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Welcome to the Spring edition



of In Touch. As we prepare for the General Election we are campaigning for the rights of people with a learning disability. Too often their needs have been ignored. You can find out about the candidates in South-West Hertfordshire, and what they have said about the Mencap Pledge, on pages 6 and 7.

Our front cover features the vibrant artwork of our young people, commissioned by VocaLink for their London office. We look forward to building this partnership.

Finally I am glad that the children we support have gained some extra funding through the government's Aiming High for Disabled Children.

Best wishes,

Jane Pattinson

Enjoy a night of music and magic!



Ben Robertson and Luke Gordon who live at Little Martins in Bushey are organising an evening of music on June 16 at the Pump House in Watford.

The two young men plan to raise money to promote understanding of the Little Martins way of life... and make some new friends along the way.

The fun will start at 8pm with musical entertainment including jazz, rock, folk and even pirate songs! There will be a raffle, an auction and a magician to keep you entertained.

Please call Ian Kopelowitz on 07973 659150 or email ian.kopel@live.com for more information. Tickets are £7.50 each.

Key Points

Tickets at £7.50 each are available for a musical evening at the Pump House, Watford, on June 16 from 8pm.

Ben Robertson and Luke Gordon have organised the event to raise money to promote understanding of Little Martins, Bushey.

Call Ian Kopelowitz on 07973 659150 or email ian.kopel@live.com

Fitness fun for all

People with learning disabilities are now enjoying all sorts of extra fitness fun, thanks to grants from Watford and Three Rivers councils and the Primary Care Trust.

The fitness grants were awarded to the Watford and Three Rivers Leisure Together group as part of the Healthy Living Project.

As a result, around 30 people attend the Monday sessions at Watford Grammar School for Boys for an evening of fitness, fun and nutritional advice.

Representatives from both councils were invited to see what a difference these grants have made. As well as football, cricket, multi-sports, badminton, short tennis, skittles, dance and yoga, people can make use of the gym.

The fitness sessions are a big success so thank you to all the volunteers, including Watford Grammar School for Boys and Watford Football Club.



Daniel Stubbington rows to keep fit
Picture by Fran White

Key Points

Watford and Three Rivers councils and the Primary Care Trust provided grants to the Watford and Three Rivers Leisure Together group.

The money has helped us set up fitness and nutrition classes for people with learning disabilities.

Volunteers help run sports activities at Watford Grammar School for Boys on Monday evenings.

Young artists' work goes on show

Budding young artists from our After School Club and Hand in Hand Youth Club have had their art work put on public display.

The young people, including Beatrice Wilkins (pictured), were invited by Rickmansworth-based company VocaLink to produce some works of art for display at their new offices in Gresham Street, in the City of London.

Among the artwork produced was the picture you can see on the front cover of this edition of In Touch.

VocaLink is an international specialist payments provider. The company consistently supports Watford Mencap by raising money for our services and providing volunteers to work in our projects.



Key Point

Young People from our After School Club and Hand in Hand Youth Club produced artwork which is now on display at VocaLink's offices in London.

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Learning Disability Week

Learning Disability Week is an awareness week run by national Mencap every year.

It is a great chance to get involved and raise awareness about the issues that are important to people with a learning disability, their families and carers.

During Learning Disability Week 2010, which runs from Monday 21 to Sunday 27 June, the aim is to end the indifference in the NHS.

People with a learning disability experience poorer health and poorer healthcare than the general population, and because of this they are being denied their basic human rights.

We would like to hear your stories about what has happened to you in the NHS or to someone you support. Please email our Advice and Advocacy Manager Ruth Murray at ruthmurray@watfordmencap.org.uk or phone her on 01923 713620.

Key Points

Learning Disability Week runs from June 21 to June 27 this year.

The week will help us raise awareness of indifference in the NHS towards people with a learning disability.

Contact us with your stories about your experiences with the NHS.

Free ticket to the cinema

If you receive disability living allowance or attendance allowance or are registered blind, you could be eligible for a free cinema ticket. Please visit www.ceacard.co.uk to find out about this national card which offers you a free ticket to allow someone to accompany you to the cinema.

Focusing on young offenders

A new Mencap project called Raising Your Game will work with young people with a learning disability in England.

Funded by the Big Lottery Fund, Raising Your Game will work in particular with offenders or those at risk of offending.

Regional Co-ordinator Natasha Cock explained: "We will empower young people to take control of their own lives and play an important part in their communities."

