

2020 - 2021 Annual Report

Ealing mencap

Different Times

Our lives have changed so much in just 12 months. Simple pleasures have been taken away from us all and we realise now how much we took for granted before the Covid-19 pandemic struck.

We have all experienced hardships and our hearts go out to everyone who has lost a loved one or suffered serious physical or mental illness this year.

But we also have much to be thankful for, because we are still here and will rebuild our lives and enjoy happier times again soon. We will never forget those who will never have that opportunity.

The pandemic has shown us just how compassionate and incredible people can be. It has also emphasised the inequalities that exist within our society.

There is still so much that needs to change for disabled people and their families to fully enjoy what is rightfully theirs and to live as independently as possible.



Now more than ever stand with us as we challenge discrimination and injustice and work to create a better world for us all.

George Venus, Chair of Trustees



As we entered the first National Lockdown we made a firm commitment. That we would do everything we could to make sure that the people we support did not suffer increased loneliness, mental illness or preventable death through the Coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

We knew the pandemic would hit people with learning disabilities hard. With respiratory disease accounting for approximately half of all their deaths, we knew if they contracted Covid-19 they were in a very high-risk group. Finding ways to support people's emotional wellbeing, while keeping them protected from the deadly impact of the virus, has been a difficult balancing act.

But the people we support have so often shown us just how resilient, adaptive and positive-natured they are. They have risen to the challenges they faced and embraced new ways of working to maintain their social connections and lead their lives.

This then is their story.....



2020-2021

Ealing Mencap provides a wide range of care and support services to enable people to improve their lives. Prior to the pandemic our welfare advice service, employment programmes, supported internships, adult activities, young people's travel training, clubs and short-break holidays were all delivered face-to-face.

At the start of the first National Lockdown we made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend our face-to-face services for three months to comply with government guidance and keep people safe.

Moving swiftly, we changed our ways of working and adapted to deliver all of our services virtually. But while the general population quickly learnt how to WhatsApp and Zoom, many of those we support had no access to digital equipment or the internet at home.

To help prevent isolation we set up a new LIFELINE emotional support telephone service for all disabled people and their carers living in Ealing. But many of those we support have communication difficulties and using the phone is not a real substitute for in-person support.

Although we resumed in-person services from July 2020, due to worryingly high rates in the Borough the Local Authority instructed us to close once again in January 2021.

Spending almost 6 months of the year under National Lockdown measures has been incredibly difficult for disabled people. For their families, being carers 24/7 with only virtual support, the challenges have been immense.

As one family member told us, "We're all in the same boat - but are we really? We're not all in it equally and no one wants to listen.

My brother lives with our mum, but she is getting older and struggles to cope on her own. I do as much as I can to help but with me working from home full-time the balance is so hard. There's not even anywhere I can take him. Just for a walk in the park or cleaning my car. And when the weather's bad we can't even do that.

I've seen him regress, he's talking less, has angry outbursts and just sits watching tv. It's no life for him and he can't really get his head around why he isn't allowed to go to his usual activities. He's missing his friends and the staff.

All he keeps saying is 'come on Ealing Mencap, come on Ealing Mencap' because he wants to do all the things he used to do. He doesn't understand why he can't and I'm the one that has to keep repeating why. I mean it is what it is, and I get it, but it's so hard.

Activity services need to be treated the same as schools - if they're allowed to open then the activity centres should be too. They're just as important for people like my brother and our family."

As the first wave eased, we invested significant money and time making our buildings and practices Covid-19 safe. Watching people's faces when we reopened and they saw their friends once again was amazing and reminded us how much we value being physically with each other.

To enable everyone who wanted to return to their adult activities, while complying with 2 mtr social distancing rules, we had to find an additional venue and change the way we worked.

We hired Trailfinders Rugby Club, and this became the home of our new Fresh Start service - focused on improving physical and emotional health and co-creating accessible digital wellbeing resources.

