Ealing Mencap members have voted in favour of changing the organisation’s constitution and governance structure for the first time in over a decade.

A members vote was held at the Annual General Meeting at the end of October, following a postal ballot paper that was sent out to all members who could not make the AGM. The result was in favour of making the proposed changes.

The changes to the constitution will provide Ealing Mencap with the ability to make decisions quicker, act within the law, and open up new ways for people to have their say on how the charity is run. The changes also mirror some of the ways that national Mencap has decided to modernise.

Ealing Mencap previously had a membership model, meaning that paid members had certain voting rights, for example to vote new trustees onto the executive board at Annual General Meetings. However the number of active members has declined hugely in the last few years, down from hundreds to around 30 in 2016. Although that number is enough for us to be able to make decisions legally at present, we could not guarantee that this would be the case in the years ahead.

Under the new constitution, members no longer have the same legal responsibilities as they once did, although we still want them to have a say about Ealing Mencap. Current members will be written to in the new year about some of the ways in which they will be able to do this.

Other changes to the constitution voted in include a limit to how long trustees can serve on the board (a maximum of nine years), and for existing trustees to shoulder the legal responsibilities of running a charity alone.

The ‘Objects’ of the charity were also changed slightly - these are the reasons why a charity exists and are written in the constitution. The old Objects spoke strictly about only offering support to people with learning disabilities. Though that remains our primary cause, there are areas of our work that mean that we need to be open to working with people with other kinds of disabilities.

For example, we work in partnership to deliver the pan-disability ESAS advice provision. And strictly speaking, some people who support on the Autistic spectrum would also not be considered to have a learning disability in the traditional sense.

We feel that these changes will benefit Ealing Mencap and everyone that we work with in the long run. The changes give us the ability to take decisions quickly, to offer support to more people, and will ensure that we are in a good position for years to come.

If you didn’t make the AGM this year but are interested in the presentation regarding the constitution changes, you can download a PDF copy to read from our website at www.ealingmencap.org.uk/constitution-changes.pdf

Chair George Venus introduces the changes which were agreed by members at the AGM.
Travel Buddy Update
Service looking forward to a great 2017

It has been another busy year for the Travel Buddy Project, with new placements and lots of training taking place.

We were sad to see Mason Duncan leave Ealing Mencap in October.

Mason was a hugely popular member of staff, fantastic Travel Buddy, and was also an Ealing Mencap apprentice.

Mason decided that after years of working for Ealing Mencap he would like to try something new. We would like to thank him for all the hard work and dedication and wish him good luck in the future.

We are excited to announce that Belinda Powell joined the team in the Summer. She’s been really busy completing her intensive induction training, and we’re looking to get a placement set up for her soon. From all of us at the Travel Buddy Team - Welcome on board, Belinda!

We would also like to thank all our travel buddies and clients for their hard work over the last year, and we’re looking forward to another exciting year in 2017.”

Annual General Meeting 2016 Recap
Celebrating staff and customer achievements

The 2016 Annual General Meeting was held at the end of October, providing not just a look back at 2015-16, but also a look ahead to some big changes to the organisation and a look forward to an exciting new service.

Before getting down to business, the RealMe service cooked a superb lunch which fed all of the audience of more than 50 customers, staff, volunteers, and members. Everyone agreed lunch was excellent!

After a short welcome from Chief Executive Lesley Dodd, the AGM kicked off with our 2016 staff and volunteer awards, recognising the contributions by those who have gone the extra mile for Ealing Mencap this year.

Joanna Thomas-Wright, Jean Breen, and Kate Kilty won individual staff awards, and the Transition team of Julie Leveque, Jennifer Lindsay, and Rosina Anderson won a joint award.

And our star volunteers this year were Joyce and John Rundell, Addison Matthews, Nick Radclyffe, and Richard Melmoth.

Chair George Venus presented the first order of business, a special members vote for changing the Objects of Ealing Mencap. All of the details on what these changes mean are on the front page of this newsletter.

Treasurer Jayesh Pankhania then presented the finances for 2015-16, before the confirmation of our auditors for next year was finalised.

Some sad news next as we said goodbye to two trustees who have retired from the board this year. Anne Warner and Bill Elliott both served for years as trustees of Ealing Mencap, offering support and ideas across the organisation. Both were publically thanked by Lesley and George, and presented with parting gifts for their hard work and service.

Finally RealMe rounded off the meeting with a look ahead to the new services based in West Ealing, focusing on training and employment, and some of the work that has gone into getting things up and running there.