Natasha Cock and Sandra Bell are pictured working together on the Raising Your Game project. To find out more email Natasha.cock@mencap.org.uk



Key Points

Raising Your Game is a new Mencap project which works with young people with a learning disability.

The project is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

Raising Your Game will work in particular with offenders or people who are at risk of offending.

Funding for Children's Services

Hertfordshire County Council has awarded nearly £100,000 to be spent on Watford Mencap's Children's Services.

The funding is part of Aiming High for Disabled Children, the government's transformation programme for disabled children's services.

The money will be spent on:

- Holiday play schemes
- The Saturday Club
- Hand in Hand, and
- The Achieving Potential Together Youth Club for young people with complex needs

We were, however, very disappointed that the After School Club, which so many parents value, was not funded at all. Hertfordshire County Council says this provision is funded

elsewhere. As far as we know, this club is unique and children with disabilities in this area have no alternative.

The After School Club costs over £100,000 a year to run. If you can help us raise funds, please email development@watfordmencap.org.uk, phone 01923 713637 or speak to Ro Linton at the Children's Centre.

Key Points

Hertfordshire County Council has awarded nearly £100,000 to be spent on our Children's Services.

The money will be spent on holiday play schemes, the Saturday Club, Hand in Hand and the APT Youth Club.

Boxercise for children

Wednesday's After School Club has been trying out Boxercise, as you can see from our photograph! Boxercise - non-contact boxing - has been given the thumbs up by the children who declared it "fantastic."



Tell us what you think about Watford Mencap

We are keen to hear from people who use our services. We are committed to providing quality services and welcome all comments to help us improve and develop.

In line with this we have included a feedback questionnaire with this issue of In Touch. We would really appreciate it if you could fill it in and send it back as soon as possible.

If you need help to complete the form please contact our Advice & Advocacy Service on 01923 713620 or email them at

advice@watfordmencap.org.uk

Do our candidates support people with disabilities?

It's nearly time for the General Election so Watford Mencap invited our local parliamentary candidates to sign our pledge and send us their commitment to supporting people with a learning disability and Watford Mencap if they were elected.

Labour's Claire Ward and Harry Mann, the Conservatives' Richard Harrington and the Liberal Democrats' Dr Christopher Townsend responded to our request.

Labour's Harry Mann signed the pledge and said: "I will campaign to make sure no-one is left behind, and carers are given the right support."

Liberal Democrat Dr Christopher Townsend also signed the pledge and said: "My pledge is to work with active charities and ensure that help is delivered in a way that is best suited to local needs."

Labour's Claire Ward signed the pledge and added: "My pledge is to continue to promote and support the work of Mencap such as the Big Herts Walk which I established and raises funds for Mencap and to campaign for improved rights for disabled people."

Conservative Richard Harrington did not sign the pledge but said: "Making life easier for disabled children and their families will be a priority. That is why we have set out a range of positive policies which will aim to make a real difference to the lives of families with disabled children."

