



# Hear Our Voices get together report – May 2025

## Introduction

The first Hear Our Voices event happened in October 2023. People with a learning disability unanimously wished to meet again and the consensus was 6 monthly.

The second and third Hear Our Voices events were in May 2024 and then October 2024 at the Kindle Centre in Hereford. It continued in the same spirit filled with the energy and enthusiasm, ideas and voices of people attending.

Our 4<sup>th</sup> event, in this report, was in May 2025 which was really well attended with a really positive vibe throughout the day.

The event was organised by Herefordshire Mencap and Healthwatch Herefordshire and funded by Herefordshire Community Foundation.

This is a report of:

- What we did on the day
- What People said
- What people thought of the day and Hear Our Voices future plans

## Appreciations!

Thank you to the participants on the day for coming along and making it a day full of energy and inspiration and most of all for sharing their enthusiasm and views.

Thanks to the people with a learning disability that spoke on the day and worked hard to organise and make the event a success.

Thank you to Herefordshire Community Foundation for funding the event.

Thank you to the support organisations who helped people to attend and participate: ECHO, Beacon College, Herefordshire Mencap, Enviroability, Walsingham Support, Health Checkers, Shared Lives, Star College and Aspire.



Thank you to the organisations that came along to support the event and listen to the views of people with a learning disability about community activities, the learning disability plan (Herefordshire Council) and community health champions (Healthwatch Herefordshire).

Thank you to Councillor Carole Gandy, for her welcome message for the event and to Kevin, Bev and Libby for speaking to the audience during the day.

Thank you to Echo sound and vision hub for the photography and videoing the day.

Thank you to Star College for their fun and engaging Icebreaker.

## Participants

There were 77 people at the event. 47 participants with a learning disability from 9 support organisations with 10 support workers, 3 people from Herefordshire Council, 2 from Healthwatch Herefordshire, 4 people from the ECHO sound and vision hub and 1 from Royal Mencap Society.

## Agenda

9.45 – 10.15 Registration and refreshments

10.15 – 10.25 Welcome - Kevin Stuchbery, Herefordshire Mencap's co-vice Chair

Message from Councillor Carole Gandy, Cabinet Member, Adults Health & Wellbeing.

10.25 -10.50 Ice Breaker, National Star College students

10.50 – 11.40 Have Your Say about the Learning Disability Plan: Hannah, Laura and Lucy, Herefordshire Council. Table Activity. Feedback

11.40 – 12.30 Community Activities: where do you spend your time? Hannah, Laura and Lucy, Herefordshire Council. Table Activity. Feedback

12.30 – 1.30 Lunch. Filming: what's important to me now and in the future: ECHO Sound & Vision Hub

1.30 – 1.45 Community Health Champions project: Sam and Toni, Health Watch

1.45 – 2.00 You said, we did: Bev Davies, Herefordshire Mencap

2.00 - 2.30 Hot topics for next Hear Our Voices, introduction from Libby from EnviroAbility & Evaluation



# PowerPoint

Our PowerPoint shows the activity content and is in the appendix.

## Welcome

Kevin Stuchbery from Herefordshire Mencap welcomed everyone.

“We have another interesting day ahead. We will be working with Herefordshire Council on the next steps towards a refresh of its Learning Disability Plan. This Plan is about Our Lives, Our Futures.

Welcome:

- Councillor Carole Gandy, Cabinet Member, Adults Health & Wellbeing
- Manny, Hannah, Laura and Lucy from Herefordshire Council
- Sam, Crista, Kayla and Chris from the NHS Learning Disability team and finally and not least,
- Claire Frowd from Herefordshire Community Foundation who has given Hear Our Voices the money to hold all these events.



“What’s important to me now and in the future”

During lunch there is once again the opportunity for you to put your thoughts and ideas on film. ECHO’s Sound & Vision Hub will be filming.

The Sound & Vision Hub will also be taking photos during the day.

At the end of today please tell us your Hot Topics that you want to be discussed for the 5th Hear Our Voices in October.

Thank you for coming today.

And now welcome, Councillor Carole Gandy”.