Huge thanks to everyone that came down to the Lodge, took part with welcomes, lunches or presentations, and made the 2016 AGM such a success – we’ll see you all next year!
New children's respite centre to be built in Northfields following campaign from Heller House parents

The decision to build a new respite centre has been hailed as "a wonderful justice for the children of Ealing" by campaigners.

A new centre will be built following a campaign led by parents upset with a decision to close a residential children's home in the borough.

The new £1.5million centre is set to be constructed alongside the Log Cabin Children's Centre in Northfields following a decision this week.

Earlier this year, Ealing Council voted to close the respite centre Heller House despite a heartfelt rally from more than 50 campaigners.

Following this week's decision to build a new centre, campaigner Jacqueline Swords, whose son Ciaran used Heller House, said: "I think it's a wonderful day it's justice for the children of Ealing - the children currently travelling to respite out of the borough which should never have happened.

"I feel we have won the day. We shouldn't have had to do this. We're very happy and we look forward to working with the council in creating a really excellent respite centre."

Parents facing loss of Ealing's Heller House offered alternative care as far away as Croydon.

Images of what the new centre will look like have not yet been revealed.

At an Ealing Council cabinet meeting on Tuesday November 16, councillors agreed on the preferred option ahead of building a centre in Haydock Avenue, Northolt, which was the second preferred option, and a site in Broomcroft Avenue in Northolt.

Labour Councillor Binda Rai, cabinet member for children and young people, said: "This is a very exciting solution which will give families high quality, modern respite facilities designed to meet their children's needs in the borough.

"We are grateful for parents' involvement throughout the review process and we will continue to welcome their input in the design and creation of this new facility.

"I am also pleased that Heller House can be given a new lease of life by helping families in need of somewhere to live."

Ealing Council voted to close respite centre despite late rally from campaigners. A study into Heller House found a number of problems with the condition and structure of the Victorian building, meaning it would cost at least £2.3million to repair it.

The council has agreed the building will be refurbished at a cost of £128,000, to provide temporary accommodation for homeless families.

Speaking after the meeting, Conservative councillor David Millican said: "Huge credit is due to the parents and Ealing Mencap for keeping faith in ensuring that Ealing Council now plans to open a proper residential short break facility for children with disabilities.

"It has been an honour to work closely with the campaigners every step of the way to force the council to U-turn. "We have forced the Councillors back to the Town Hall time and again until they have finally relented."

Ealing Mencap will be closed from 12:30pm on 23rd December and will reopen again in the New Year on 3rd January 2017.

Almost all services will close for the festive period before the 23rd – please contact your service if you are unsure when it will be finishing for Christmas.

There a few limited services running between 23/12 and 3/1 which should have already been arranged and in place by now.

Again, please contact your service directly if you have any queries.

From everyone at Ealing Mencap, have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to seeing you all in 2017!
Fundraising Thanks

Huge thanks to Mrs Hancock, who contributed £112.17 to our ‘No Change Too Small’ campaign. It took some time to count all the coppers, but we’re hugely grateful for the kind donation.

For more information on what No Change Too Small is all about, you can read about it online at www.ealingmencap.org.uk/nochangetoomall and after you’ve done that, maybe you can recall a long-forgotten jar of small change at the back of the cupboard that you might like to donate to Ealing Mencap?

We also have an update on Thomas Ruane’s fundraising efforts featured in our last newsletter.

You might remember Thomas took part in the London to Brighton Cycle Challenge, riding nearly 90 miles to the coast from a starting point in London, fundraising for Ealing Mencap along the way. Thomas has increased his JustGiving total to a massive £550.43 including Gift Aid, which is a fantastic achievement.

For more info on Thomas’s challenge, have a look at our Autumn newsletter which is available on our website, or visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Thomas-Ruane

Thanks once again for supporting Ealing Mencap, we really do appreciate it.

SEND Information Fair - Friday 24th February 2017

Information, workshops, and presentations for young people with disabilities

Save the date! Ealing Parent Carer Forum will be holding an all-day SEND Information Fair on the 24th February 2017 at Ealing Town Hall.

It’s a day designed to be packed with information about services across the borough for anyone up to the age of 25. There will be plenty of local colleges, service providers and organisations there to let children, young people, parents and carers know what is on offer.

As well as the information stalls, there will be a series of workshops lead by Ealing Mencap and presentations from young people about their experiences. There will also be a café staffed by young people with disabilities too.

The day fair kicks off at 10am and runs until 6pm. Please keep an eye on our website and social media over the coming weeks for more information.