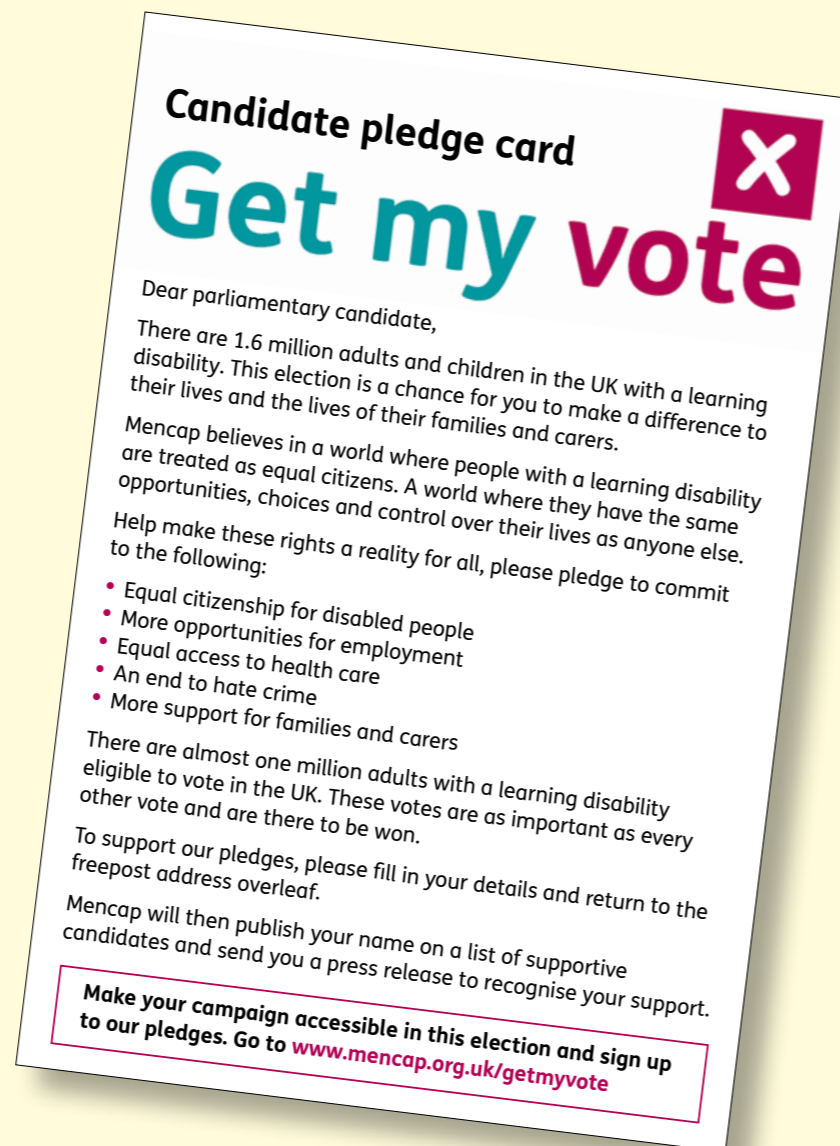
Brenda Dingle, a member of our Involvement Group, wanted to make some points to the parliamentary candidates:

- She would like more college courses in IT and history and easy access to education
- She would like politicians to make it easy for her to get public transport
- She would like there to be more education about people like her

Development Worker Debbie Russell said she would like to ask candidates: "As people with a learning disability get older and need more help, but do not want to go into a home and lose all their independence, they need a little more support. Would you ensure they can get this support?"

You may want to ask your candidates questions about their support for the work of Watford Mencap, and how they are going to support people with a learning disability and their families.

To find out more about voting visit www.promotethevote.co.uk



Key Points

Watford Mencap invited our local parliamentary candidates to sign a pledge supporting people with learning disabilities.

We want people with learning disabilities to be treated as equal citizens.

We want more support for families and carers.

Make your vote count on May 6.



Candidates are:

South West Herts

Conservative - David Gauke

www.davidgauke.com 01923 771781

Labour - Harry Mann

harry4swherts@googlemail.com

Liberal Democrat - Dr Christopher Townsend

www.christophertownsend.org 01442 828225

Watford

Conservative - Richard Harrington

www.richardforwatford.com 01923 296790

Green - Ian Brandon

www.watfordgreenparty.org.uk

Labour - Claire Ward

www.claire-ward.org.uk 01923 213579

Liberal Democrat - Sal Brinton

sal@watfordlibdems.org.uk 07768 821 187

Hertsmere

Conservative - James Clappison

www.jamesclappison.co.uk

Labour - Sam Russell

www.labour-hertsmere.org 020 8953 1689

Liberal Democrat - Anthony Rowlands

Hertsmere Liberal Democrats, 13 Claybury, Bushey. WD23 1FS

Pancake race success



Photo by Fran White

Ready, get set... go! A record 16 teams flipped pancakes during our annual Pancake Race and helped raise £1,000 for Watford Mencap.

For the second year running, the race along Rickmansworth High Street was won by the 6th formers at Rickmansworth School. They were followed closely by teams from Waitrose, the Coach and Horses, and Druids.

MP David Gauke also entered a team alongside teams from Day, Smith and Hunter, LoCo2 Energy, Archer Rusby, Freedom Communications, VocaLink, Bradley and Jones, John Lewis Watford, Gibbs Gillespie and The Pennsylvanian.

Thank you to Richard Laval, Chairman of Three Rivers District Council, for officiating on the day and to the Coach and Horses for sponsoring the event.

Key Points

16 teams took part in the annual Pancake Race and raised about £1,000 for Watford Mencap.

A team of 6th formers from Rickmansworth School won the race for the second year running.