At Enterpise Lodge we changed our operating hours to run one session from 8am till 2pm, and a second session from 2pm till 8pm, five days per week. We also changed opening times at Dare to Dream, our work preparation service.

Although we couldn't offer all the activities we organised before the pandemic, it was clear that everyone was delighted to once again be back with their friends, enjoying new experiences and learning new skills.









Active Lives

For most young disabled people, having a job is their biggest ambition. But it is also one of their greatest challenges, and even before Covid-19 fewer than 7% of people with learning disabilities were in paid work.

The young people attending our hopitality supported internship 'Project Search at The Hilton T5' have been particularly impacted by the pandemic. With The Hilton forced to close by the Government in March 2020 the internship ended early and work was hard to find.

Historically, 75% of our interns have successfully secured full-time paid employment. Of the 2020 graduates, only two gained full-time jobs and three gained part-time jobs. All of them quickly found themselves on furlough, and one has since been made redundant from his position as a Chef.

A new cohort of young people were ready and looking forward to starting their internship in September 2020. But with the host company closed, their experience has been very different to what they expected.

Where restrictions have allowed, they have made use of the kitchen and IT facilities at Southall College alongside virtual skills lessons. Their aim is to graduate in July 2021 having achieved OCN Level 1 and with improved functional and employability skills.

While The Hilton remain fully committed to restarting the internship programme when they can, one of the primary requirements for Project Search is to have a host company.

Fortunately, COINS - a leading building solutions technology company based in Slough - has stepped forward and is excited about being our new host.

Throughout this year they have been working with our team identifying how the interns could be trained to learn the different types of roles and functions performed at COINS, including invoicing and social media content creation.

Although it isn't the hospitality internship they expected, 5 of the current interns are really enjoying this change of direction and have shown their suitability for working in these roles.

It is too early to know, but it is possible that we we may have 2 hosts next year - offering even more opportunities for supported internships suiting different people's career aspirations and skills.

We know that young disabled people's emloyment chances have been disproportionately impacted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. And the situation is likely to get worse.

Thanks to new funding, we can do more to help them.
In February 2021 we launched an exciting 18 months project providing 1:1 specialist support to get people who have lost their jobs back into work as quickly as possible.

Being a valued employee brings so many benefits to people and we are committed to ensuring disabled people do not miss out.

“Hi I’m Clare (Left).
This is my son Zen who’s 14 (Centre)
And his travel trainer Jess” (Right).

“From a parents point of view, when you’ve got a child with special needs you wrap them up in cotton wool. You can’t help it. It’s what you do. You want to make sure they’re protected from the world.

Zen has autism and ADHD, and he’s been on special needs transport since he was 8 years old. It was my way of knowing he’d get to school. And he was safe.

Knowing that he will stand in a shop and shout at someone without any second thought, I’m not going to lie, the idea of him going on a bus on his own filled me with dread! I was a bit like “oh my, he can’t do. It can’t happen.

