



mencap

St Albans & District

STAFF HANDBOOK

CHARITY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

ST. ALBANS MENCAP CHARITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Issued: May 2025

St. Albans Mencap Charity Staff Handbook – Content

1. Welcome Message from the Chair of Trustees
2. St. Albans Mencap Charity - what do we stand for?
3. Trustees – introduction
4. Purpose of the Handbook
5. Working with us

DRAFT

1. Welcome Message from the Chair of Trustees

Dear Staff and Volunteers,

Welcome to St. Albans Mencap. As the Chair of Trustees, I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to both new and existing members of our team. Your dedication and commitment to supporting children and young people with disabilities are truly valued and essential to our mission.

At St. Albans Mencap, we believe that every individual is unique and deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. Our charity is built on the core values of **respect, inclusion, and empowerment**. We strive to create a supportive environment where children and young people can thrive, and their families can find the respite and assistance they need.

Our commitment to providing high-quality experiences and services is unwavering. We offer a range of programs, including day services, community outreach, holiday, weekend, and evening activities, all tailored to meet the diverse needs of those we support. We are dedicated to ensuring that our services are delivered with compassion, professionalism, and a deep understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities.

As part of the wider Mencap family, we share the vision of making the UK the best place in the world for people with learning disabilities to live happy and healthy lives. We are passionate about changing society's attitudes, influencing policy and practice, and empowering individuals to lead fulfilled lives.

Safeguarding is at the heart of everything we do. We adhere to the highest standards of safeguarding practices to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and young people in our care. All staff and volunteers undergo thorough recruitment checks, including DBS checks, and receive training on safeguarding policies and procedures.

Your role within St. Albans Mencap is crucial, and we are committed to supporting your professional development and well-being. We offer training opportunities and encourage continuous learning to help you grow and excel in your role.

Thank you for being part of our team and for your dedication to making a positive impact in the lives of children and young people with disabilities. Together, we can create a brighter future for all.

Warm regards,

David Keen
Chair of Trustees
St. Albans Mencap

2. St. Albans Mencap Charity - what do we stand for?

Our charitable focus at St Albans & District Mencap is all about making life better for people with learning disabilities and their families. We want to break down barriers. Reduce loneliness, and make sure everyone in our community feels included and supported.

We are a local voice for learning disability. We work to raise awareness, challenge stigma, and promote equality. We provide advocacy to make sure people with learning disabilities are heard, understood, and respected. We also help campaign on issues that affect our community, striving for positive change on both a local and a national level.

Everything we do is driven by the belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to live the life they choose.

Mission Statement

To empower children and young people with disabilities to achieve their full potential through high-quality, inclusive services.

Vision Statement

Creating a community where every individual with a learning disability is valued, respected, and supported to lead a fulfilling life.

3. Introduction to Charity Trustees

The Trustees of St. Albans Mencap play a crucial role in the governance and strategic direction of our charity. They are dedicated individuals who volunteer their time and expertise to ensure that our organisation operates effectively and in alignment with our mission and values.

Role of the Trustees

- **Governance and Oversight:** Trustees are responsible for the overall governance of the charity. They ensure that we comply with legal and regulatory requirements, including those set by the Charity Commission.
- **Strategic Direction:** Trustees work collaboratively to set the strategic direction of the charity. They help to define our goals and objectives, ensuring that we remain focused on our mission to support children and young people with disabilities.
- **Financial Management:** Trustees oversee the financial health of the charity. They ensure that our resources are managed responsibly and that we maintain financial stability to continue providing high-quality services.

- **Support and Guidance:** Trustees provide support and guidance to the charity's management team. They bring a wealth of experience and knowledge, offering valuable insights to help the charity grow and thrive.
- **Advocacy and Representation:** Trustees act as ambassadors for St. Albans Mencap. They advocate for our cause, raise awareness, and build relationships with key stakeholders and the community.

The Trustees' commitment and leadership are vital to the success of St. Albans Mencap. Their dedication ensures that we can continue to make a positive impact in the lives of the children and young people we support.

Here are the trustees and their areas of responsibilities.

PHOTO	David Keen – Trustee (Chair) & Director
PHOTO	Brett Collocott – Trustee (Deputy Chair) & Director
PHOTO	David Lovell – Trustee (minute taker)
PHOTO	Mike Arnott – Trustee (minute taker)
PHOTO	Lauren McGilvray - Trustee
PHOTO	Nick Latham - Trustee
PHOTO	Andy Howatt - Trustee
PHOTO	Tina Coast - Trustee
PHOTO	Peter Seymour – Trustee & Director
PHOTO	Annemari Ottridge – Trustee (Safeguarding Lead)
PHOTO	Martyn McPhee - Trustee
PHOTO	Ray Fraser - Trustee
PHOTO	Audrey Phiri - Trustee

4. Purpose of the Handbook

The purpose of this staff handbook is to provide you with a comprehensive guide to working at St. Albans Mencap. It outlines our policies, procedures, and expectations, ensuring that you have all the information you need to perform your role effectively and confidently.

