

Changes at Northallerton and the Dales Mencap Society:

From its inception in 1964, The Northallerton and the Dales Mencap Society has seen several changes but has always worked to support people with learning disabilities, their families and carers. This work was taken on by Sue Lear, in support of the Trustees of the Society, on 1st December 1997.

Over the past 28+ years Sue, as Development Manager, has worked hard to ensure that the voice of people with learning disabilities has been heard, or represented, both locally and more widely. Sue has established the good reputation of this local Mencap so that, when issues relating to the needs of people with learning disabilities are being considered, the Society is consulted. In this regard, Sue played a vital role as Valuing People Coordinator for North Yorkshire County Council, as it was then, and, with NYCC staff, ran the North Yorkshire Learning Disability Partnership Board helping to transform provision for people with learning disabilities. Work on community safety, health issues and links with other organisations, such as Royal Mencap, the police and like-minded providers, has been effective in raising awareness of the needs of people with learning disabilities. Sue has also been a listening ear; many parents and carers have been grateful for her support. Sue's dedicated work was recognised more widely when she was awarded the British Empire Medal for her long and valued service.

Sue has now decided that it is time for her to retire and will be leaving her role at the end of March 2026. Trustees, and everyone involved with the Society, owe Sue a debt of gratitude and wish her a long and happy retirement. It is no exaggeration to say that the Society would not be where it is now without Sue's input; she will be missed.



**Sue in the porch of the Centre before the extension was built
and receiving the BEM award.**

The New Team:

In January 2022, Joelle Mitchell started working with Sue as Assistant Development Manager. Joelle has extensive experience of supporting people with learning disabilities and autism, their families and carers and is a very effective youth worker. Joelle helps to run the activities at the Goosecroft Centre, particularly the Monday Club, and has introduced new ideas such as the monthly 'Lunchables' and the Goosecroft Centre Garden Project. Joelle is now a vital and valued part of the team and is good at promoting the work of the Society through Facebook and other media. Like Sue, Joelle is very keen that the voice of people with learning disabilities is heard and that steps are taken to raise awareness of their needs. From February 2026, Joelle will be taking on additional hours and responsibilities as Centre Manager, with particular emphasis on engagement and support. Joelle has demonstrated that her approach to the work of the Society is one of real dedication and commitment.



Joelle



Our Mission



Garden Project



Monday Club



Lunchables



Sport with Joe

The New Team continued:

Since March 2025, the financial management and other administrative responsibilities have been taken on by Lizzie Rollin. Lizzie has a real commitment to the work of the Society, expertise and experience in accounting and enjoys developing detailed spreadsheets and keeping accurate records. Lizzie will be taking on additional hours from February 2026, as Centre Finance and Administration Manager, to help ensure that the Centre is run in line with the standards required.



F

Sue with Joelle, Helen and Ruth



Lizzie

In addition to Joelle and Lizzie, Helen Orr has agreed to increase her hours as Senior Support Worker for the various activities that take place at The Goosecroft Centre. Helen is very good at encouraging participants and gives them the confidence to have a go. As well as having a real heart for our work, Helen is meticulous in her approach. The centre and our members will be in good hands.

For some time now Ruth Hawkes has planned and carried out regular Tuesday art activities which are very beneficial and greatly enjoyed by all who take part. Ruth is very skilled at thinking of art activities that encourage people to participate and that have real therapeutic value. We are delighted that Ruth is happy to continue this work into the future.

We are also grateful to Joe McKechnie for the sports activities that he organises at the Centre and more widely. Joe is a Trustee of the Society and Inclusion Sports Officer for North Yorkshire Council. He is very good at encouraging people to be active and involved.



The Goosecroft Litter pickers



Phillip Craig

The next litter pick will be on Saturday February 21st 2026 – all welcome. The Goosecroft Pickers are grateful to Phillip Craig for his support and for the 'Keep Britain Tidy' equipment and insurance.



Frits Rab, Chair:

The Trustees

Change is never easy. However, given the commitment and enthusiasm of the New Team described in this newsletter, I am confident that the work of the Society will continue on a sound footing. As Trustees, we need to ensure that we carry out our responsibilities effectively and provide essential support. As Chair of Trustees, I am particularly grateful to our Holding Trustees and Vice-Presidents for their encouragement and to all those who have provided financial support. Financially, we have been placed in a very strong position. This will enable the Society to continue its work well into the future.

We are always keen to welcome new people and to consider innovative ways of benefitting those we support. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to become involved or want to know more.

Have a look at our webpage and let us know what you think.

Contact details:

admin@northallertonmencap.org.uk on [Facebook](#) or

Tel: 01609 778894