Lockdown Trustee -An opportunity to set up a Sensory Room on a shoe string for people with PMLD.

I applied to be a volunteer in March 2020!

By July 2020 Kingston Mencap (KM) had interviewed me to be a Trustee - I felt very honoured to be asked, it’s a big responsibility.

The most exciting thing was that KM lease the Searchlight Centre from the council; in it was a dedicated room - the sensory room. Unfortunately, funds had ran out and there was only this wonderful interactive projector in the room- called the magic projector (Tovertafel). The room was being used as a store room, Christmas fair CD’s and other varied interesting ‘stuff’ was in it.

One of the other new Trustees (Helen) applied for a grant for £2500 and we got it! My job was to set up a sensory room for that amount. This amazingly was all organised-on Zoom! I had only met the Grant writing Trustee once face to face. Then she asked me what equipment I needed in the room and why?

The way I managed was not to make it a ‘Snoozeleen’ type, soft furnishing room, but a distraction free sensory room/dark room. Lovely Helen did the rest- I didn’t know filling in Grant applications was such a skilled job! Using the right terminology etc.

My email to Helen as a contribution for the Grant:

Proposal for developing the Sensory room at the Searchlight Centre Kingston MENCAP:

A sensory room is a quiet space dedicated to stimulating, developing and relaxing the senses. A sensory room will allow MENCAP members the freedom and autonomy to explore the environment for themselves, in their own time, using all of their senses. The décor of a sensory room might include low lighting and adjustable lighting projections, fibre optics, mirrors and bubble tubes. It will typically contain a choice of comfortable places to sit, a variety of interesting objects to examine, and it might also feature sounds and soft music.

We are hoping to get support to develop our sensory room. At the Searchlight Centre MENCAP Kingston there is a designated room that was to be developed as the sensory room for the centre. Unfortunately, the lack of funding has meant that apart from an interactive lights projector there is nothing else in it. Fortunately, it is decorated and has been carpeted; what it needs is the equipment to make it a functional space to enable us to achieve our aims set out below.

We aim to:

* Create an appropriate space for our MENCAP members with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) who need a place to go where they can have minimal visual and auditory distraction.
* Make the space and equipment in the Sensory room so that it offers opportunities to stimulate learning and engagement, which in turn promotes independence and choice-making for our MENCAP members.
* Provide a distraction free space which can be used as a dark room as well. This will help our MENCAP members with a visual impairment to use their residual vision; focusing on a variety of light sources (UV & White) in a dark room.
* Create an interactive sensory environment that can be easily controlled by the MENCAP members. We aim to do this by making a lot of the equipment switch operated. These pressure pad switches require very little pressure to activate them making them accessible to most of our members.
* Use music and calming lights to encourage Sensory integration activities; they can be brilliant as relaxation tools for individuals with all sorts of complex needs, including autism.
* Provide 121 sessions with specific aims; encouraging communication, using intensive interaction techniques, visual stimulation sessions, functional vision assessments etc.
* Provide a space that people with SLD /PMLD can use with their parents and carers, by booking the sensory room to use for visual stimulation, relaxation, or sensory sessions.
* A sensory room that has a clear purpose and aim.

