population. We'll explore how to join up services across generations, advocate for long-term planning, and work with partners to make sure no group is overlooked as needs become more complex. We recognise that our current services could be tailored even more to different age groups but are limited by staffing capacity.

T

Technological

7 out of 10 charities are struggling to move forward digitally due to financial constraints – a figure that has been increasing.

Improvement in data maturity for charities is slow nationally.

We recognise the value of investing in our digital infrastructure to help save time, track important data, improve processes and keep information safe. We will look to build unrestricted income to help us meet the costs of digital investment which can help improve our efficiency and effectiveness.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) brings huge opportunities from productivity to problem-solving, along with huge risks from environmental threats to more convincing scams and disinformation. Sutton Council have been trialing AI sensors to help people live independently longer by tracking their habits and flagging disrupted routines.

We will continue to explore the advantages AI can bring to our work such as Otter AI for staff and our AccessAva tool, whilst balancing this with the trade-offs. We will support staff to use AI in a safe way and look to develop a policy or approach for the whole organisation. We are open to innovations where AI can solve problems for our community.

A digital divide in communities is preventing people from accessing important services.

We need to ensure any new services we develop do not exclude people who do not have internet access or who cannot use digital devices. We remain people, not robots.

Multiple groups in the consultation highlighted challenges for people with learning disabilities to use tech without further support. They also highlighted the untapped potential of assistive technology. People are potentially missing out on the benefits of technology unnecessarily.

As we deepen our understanding of impact and unmet needs, we may explore how best to support digital access – either directly or by working with partners and where it aligns with our priorities and capacity.

L

Legal

The [Employment Rights Bill](#) going through parliament strengthens employees' rights including requests for flexible working, day-one employment rights, and the end of zero-hour contracts.

We are proud of our employer accreditations including Good Employer Croydon and being recognised as Disability Confident. We always aim to go beyond our statutory duties to staff where we can and will update our policies and practices to reflect any new legislation.

The [Renters Reform Bill](#) going through parliament sees major changes to the rights of the 11 million people who rent privately, ending 'no fault' evictions, creating obligations to make homes safer and regulating the 2.3 million landlords in England.

People with learning disabilities need a safe place to call home. We welcome actions that contribute to this. We will need to consider how to make sure people are aware of their new rights in an accessible way, particularly with our advocacy work.

The [Online Safety Act 2023](#) should give more online protection to people with learning disabilities who are often at higher risk of abuse or exploitation. At the same time in the US, [social media tech companies are moving away from 'fact-checking'](#) which could lead to more mis- and dis-information about learning disabilities and neurodivergence.

We will continue to monitor online access and online safety for people with learning disabilities, and whether there is an unmet need that we may need to address differently in order to achieve our strategic aims. We will remain mindful of the risks and opportunities of using social media to promote our own work and visibility of learning disability.

E

Environmental

Increasing appetite for AI is causing environmental pressures from additional data centres with both individuals and organisations responsible for this demand (61% of UK charities are using AI).

As we develop our policy around AI we will need to consider our own impact on the environment and what trade-offs we are comfortable making in line with our values.

Global warming is creating more extreme temperatures posing risks to vulnerable individuals at a time when the UK has decreased provision for Winter Fuel payments.

Croydon has struggled with wildfires during heatwaves (Shirley Hills, Croham Hurst) in recent years posing health risks to residents. In March 2025, London issued an amber alert for wildfires.

More extreme temperatures and increased wildfire risks pose serious health threats to those we support, particularly where mobility, understanding of risk, or access to safe spaces is limited. Climate resilience will need to be something we are mindful of when considering unmet need. Our advocacy work will continue to ensure people get the financial support to adapt as they are entitled to. We focus on where we make the biggest difference.

The expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to reduce environmental damage and pollution has also meant increased transportation costs for organisations and individuals, causing some individuals to lose access to a car.

We remain mindful when organising in-person support and activities that they are accessible to get to. We have ended our use of minibuses and now work with a single cab company to help members access our services. This puts us the organisation at less risk from changes to road use.



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