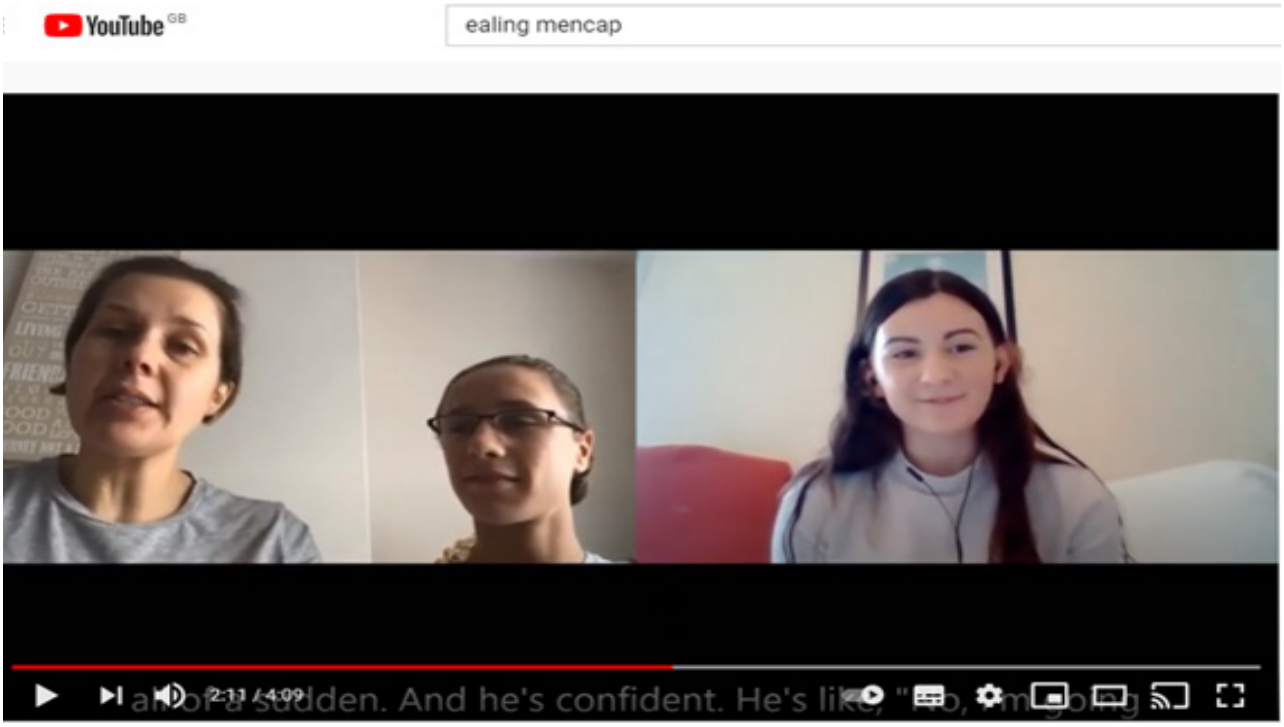
Now it’s been done I am so pleased, it’s just amazing.

The change it’s made to Zen. I just wish everyone was aware of how good the travel training programme is and the difference it makes to your child.

It’s like he’s got a new found confidence. I don’t know if it’s the lockdown and everything, but he seems to have really grown up all of a sudden. When I think about how scared he was about his first training session. Now every morning he’s like “No I’m going. I’m getting the bus at this time….” He’s so brave about it. It’s boosted his confidence 100%.

Increasing Independence

It's the best thing we've done for him. I can honestly say it's really going to make such an impact on him, and on us as a family"



And what does Zen say about becoming an independent traveller?

"When mum woke me for my first training day I was quite worried – I didn't want to do it. But then I met Jess and when I came home I said to mum 'That was fine, I don't know what I was worried about'

Now I go to school on the bus and I feel absolutely brilliant. My independence is definitely boosted and I learnt I can just go anywhere. I would say to everyone "Do it. Don't worry about it. It will change you!"

With over 350,000 people living in Ealing, an important part of our work is ensuring that they can all access their rights. As the lead of the Ealing Advice Service Consortia (EAS) this year the service has assisted 4,727 residents deal with 5,966 specific welfare problems.

For the mother of a young child with autistic spectrum disorder and ADHD home schooling proved challenging due to a lack of technology. She called EAS to see if we could help because she could not afford to buy the equipment needed.

Our advisor contacted The Hobbayne Charity as they were refurbishing old laptops to donate to people in need. Unfortuntely the devices they had weren't suitable for this child as they required a heavy duty touch screen.

Looking for an alternative solution our advisor contacted Young Ealing Foundation. They were able to help and an application was put forward for a suitable tablet and case.

The equipment was dropped off at the Lido and the mother was delighted when she collected it saying 'Thank you, that's wonderful. He's so behind with his schoolwork and now he can catch up!'