Thanks to

Aiming High - £9,327 for Speciality Youth Club Grant

Barclays Bank - £559 matched funding for monies raised at Leisure Together Valentine Disco

Colin Barnett - £1,665 sponsorship so far – Coast to Coast Eco Challenge

Blaser Mills - £50

Bushey Academy - £142

Councillor Frances Button - £400 Locality Budget

Maria Chappell and Team LoCoMotion - £168 for Pancake Race

Cox, Costello and Horne - £50

Gluck family - £350

Pauline Joy - £26

Councillor Barbara Lamb - £200 Locality Budget

Paul Lambert - monthly pass to Riverside Health Club

Leggatts Show and Drama Group - £100

Stuart and Cherry Marshall - £75 of which £25 in memory of Kathleen Ruth Marshall - £50 sponsorship for tandem ride

Mencap Local Arts Award for Watford and Three Rivers - £500

Merchant Taylors' School - £118

Marijo Hair and Beauty - £100

Mark Roberts - £108 sponsorship for Watford Half Marathon

Olive Rowe - £50

Santander, Watford North - £400 vouchers from Community Chest

Sigma Charitable Trust from Big Herts Walk - £7,333

Ellie Smith - £50

St James' Place Foundation - £1,000 grant

Syabase Tools User Network - £200

Three Rivers District Council - £1,054 Sports Development grant for Leisure Together Healthy Living project

Jo Warburton - £160 from sponsored room tidy

Watford Borough Council - £640 Sports Development grant for Leisure Together Healthy Living Project

Watford Grammar School for Boys - £500 from non-uniform day

Watford and West Herts Scottish Society - £272 from Burns Night Raffle

Hannah Wilson - £142 collection tin

All Pancake Race entrants - Archer Rusby, Bradley and Jones, Day Smith and Hunter, Druids, Freedom Communications, David Gauke, Gibbs Gillespie, John Lewis Watford, LoCo2 Energy, The Pennsylvanian, Rickmansworth School, VocaLink, Waitrose, Daniel Stubbington and Annette Timms

All those who purchased Snowball Raffle Tickets - £335 in ticket sales and £141 in donations raised.

Donations In kind:

Aldenham School - Leisure Together Fun Day

Sally Ashley-Cound - photographer

Rachel Bird - raffle prizes for Watford Leisure Together

Ann Badham - cuddly toys

The Coach and Horses - for sponsoring the Pancake Race

Heather Fuller - portable DVD player

Pat Hiscock - cuddly toys

Sarah Kitt - editor of In Touch

Dee Lewis - raffle prizes for Watford Leisure Together

John Lewis Watford - cooker for Children's Centre

MSM Consultants Ltd - computer

Three Rivers District Council

VocaLink - Christmas gifts, art work opportunity for Children's Centre, boardroom furniture

Fran White - photographer

Watford Football Club - multi sports sessions at Watford Grammar School for Boys, free tickets

Watford Grammar School for Boys

Watford Grammar School for Girls

A big thanks also to everyone who donated along with their membership and to all those who donated goods for our shops and eBay sales.

Sandy Lodge fundraising drive

Sandy Lodge Golf Club in Northwood has chosen Watford Mencap as its charity of the year.

Sandy Lodge Golf Club celebrates its Centenary Year in 2010 and places great importance on supporting the local community. They have already held a very successful Easter Fayre, raising £600. There were 14 stalls, one of which sold goods made by the residents at Hillside (pictured).

Ladies' Captain Lesley Mulley, who organised this particular event, said: "We have a tradition of fundraising at the club and to combine my love of chocolate with this fundraising event seemed the perfect solution." Over the coming year the club hopes to raise enough money to buy 2 new vehicles for our organisation.

You may recall from our last issue that Merchant Taylors' School has also chosen us as their local charity. The boys have already organised a read-a-thon, a football tournament and helped to organise the fantastic Strictly Charity Dancing Evening with the Ladies' Association.

Great news for Watford Mencap, so a big thank you to all the pupils at Merchant Taylors' and the golfing community at Sandy Lodge Golf Club for their support.



Key Point

Sandy Lodge Golf Club in Northwood has chosen Watford Mencap as its centenary charity of the year.

Good practice at Watford Mencap

Watford Mencap has been chosen as an example of good practice in involving people with a learning disability. Our good practice was highlighted in the 'Skills for Care' booklet produced by the Social Care Institute for Excellence.

New Ways 2 Work

A 1-day free conference to help people aged 16 to 25 with learning disabilities into employment will be held at the Fielder Centre, Hatfield, on Friday 11 June from 9.30am to 3pm. For more information contact Mita Ashcroft on 01462 704934 or email mita.ashcroft@hcs.co.uk.