## Message from Councillor Carole Gandy



# Star College Icebreaker

The Star College students ran an excellent icebreaker, getting everybody to move around the room and talk to lots of different people. We had lots of comments about how fun and enjoyable the activity was.

## Have your say about: The Learning Disability Plan

Hannah from Herefordshire council introduced this activity, asking to hear about what was important to the audience about living with a learning disability.

### SESSION 1

#### Thinking about where you live

#### What is working well?

The biggest themes from this question were :



- Independence / Having own space and choices
- Having company / Living with family / Close to family / friends
- Having support
- Having access to fun and activities
- Access to transport

#### Is anything not working well?

There was a much broader range of answers for this question, meaning it was individualised, but there were some answers where a couple of people had said similar things, which include :

- Transport



- Shared lives not always working for individuals
- Housing – waiting times and accessible housing

### What could be changed to make it better?

Again, there was a broad range of answers for this questions, but a few themes stood out, which include :

- Evenings and weekends – more activities and staff available
- Accessibility on transport and other places, such as shops.

### Thinking about being healthy and safe

#### What is working well?

The biggest themes to come from this question were about :

- Good communication with carers to feel safe
- Having the right support
- The importance to medical appointments, check ups and healthy eating

#### Is anything not working well?

Along with a variety of answers, a couple of themes emerged :

- Access to mental health support / specifically ADHD and Autism
- Needing support and kerbs and paths aren't suitable and can't go out alone
- Issues with being healthy – cost / lack of motivation / too many opportunities for unhealthy choices

### What are the 3 things that are most important to you for a good life?

The three themes that came from this question were :

- Friends, Family, Pets
- Social and meaningful activities
- Shared carers / good staff / Support



## SESSION 2

### What activities do you spend time doing?

There was a wide variety of answers including :

- Opportunities at Aspire, ECHO, Horizon Centre, About Face, Open Gate, Marches Family Network, Cracked Slipper
- Sporting activities
- Drama, music & crafting
- Being outside (such as gardening and walking dogs)
- Volunteering
- Shopping / seeing friends / cinema
- Gaming

### What is working well with the things you currently spend time doing?

Some of the responses included :

- Free food
- Exercise keeps me fit
- Variety
- Affordable
- Fun
- Customer service / feeling supported
- Choice

### Is anything not working well? What would make it easier to do a community activity?

A lot of the responses for this question are around :

- Cost
- Transport issues
- Accessibility
- Not much in market towns





## What are your goals for the future?

The main responses to this question were :

- Living independently
- Going to social occasions
- Love and relationships
- Job goals

## Community Health Champions

After lunch Sam and Toni from Healthwatch talked about their Community Health Champion project.

They explained how they could provide training which could equip you to go and spread the word about prevention of certain health conditions.



They did an exercise with the audience to see if anybody would be interested in being involved in the project and if so, what health conditions were important and relevant to them.

Sam and Toni took the information from the engagement with the audience and will hopefully return with a training package designed for people with a learning disability.

## You Said, We Did: Bev Davies (Herefordshire Mencap)

“You said, we did”

Last October lots of ideas were given to Glen from Herefordshire Council about day activities and the support needed.

Today Manny and her team are building on that work.

Councillor Gandy is also here – the council members hold the money to spend on services. They also examine the council's work and give their opinions.

Ellie Chowns MP welcomed everyone to October's Hear Our Voices.

Ellie is working with Mencap to get disabled bus passes to be made available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

She has met the government's Transport Minister. He told her that money is short and it's difficult to find extra money to fund extra things.

The council tells us that the bus companies have concerns about the policy. The council will find out how other councils have successfully applied this and get back to us.

We are continuing the buses 24/7 campaign and working with other Mencap groups. Removing the time restrictions supports the government's 'Pathways to Work' agenda.

The Safe Places mobile phone app can now be used up until September 2026 with more funding from national Mencap.

We want to hear what having the Safe Places app means to you. Is it good to have it? Does it give you more confidence to get out and about in your community? Or going to other places in England and parts of Wales? The Safe Places website tells people where other safe places are. There are leaflets on everyone's tables.