Early in the year a 55 year disabled man phoned our Ealing Advice Services in a terrible state.

His application for the disability related welfare benefit PIP – Personal Independence Payment – had been refused. He wanted to appeal the decision but could not fill out the forms himself and due to lockdown he did not have anyone close who could come and help him.

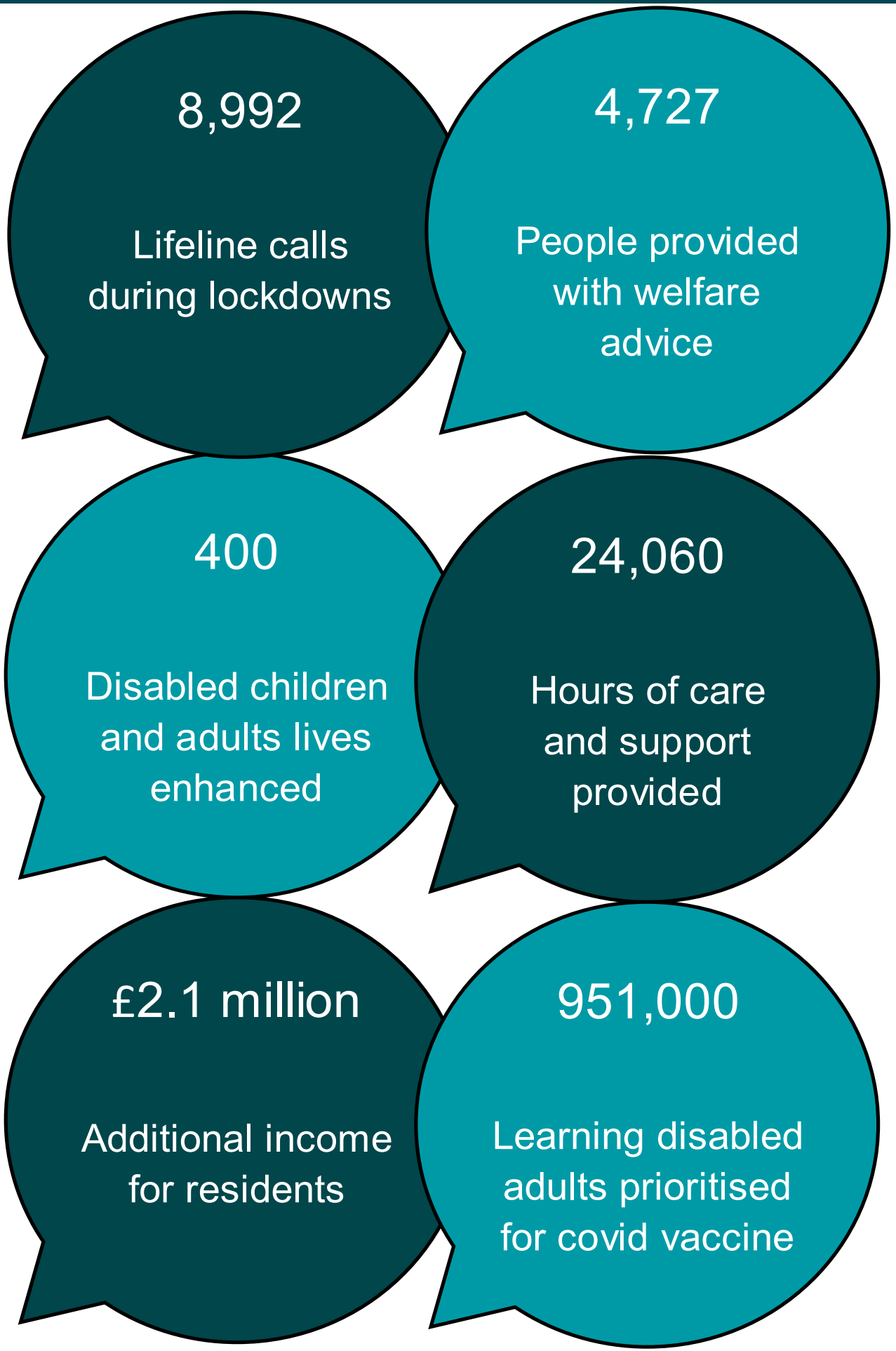
After overcoming a series of technical barriers our advisor assisted him to write and submit his appeal statement. This was successful and he was awarded both enhanced components of this non-means tested benefit. As a result he received backpayments totalling over £3000.