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| **Proposed Equipment for the Sensory Room** |
| Name of Equipment: | From:  | Prices may vary subject to availability on day of purchase: |
| Switch Socket Adapter  | From Inclusive Technology Catalogue. Adapter for pressure switches to operate equipment.  | £139.00 |
| 4 X Jelly Bean Switches | Pressure switches @ £39.00 ea. (Inclusive Technology) | £ 156.00 |
| Table fan | To be operated by Jelly bean switch. | £50.00 |
| Juice maker  | To be operated by Jelly bean switch. | £60.00 |
| Foot Spa  | To be operated by Jelly bean switch. | £70.00 |
| LED cool table lamp | To be operated by Jelly bean switch. | £30.00 |
| 2x John Lewis & Partners Max Indoor / Outdoor Bean Bag, Black | To aid comfortable postural seating. £85.00 ea.  | £170.00 |
| Bubble Tube - Extra Large (183cm / 6ft) Bubble Lamp incl 15 fish, balls, LED colour changing lights.  | Relaxation, visual stimulation encouraging looking and vibration sensory feedback. (from Amazon) | £449.00 |
| Bubble tube wall bracket  | To secure bubble tube to the wall.  | £40.00 |
| Fibre optic sensory lights PVC covered FLEXIBLE (30 x 200) 3.2mm diameter! sideglow sensory lighting (disabled, autism) | Relaxation, visual stimulation encouraging looking. (from Amazon) | £250.00 |
| UV Blacklight Strip Bar Light with Glowing Neon Lamp Fluorescent Tube  | UV light to enable the use of fluorescent equipment in the dark room.  | £30.00 |
| Fluorescent equipment  | Variety of equipment that glows under UV light.  | £70.00 |
| Pack of various light up equipment.  | Hand held light up equipment e.g Torches, glow spinners, fibro optic lamps etc.  | £100.00 |
| Panasonic Bluetooth Hi fi. | Music centre with USB and speakers.  | £250.00 |
| Schlagwerk RTF60 Drum with a floor frame  | To encourage interaction and communication.  | £195.00 |
| Rockjam 61 keyboard piano with stand, stool and headphones.  | To encourage interaction and communication. (ARGOS).  | £100.00 |
| 6 Extra deep tray double trolley unit.  | Storage for sensory equipment that is easily accessible in trays.(TTS)  | £250.00 |
|  |  |  |
|  | Total: | £2320.00 |

January 2021: We got the Grant!!

So exciting we had to have a trustee meeting on Zoom! on how I would be reimbursed once I had bought the equipment. Searchlight Centre was essentially closed! Vikram another wonderful Trustee the treasurer helped (All Trustees are volunteers incredible what can be achieved on this basis).

It was really exciting sitting on my computer at home buying on-line, my neighbours thought I was having a spending spree as often they were left with the parcels!

By the end of February 2021 – I had got most of the equipment delivered another absolutely amazing Trustee Peter- who is wonderful at DIY; put up the mirrors, the bracket for the bubble tube and he even found an old tripod to attach the UV lamp – ingenious its height adjustable now! I had a little anxious wait for the delivery of the Powerlink for the switches as it’s the key component, making the sensory room totally interactive. In our monthly Zoom trustee meeting I presented the following document: Item on agenda ‘Sensory Room’:

Sensory Room Kingston Mencap

**Look:** 

* Come and enjoy the lights, and UV lit up visual effects in the dark room e.g., Bubble tube, Fibre-Optic curtain, Touch Projector/ magic table, handheld lights & torches. UV lights, fluorescent material and paints, Shiny material when lit up etc.
* We also offer pre-booked sessions with Lina Graham (QTVI) to help you and your carer understand how you use your vision by offering Functional Vision Assessments (FVA)

**Listen:**

* There is an electronic keyboard and a Hi-fi for you to use.
* Musical instruments.
* If you have a hearing impairment, we have drums you can use to experience sounds by the vibrations. If required we will have access to a resonance board.

**Touch:**

* We have a selection of equipment you can explore by touch.
* We have a foot spa, bubble tube, fibre-optic lights and other equipment you can control with a simple one press switch and touch.

**Communicate:**

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* We have a selection of One Press Switches and power link to enable you to control a variety of appliances when you Choose to do so. To encourage you to experience Cause and Effect and Choice making we at present have the following type of appliances e.g., Juice maker, table lamp, fan, etc.
* To encourage you to communicate you are able to pre- book sessions with Lina to explore communicating based on Intensive Interaction Strategies.

Contact: Michelle for bookings. (One to One or Two to One session’s only).

As explained earlier KM leases the Searchlight Centre from the council and I had retired from working in state schools for nearly 40 years, I hadn’t really thought of RENT! So obviously this would be a facility for members but also could make money and be hired out. This is when I had to quickly think of clear rules, for safe guarding, health and safety and of course a risk assessment. So not so simple! as having an idea in a state school; as I had done many times before and ordered bubbles tubes etc to make dark rooms into interactive sensory rooms.