Pool Club celebrates birthday

The Watford and Three Rivers Leisure Together Pool Club has just celebrated its 3rd birthday. If you are male or female and would like to volunteer to help with the club, please contact Lata Rees on 01923 713634 or 07901 914154.

Wanted: old revision guides

Can't wait to build a bonfire of your old school revision guides? **STOP!** Why not donate all books to Watford Mencap instead? We can sell or recycle them to raise much-needed funds for our charity supporting those with learning disabilities in South West Hertfordshire. Please call Rose on 01923 713627 for further details.

Volunteers' Day

Volunteers' Week is in June 2010. To thank all our volunteers for their support during the past year, we have arranged for an 'open day' at the Riverside Health Club in Northwood.

Come along on Wednesday 2 June for a day or evening of pampering, use of sporting facilities and classes or some chill out time in the picturesque grounds. You will receive invites in due course – enjoy!

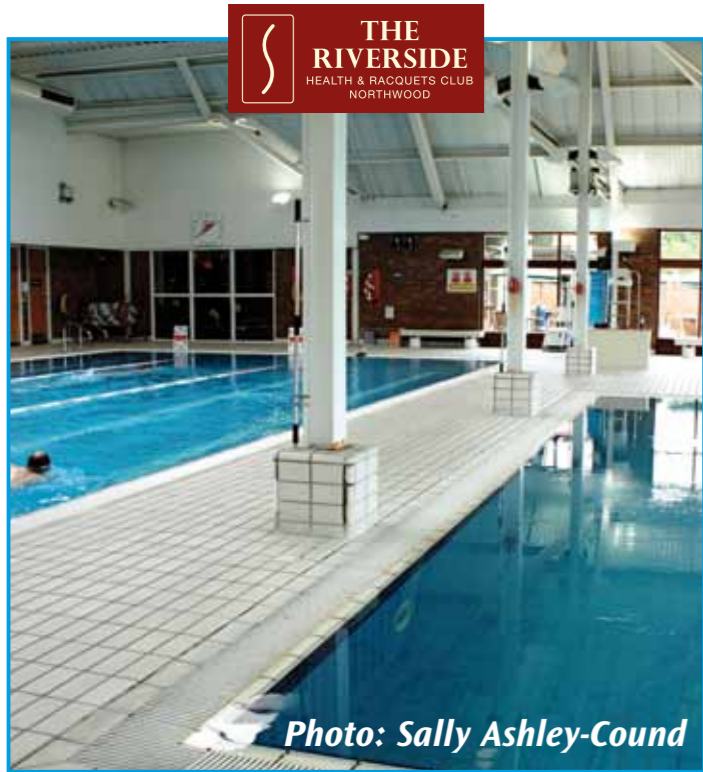


Photo: Sally Ashley-Cound

Development Day for staff and volunteers

On Thursday 1 July we will be holding a Development Day for all staff and volunteers at the Niland Centre in Bushey from 10am to 3pm. The theme for the day will be to learn more about what personalisation is all about and will also give us an ideal opportunity to meet with other people from across the projects. You will receive more details in due course.

School welcomes Leisure Together

9 members of Hertsmere Leisure Together visited Aldenham School in Elstree to take part in a day full of challenges and fun. With activities such as pottery and egg hunting, the students and their guests had an enjoyable day. Watford Mencap looks forward to working closely with the school in the future. See their pictures at http://www.aldenham.com/publish/news/charity_day.php

Key Points

Members of Hertsmere Leisure Together took part in a fun day at Aldenham School in Elstree.

Activities enjoyed included pottery and egg hunts.

Celebrity Golf Day

Actor Warren Clarke will be hosting another Celebrity Golf Day on Wednesday 7 July at Beaconsfield Golf Club.

Once again, proceeds from the day will go to our Children's Centre. If you would like to join in this fun event, or know someone else who might like to, then please contact Lesley Blee on 01923 713622 for more details or email fundraising@watfordmencap.org.uk

Holidays in Norfolk

If you fancy a holiday by the seaside in Norfolk, contact Cambridgeshire Mencap which has a holiday caravan sleeping 8 people. The well-equipped holiday home is sited at the Heacham Beach Holiday Park. Check out www.cambridgeshiremencap.co.uk or ring 01223 883130 for more detail.