By familiarising yourself with this handbook, you will:

- **Understand Our Values and Mission:** Learn about our commitment to empowering children and young people with disabilities, and how your role contributes to this mission.
- **Feel Supported and Included:** Know that you are part of a caring and inclusive community that values your contributions and is dedicated to your professional growth and well-being.
- **Ensure Best Practices:** Follow our guidelines and procedures to provide the highest quality of care and support to the children and young people we serve.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up to date with important policies, safeguarding practices, and your rights and responsibilities as a member of our team.

This handbook is designed to help you integrate seamlessly into the Mencap family, where we work together to create a positive and supportive environment for everyone. By adhering to the policies and procedures outlined here, you will be well-equipped to provide the very best support for the children and young people in your care, ensuring their safety, well-being, and development.

Welcome to St. Albans Mencap and thank you for your dedication to making a difference in the lives of those we support.

5. Working with us

5.1 Equal Opportunities

We are committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination in employment and against customers. This policy is intended to assist the charity to put this commitment into practice.

5.2 Employment Status and Rights

All employees will be provided with a written statement of employment particulars as required by the Employment Rights Act 1996. This will include details of pay, working hours, and other key terms of employment. Part-time employees and volunteers will receive appropriate documentation outlining their roles and responsibilities.

5.3 Recruitment and Selection

Our recruitment process is designed to be fair and transparent, ensuring that all candidates are treated equally and that the best candidate for the role is selected. We follow the Charity

Commission's guidance on safer recruitment practices. All employees and volunteers must undergo full safe recruitment checks, including DBS checks, before starting work.

5.4 Annual Leave

Employees are entitled to a minimum of 28 days of paid annual leave per year, inclusive of public holidays. Part-time employees' leave entitlement is calculated on a pro-rata basis. Volunteers are encouraged to take breaks and time off as needed, though they do not have formal leave entitlements.

5.6 Bereavement Leave

Employees are entitled to take bereavement leave in the event of the death of a close family member. The amount of leave granted will be at the discretion of the charity, considering the employee's circumstances.

5.7 Bullying and Harassment

We are committed to providing a work environment free from bullying and harassment. Any complaints of bullying or harassment will be taken seriously and investigated promptly. Employees and volunteers can report incidents to their line manager or designated safeguarding officer.

5.8 Comments, Suggestions, and Complaints

We welcome feedback from our staff and volunteers and have a formal procedure for handling complaints. Employees can submit their comments, suggestions, or complaints to their line manager or through the designated feedback channels.

5.9 Compassionate Leave

Compassionate leave may be granted in cases of serious illness or death of a close family member. The amount of leave will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

5.10 Confidentiality

All employees and volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement to protect the privacy of the children and young people we work with. Personal data must be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

5.11 Contact Information

Employees should ensure that their emergency contact details are up to date. Key personnel contact information will be provided to all staff and volunteers.

5.12 Development and Training

We are committed to the continuous professional development of our staff and volunteers. Training opportunities will be provided, and employees are encouraged to take advantage of these to enhance their skills. Individual development plans will be created for each employee and volunteer to support their growth.

5.13 Events and Notification

All internal events and important notifications will be communicated through the designated channels. Employees and volunteers are expected to participate in events as required.

5.14 Lone Worker Policy

A risk assessment will be conducted for all lone working situations. Employees and volunteers must follow the safety procedures outlined in the lone worker policy to ensure their safety.

5.16 Mobile Phone Policy

Employees and volunteers are not permitted to use mobile phones during working hours except during their breaks, away from contact with the children. This policy is in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and young people we work with, in line with safeguarding guidelines.

5.17 Use of Own Transport

Employees using their own vehicles for work purposes must ensure they have the appropriate insurance coverage. Mileage reimbursement will be provided at the standard rate. Employees must provide proof of insurance coverage for their vehicles.

5.18 Social Media Policy

Employees and volunteers must use social media responsibly and ensure that their online activities do not negatively impact the charity. Any representation of the charity on social media must be approved by the Trustees.

5.19 Use of Society Vehicle

Only authorised employees and volunteers may use the society vehicle. Regular maintenance checks must be conducted, and any issues reported immediately.

5.20 Staff Code of Conduct

This code of conduct outlines the expected behaviour and responsibilities of staff working with children and young adults with disabilities. It aims to ensure the safety, dignity, and well-being of all individuals in our care, in compliance with NSPCC guidelines and England legislation.

Employees and volunteers are expected to always maintain a high standard of professional behaviour. Conflicts of interest must be declared and managed appropriately.