## Talk by Libby from Enviroability

Libby did an impressive speech about the importance of finding the right work opportunities, whether that be paid or voluntary, for both the employer and employee.





## Hot topics for future events

- A** Social clubs/places to hang out/safe places for young people/fun activities
- B** healthy eating/healthy lifestyles/exercise/mental health
- C** friends & relationships
- D** community/how to get involved in community groups
- E** housing/options/accessibility/equipment/tech adaptations
- F** transport
- G** jobs/job mentoring/continued support
- H** budgeting/money/banking
- I** benefits – PIP, ESA, Income Support
- J** how to make a difference into the world, eg Ukraine, homelessness
- K** disability confident employers in Herefordshire/disability awareness

### Top results were :

- 1.) Friends & Relationships
- 2.) Housing/options/accessibility/equipment/tech adaptations
- 3.) Transport

## Evaluation – Reflections of the day

Comments were as follows:

### Have you found the event useful?

42 people said 'Yes'

2 people said 'No'

### What did you like about the event?

- "I like the cards and talking"
- "The variety of group invited; the venue; the mix of topics"
- "It was interesting"
- "To meet everyone"
- "I loved doing the afternoon group sessions and the learning disability plan and Libby's and Bev's presentation"
- "Health champion project"



- “Learning disability plan” x 3
- “All of it” x 2
- “Everything”
- “Lunch time. Lovely sandwiches. We liked meeting with different groups and having our voice heard”
- “I like it all”
- “Getting to talk about important things. Talking about ECHO to other people. Making new friends”
- “Refreshments”
- “Listening to everyone’s thoughts and contributions. It was great to see so many of my friends. Fabulous”
- “Working with different organisations”
- “I enjoyed meeting people/groups, thinking together as a group on responses to questions and hearing other people’s responses”
- “I really liked hearing about communities for people with LD at a local level. It was very accessible and facilitated brilliantly”
- “The buffet”
- “Cake” x 2
- “Food”
- “I liked the speeches, the ice breaker and meeting other people”
- “Meeting new people and I enjoyed the lovely food”
- “Going out”
- “Getting involved with the activities”
- “Good safe places app”
- “Interesting chatting to different people. Having lots of cake. 100/100”
- “The engaging conversations, people putting forward what they believe in”
- “Warm, friendly, interactive environment. Opportunities for everyone to speak”
- “To be able to speak with people from the council and share positive stories and concerns”
- “To meet people from other organisations and share experiences, knowledge and ideas”
- “Meeting people”
- “Doing events”
- “The location. The food was alright”
- “Doing the activities”
- “Can say what we think needs to be heard”
- “To get our say across”
- “Taking part in activities”
- “Very informative for some of the different”

- “The visual parts and officials from HC being there and NHS”
- “Liked the food. Helped us and other people, liked talking to other people- socializing and seeing old friends”

### **What didn't you like about the event?**

- “Not enough time for activity one. Not enough dots”
- “More time to think”
- “Nothing” x 6
- “It can go on a bit”
- “It was very busy. Maybe a larger space”
- “People getting upset through talk”
- “Sometimes I couldn't hear what was said”
- “Too crowded”
- “Too loud, too busy, not well accessible for someone in a wheelchair with VI”
- “Too many people”
- “Too busy” x 2
- “It was a bit busy and crowded so I had my lunch outside”
- “It was a bit hot”
- “Money” x 2
- “The buffet food”
- “Warm/stuffy in venue. Maybe too long”
- “Maybe a little long”
- “Too hot in the venue”
- “All the paperwork”
- “The food” x 3
- “Having to make sure you have a key writer, not all can read or write”
- “Found the event too busy – too many people. Too loud. A bit too long – maybe just a morning event”

### **Would you come to the next Hear Our Voices event?**

Yes – 44 responses

No – 2 responses

### **How often do you think Hear Our Voices should meet?**

Every 3 months – 11 responses

Every 6 months – 24 responses

Once a year – 9 responses



# See you in October 2025!