Being supported to access his rights and challenge the system means his household, which includes dependent children, is now better off by £4,500 per year.

In his feedback he said he felt more confident speaking to professionals about welfare rights and more knowledgeble about how to resolve any future problems.

He also reported that not only had his personal situation improved but his anxiety levels had significantly reduced.

IMPACT


8,992
Lifeline calls during lockdowns
4,727
People provided with welfare advice
400
Disabled children and adults lives enhanced
24,060
Hours of care and support provided
£2.1 million
Additional income for residents
951,000
Learning disabled adults prioritised for covid vaccine

Thank You

As a charity we are reliant on people's generosity and this year we have had amazing support from:

London Borough of Ealing
Ealing Safer Neighbourhoods Board/MOPAC
London Borough of Hounslow
The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust
John Lyon's Charity
City Bridge Trust
BBC Children in Need
Youth Futures Foundation
London Community Foundation
Royal Mencap
The National Lottery Community Fund
Pathways
EACH Test and Trace Community Engagement
British Land and Good Box
Cathy Howell's Fundraising Run

And NOT forgetting the pople we support, their families and supporters, our many partners, and our fantatsic staff members and volunteers.

It is not right that disabled people, their families and carers continue to face disadvantage and inequality in so many areas of their life. To tackle this, alongside delivering care and support services, we use our platforms and powers of influence to effect positive change within Society.

We were deeply concerened that disabled people would be forgotten during the pandemic. So with support from our friends at The Media Trust we lauched our first digital campaign. #LookICan encouraged disabled people and their supporters to create a short film showing their talents and skills. We shared these through social media to both raise awareness and people's spirits at the same time.

Learning Disability Week is always a big event in our calendar. Although events this year were a little different, our VIRTUAL BIG LUNCH was a great way for us to all celebrate and let people know that they matter.

Throughout this year we have also worked alongside partners to campaign and sucessfully achieved some major wins.

Thanks in no small part to radio presenter Jo Whiley and other prominent celebrities, on February 24th 2021, people with learning disabilities were added to the priority list so they could quickly receive their Covid-19 vaccination.

Closer to home, we joined Harrow Mencap in their petition for a dedicated Learning Disability Nurse at Northwick Park Hopital. And joined the #SocialCareCrisis calling for Chancellor Rishi Sunak to increase funding for social care.

For us as a charity,the last 12 months have been turbulent and often frenetic as we constantly adapted to the changing situations we all faced.

It wasn't the year we planned, but it was the year we got, and we are proud of what we have achieved despite the obvious challenges.

In July 2020 we heard that we had been awarded GOLD Investors in People. A fantastic achievement for a charity of our size and during a global pendemic.