Football Club bond strengthens

Watford Round Table launched the Watford 10K at Watford Football Club's home ground on Saturday 13 March, joined by sponsors Camelot. The Watford 10K will be held on Bank Holiday Monday 3 May. Visit www.watford10k.org.uk



Photo: Alan Cozzi

Pictured at the Watford 10k Launch are Billy and Jamie Chapman (After School Club), Albert Perahia (Watford Mencap), Anne Pattberg (Camelot), Daniel Scott, Antony Stivala and Mark Davis (Watford Round Table).

Fearless five face charity challenges

People go to extraordinary lengths to raise money for Watford Mencap and people with disabilities.

On 9 May Nicola Bielicki, Evelyn Gloyn, Sarah Teboul and our very own Funding Manager Veronica Chamberlain will take part in the Hatch End Triathlon where they have to swim 400 metres, cycle 17 kilometres and run 3 kilometres.

In another separate test of endurance, Watford Mencap supporter Colin Barnett will take part in the Coast to Coast Eco Challenge on 1 June. He has been training solidly to enable him to trek the 55 kilometres from the east to the west coast of Scotland in just 3 days.

Colin runs Together Communications Ltd, an advertising, design and communications

Watford Football Club is a solid supporter of Watford Mencap. The football club has continued to build on its relationship with us by inviting members, staff and volunteers of Watford Leisure Together to its recent match against Ipswich Town FC. The home team was cheered on to a 2-1 victory.

Watford FC made the tickets available as part of its involvement in the 'Level Playing Fields Campaign' run by the National Association of Disability Supporters.

Key Points

The Watford 10K will take place on Monday 3 May to raise money for Watford Mencap's Children's Centre and other local charities.

Watford FC helped us launch the Watford 10K at the club's Vicarage Road ground and also invited Leisure Together members to a match.

agency in Amersham, which has worked on various projects with Watford Mencap.

If you would like to support either fundraising effort please visit

www.justgiving.com/barnettblisters and www.justgiving.com/fourgomadinhatchend

We wish our intrepid fundraisers the best of luck.

Key Points

Nicola Bielicki, Evelyn Gloyn, Sarah Teboul and Veronica Chamberlain take part in Hatch End Triathlon on 9 May.

Colin Barnett takes part in the Coast to Coast Eco Challenge on 1 June.

They are all raising money for Watford Mencap so please sponsor them if you can.

ASK
Ruth



Dear Watford Mencap

One of my 3 children has complex needs. He needs a lot of support and this makes it difficult to do things as a family. Social Services have offered me Direct Payments. I don't know what they are and if that is the only option. Can you help?

Direct Payments are only one option for families and individuals looking for support. All options allow varying degrees of control over the support. The first option is called a 'Commissioned Service'. This is when the local authority pays an agency to provide the service for you. It can be useful, as there is an element of reliability and security. All staff are trained and monitored.

Direct Payments are designed to give you more control. Payments are made to you so you can employ a Personal Assistant. You would need to account for the money spent and provide evidence such as time sheets signed by personal assistants. It is unlikely that you could use an agency with this method, as the hourly rate paid is a lot less than agency fees.

Alternatively, if you have been offered an Individual Budget, you could choose a mix of service provision. You could ask the Council to provide some support services, use Direct Payments to organise some yourself or appoint an agent, a trust or an organisation like Watford Mencap to act on your behalf.

For more information contact Advice Manager Ruth Murray on 01923 713620

Talent Corner

Volunteer Amanda Cerasale (pictured below) is helping to boost the profile of our charity shop in Watford by creating eye-catching posters for display.



Watford Mencap has shops at 250 St Albans Road, Watford and 36 High Street, Bushey where we sell a great variety of new and second hand clothes and seasonal items.

We also sell goods on eBay to raise money. If you have something to donate - even clean rags and linens are of value to us - contact Rose Kreloff on 01923 713627.

HABs Mencap Fun Day

The Haberdashers' Aske's schools are having a Fun Day for young people with learning disabilities aged between 5 and 19 on Sunday 27 June from 10.30am to 4pm. This event will take place at Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School, Aldenham Road, Elstree WD6 3AF. Registration forms must be completed by Friday 21 May. For more details contact Ms Anusha Perera on 020 8266 1700 or Ms Lauren Marx on 020 8266 2300.

What do you think?

If you have some news which you would like to include in In Touch, please contact our Editor Sarah Kitt on 07747 805123.