My evolving rules so far:

* Maximum usage 2participants from same establishment + 3 carers/staff.
* All participants have to have a free Induction Session and feedback of the Induction sent to them before they can join a session. This is crucial it gives me an opportunity to spend quality time with the participant, assess their mode of communication, try and do a functional: vision, hearing and motor skills assessment. Here is an example of one of these Induction sheets:

Induction Sensory Room Kingston Mencap

**Name: XXXXXXXXXXXX DOB: 31 years old**

**Date of Induction: 17/05/2021**

**Address: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**

**Look:**  Activities enjoyed or not:

1. – Enjoyed turning the Bubble tube & fibro-optic curtain Off &On using **Direct** setting on switch, not sure if she was looking at it or just glancing at it.
2. – Really enjoyed the light spinning top in the bowl- asked for ‘more’.
3. – Magic light projector & UV light briefly interested.

**Listen:** Activities enjoyed or not:

1. Liked the Key board using left hand to take turns to play.
2. Big favourite was the drum, turn taking tapping the drum.

 **Touch:** Activities enjoyed or not:

1. When XXXXXXXX is interested in an activity she will reach out and touch.
2. When using the drum and switches XXXXXXX operated these for long periods of time; mainly because she liked them, smiling as she used them.

**Communicate:** Activities enjoyed or not:

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1. XXXXXXXX communicates her **likes** very clearly, she smiles, claps her hands, vocalises and reaches out to touch when she is enjoying the activity.
2. Shows her dislike by: pushing it away, not reaching out, looking as if she is asleep or switching off.

Additional comments: XXXXXXX was engaged throughout the session even if it was by ‘just’ glancing at the fibro-optics. It will be useful for XXXXXXX to have a functional vision assessment (FVA)as it wasn’t clear, what& how she was looking and seeing without doing a FVA.

**Induction Carried out by: Lina Graham (QTVI, DB/MSI, SLD& PMLD).**

**Trustee Kingston Mencap At Kingston Mencap, Sensory Room**

[**Address**](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=kingston+mencap+address&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LVT9c3NEyLNym2yCoz1pLNTrbSz8lPTizJzM-DM6wSU1KKUouLF7GKZ2fmpReX5Ocp5KbmJScWKEBlAFnJZE9KAAAA&ludocid=14979511185470315471&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjt0d_5p43wAhVEtnEKHfl0BngQ6BMwEHoECBYQAg)**:**Searchlight Centre, New Malden KT3 3RX [**Phone**](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=kingston+mencap+phone&ludocid=14979511185470315471&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjt0d_5p43wAhVEtnEKHfl0BngQ6BMwEXoECBEQAg)**:**[020 8546 2837](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=kingston+Mencap&source=hp&ei=iAp_YJmfBI3aUpXFiOAP&iflsig=AINFCbYAAAAAYH8YmMm3S3Ld4gPyMkdL0lMw3-Chl73t&oq=kingston+Mencap&gs_lcp=Cgdnd3Mtd2l6EAMyCwguEMcBEK8BEJMCMgIIADIGCAAQFhAeOgUILhCTAjoICC4QxwEQrwE6CAguEMcBEKMCOgIILjoFCAAQyQNQxSFYqFNg62FoAHAAeACAAVqIAaMIkgECMTWYAQCgAQGqAQdnd3Mtd2l6&sclient=gws-wiz&ved=0ahUKEwiZg8vzp43wAhUNrRQKHZUiAvwQ4dUDCAo&uact=5)

 Email: lina.graham@kingstonmencap.org.uk

June 2021 – so far I have done 6 inductions of participants who use the KM clubs and Inducted about 15 staff, carers and Trustees – Nobody is allowed to use the Kingston Mencap Sensory Room with out doing the Induction (teacher me I have a register of all the people who have had the Induction).

 I couldn’t have achieved any of this without the help of Michelle, the wonderful supportive but questioning Trustees and of course Peter. Let’s see how it evolves but at least I used my Lockdown constructively.

Lina Graham

Retired Teacher.