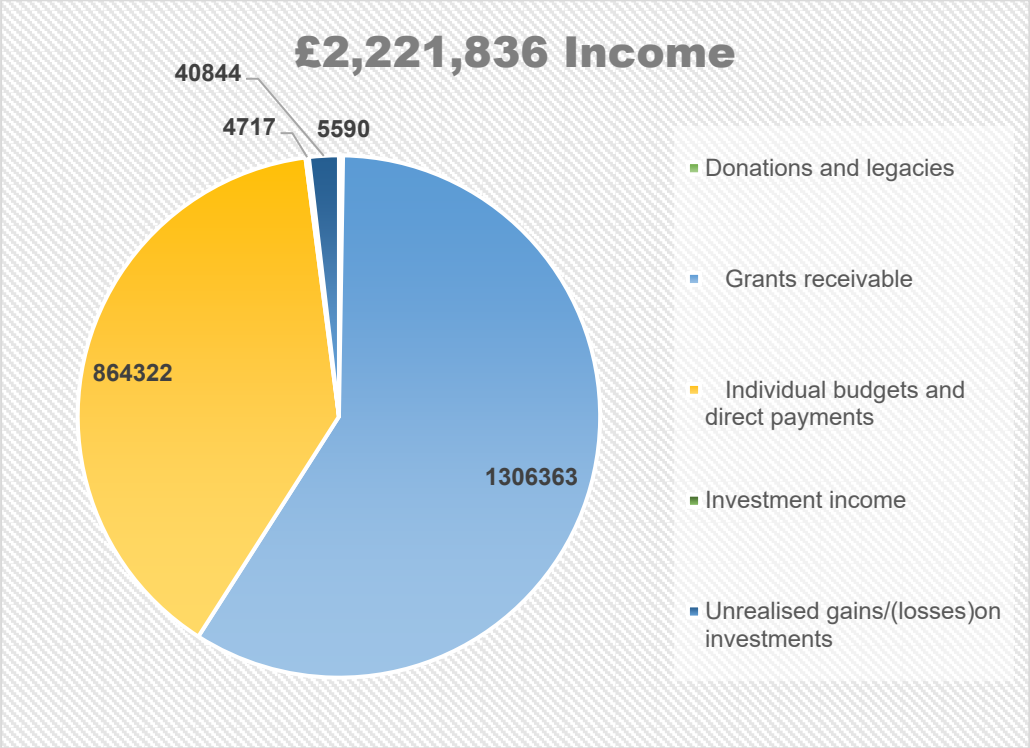
You may also have noticed that we have changed our logo, branding and website - work that started pre-Covid and forms part of our forward stategy for 2021 to 2023.

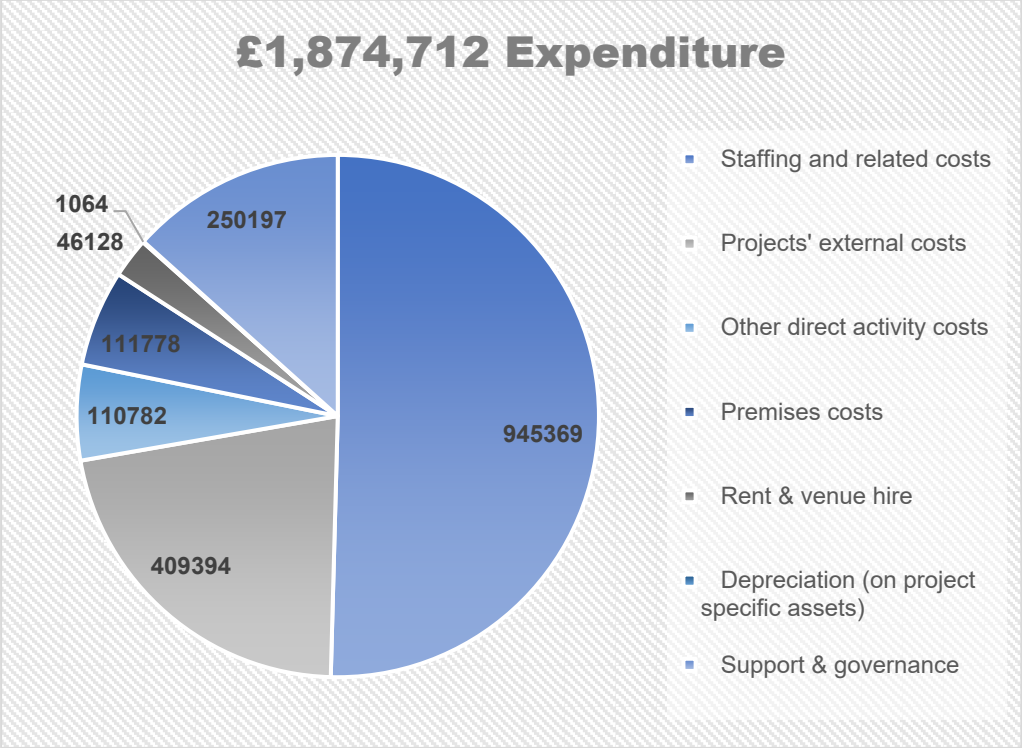
Throughout the year we have remained strong for those we support, making sure they and their families continued to have the help they rely on and fighting for their rights.