General Principles

1. **Respect and Dignity:** Treat all children and young adults with respect and dignity, valuing their individuality and rights.
2. **Safety and Welfare:** Prioritise the safety and welfare of children and young adults at all times.
3. **Professional Boundaries:** Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid any behaviour that could be misinterpreted or lead to allegations of misconduct.

Responsibilities

1. **Safeguarding:** Adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures, including reporting any concerns about a child's welfare to the designated safeguarding lead.
2. **Confidentiality:** Respect the confidentiality of children and young adults, sharing information only with authorised personnel.
3. **Equality and Inclusion:** Promote equality and inclusion, ensuring that all children and young adults have access to opportunities and support tailored to their needs.

Behavioural Expectations

1. **Positive Interaction:** Engage positively with children and young adults, using appropriate language and behaviour.
 - **Example:** Use encouraging words and praise to build confidence and self-esteem.
 - **Example:** Listen actively and show genuine interest in their thoughts and feelings.
2. **Physical Contact:** Avoid unnecessary physical contact. Any required physical intervention should be conducted in line with training and organisational policies.
 - **Example:** Offer a handshake or high-five instead of a hug, unless the child initiates and is comfortable with it.
 - **Example:** Use touch only when necessary for care tasks, ensuring it is appropriate and respectful.
3. **Communication:** Communicate effectively and appropriately, considering the individual needs and preferences of each child and young adult.
 - **Example:** Use clear and simple language, and check for understanding.
 - **Example:** Adapt communication methods to suit the needs of children with speech or hearing impairments, such as using sign language or visual aids.

Professional Conduct

1. **Training and Development:** Participate in ongoing training and professional development to stay informed about best practices and legal requirements.
 - **Example:** Attend regular safeguarding training sessions and refreshers.
 - **Example:** Engage in workshops on disability awareness and inclusive practices.
2. **Accountability:** Take responsibility for your actions and decisions, seeking guidance when necessary.
 - **Example:** Admit mistakes and take steps to rectify them promptly.
 - **Example:** Seek advice from supervisors or colleagues when faced with challenging situations.
3. **Collaboration:** Work collaboratively with colleagues, families, and other professionals to provide comprehensive support to children and young adults.
 - **Example:** Share relevant information with team members to ensure consistent care.
 - **Example:** Involve parents and caregivers in planning and decision-making processes.

Compliance with Legislation

1. **SEND Code of Practice:** Follow the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, ensuring that support is provided in line with statutory requirements.
2. **Children and Families Act 2014:** Adhere to the provisions of the Children and Families Act 2014, which outlines the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools, and colleges in supporting children and young adults with disabilities.

Adherence to Other Policies

1. **Safeguarding Policy:** All staff must read and adhere to the organisation's safeguarding policy, which provides detailed guidelines on protecting children and young adults from harm.
2. **Equality and Diversity Policy:** Staff must comply with the equality and diversity policy, ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and without discrimination.
3. **Health and Safety Policy:** Follow the health and safety policy to maintain a safe environment for children, young adults, and staff.

Consequences of Breaching the Code

1. **Investigation:** Any breach of this code will be investigated in accordance with organisational policies.
2. **Disciplinary Action:** Breaches may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

This code of conduct should be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains up-to-date with current legislation and best practices.

5.21 Use of ICT and Data Protection

Employees and volunteers must adhere to the acceptable use policy for ICT resources. This includes using ICT systems responsibly and ensuring that all data is handled in compliance with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Security measures must be followed to protect the charity's data and systems. This includes using strong passwords, regularly updating software, and reporting any security breaches immediately. All ICT use must prioritise the safeguarding of children and young people. This includes ensuring that any formal, charity digital communication (official email from @stalbandsmencap.co.uk) with families, parents and carers is appropriate and secure.

5.22 Personal Belongings and Dress Code

Employees and volunteers are responsible for their personal belongings. It is recommended to keep valuables to a minimum while at work.

Clothing should be appropriate for working with children and young people. This includes wearing comfortable, practical clothing and footwear. Jewellery should be minimal and safe **to wear in an active environment.**

5.23 Attendance and Sickness Absence Reporting

Regular attendance is essential for the smooth operation of our services. Employees and volunteers are expected to adhere to their scheduled hours.

Employees must inform their line manager as soon as possible if they are unable to attend work due to illness. A doctor's note may be required for absences longer than seven days.

After any period of sickness absence, employees will have a return-to-work interview with their line manager to discuss their health and any support they may need.

5.24 Performance Management and Objectives

Regular staff performance reviews will be conducted to assess progress and set objectives. These reviews provide an opportunity for feedback and professional development.

Clear, measurable objectives will be set for each employee and volunteer to ensure alignment with the charity's goals and mission.

5.25 Record Keeping

Accurate and timely record keeping is essential for the effective operation of our services. This includes maintaining up-to-date records of attendance, training, and any incidents.

Records will be retained in accordance with legal requirements and the charity's data retention policy. Sensitive information will be securely disposed of when no longer needed