We have survived when many other charities have not, and we will build on our experiences to enure that we can continue serving the needs of disabled people and their families for as long as they want us.

We hope you will continue to support us to do what we do best 'changing lives for the better'

How we spent our money





Our Audited Accounts are available on our website www.ealingmencap.org.uk

2020 – 2021

This has been an awful year for so many of the people we support, challenging them in ways that they could never have imagined. Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on daily lives, robbed people of the opportunities and experiences they were looking forward to and placed enormous pressures on family carers. I am grateful to everyone who was willing to share their story in this Annual Report.

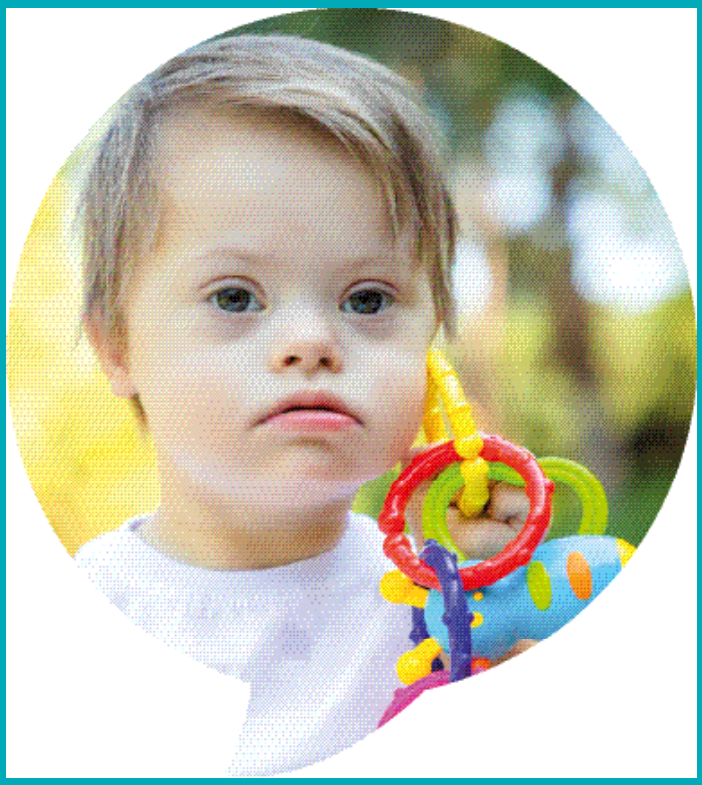
In recent months we have started looking to the future, thinking about what we can do as a charity to best help those we support to rebuild their lives. As we finalise our 2021 - 2023 Strategic Plan we are focused on ensuring our charity addresses the very real inequality and disadvatage that disabled people and their families continue to experience. Creating a better world for us all will be central to our work as a charity.

Leading an organisation through such turbulent times can be lonely, and I am incredibly lucky to have such a fantastic staff team with me. They have been incredible throughout and it is credit to them that we are where we are today. Well done and thank you!

If you stand with us and are committed to challenging discrimination and injustice, we would love for you to get involved.



Lesley Dodd, Chief Executive



Find out more and sign up for news and events

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