

The Mag

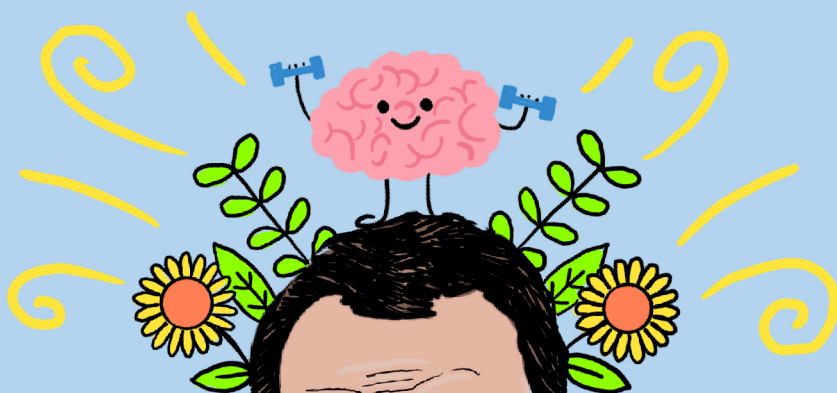


MacIntyre

Providing support...your way

macintyrethemag.org

Issue Six 2015



Inside
Rory
talks...

Well Being

**This edition of The Mag is brought to
you by...**





The Mag



Welcome to The Mag

Welcome to Issue Six of The Mag! Inside, you'll find Rory's top wellbeing tips to keep your body and mind healthy, Molly from Warrington sharing her inspiring volunteer journey, and all the latest from our Co-Pro's tour. Dive in — we hope you enjoy every story!

Sui-Ling





Rory's Stories.

***In this issue Rory
talks about his
struggles with
mental health and
offers tips to help
deal with this...***

Good mental health is important to me because it helps keep me motivated in my everyday life. I put my passion into mental health and contribute through the work

I do because of my past struggles. Because of my autism, I faced many challenges after Covid, as I struggled to accept that I wasn't going to get back one of the things I loved — my job. I missed the people I worked with because we were like family, and the hardest thing was that we never got to say our proper goodbyes. It happened suddenly; I felt like everything was snatched away from me when I was made redundant from my barista role at Debenhams. Fast forward to now, and I am proud to be working at M&S Gemini in the café, continuing my barista role once again.



Positive steps I took to improve my mental health -

1. I Started doing some volunteering work in a community food bank.
2. I used my passion for cycling to set up a Cycling Social group to help others.
3. I started sharing my Mental Health journey with local Mental Health support groups , Including Offload and More Than Men and delivered my story to students at the local college and University .

Rory's Top Tip's for Good Mental Health -

- Do the Things that you enjoy.
- Always Check up on your friends.
- Open up to the people that you trust.



***In this issue Molly from Warrington
tells us about her inspirational journey
starting as a volunteer in 2021...***

Volunteering can change lives in ways we don't always expect. For me, stepping into Green Lane School in 2021 was the beginning of a journey I never imagined — one that taught me about autism, friendship, and the power of community, as well as helping me understand my own sensory needs.

Over three years, I worked in different classes, learning from both the children and the staff, and discovering a passion I never knew I had. I was also able to attend training through the school, including Team Teach and Makaton. Having autism, ADHD, dyspraxia, a learning disability, and hypomobility has only made me stronger and more determined to teach others what it is like to live with a disability, while also challenging boundaries and opening doors for others.





Back in 2018, I started a small friendship group. At first, only a few people came along, but now it has grown to more than 20 members. With the help of Pete Connor, the group opened doors not only for me but also for others across Warrington. Together, we have worked to reduce social isolation and give people with autism and learning disabilities a voice in their community. Through Macintyre's great communities, we have helped to inspire other groups too.

Working at Green Lane, and learning about autism with support from Mike Gaskell, has changed how I see the world. I've realised that Macintyre's friendship groups and social activities aren't just nice extras- they are life-changing.

They give people with autism and a learning disability the chance to belong, make friends, and feel proud of who they are. Being part of this has made me proud too, and it's shown me how powerful community and connection really are.

In 2023, I became a midday assistant at Green Lane Special School. With encouragement from Laura Owen, one of the class teachers, and Lynn, the school's former deputy head, I began my Level 2 Teaching Assistant course at Warrington Vale College in autumn 2023. Thanks to the support of Laura and my class team, including Hailey Chadwick, I completed the course in October 2024. Soon after, I was offered a six-month contract in the Early Years team. Today, I am proud to be a permanent member of staff, working 1:1 in Key Stage 1.

Being diagnosed with autism at 31 was life-changing. It finally helped me understand myself. The guidance and knowledge I received from Mike Gaskell and Laura Owen at Green Lane made all the difference, and I feel so privileged to have them both in my life. Lauren, the ASD assessor at Willis House, also made the experience easy and supportive for me.

The support of colleagues like Sarah Irwin, Alison Wright, Lorna Smith, and especially Pete Connor at MacIntyre made me feel part of a big family. Their encouragement gave me the confidence to keep going. They have supported me emotionally, reminded me I am seen for who I am, and allowed me to simply be myself.



One of my proudest moments was receiving the Dimensions Award for Learning Disability and Friendship in 2020. This award recognised the importance of friendship and the value of creating safe spaces where people with autism and learning disabilities can connect, belong, and reduce isolation.

My journey shows that with support, determination, and friendship, we can all find our place and truly thrive. I want to inspire future generations to believe in themselves, break down barriers, and know that they belong.

Quote from Deputy Head Teacher, Sarah Irwin:

"Molly's journey is nothing short of inspirational. From founding the Friendship Group during Covid to supporting adults with learning disabilities, to volunteering in classes at Green Lane School, she has shown remarkable dedication and compassion every step of the way. Her commitment led her to a role as an MDA, and through continued volunteering and the completion of her TA qualifications, she has now secured a well-deserved position as a 1:1 Teaching Assistant."

Molly has a natural way with the children and young people across the school — her warmth, patience, and understanding shine through in everything she does. She is an incredibly hard-working member of the team, always eager to learn, develop her skills, and provide the best support possible to both staff and pupils. It is a privilege to work alongside Molly at Green Lane School and to witness all that she has achieved and continues to accomplish."





Gardening in the community with Lewis and Sarah.



The Garden Gang has had yet another fabulous year! Not only are they outstanding gardeners, but they're also multi-talented and bring huge amounts of laughter to everything they try. It's been a very busy year of gardening and creating new features, and, as always, having so much fun while developing new skills along the way.


A few special highlights during 2025 have been:

- Taking part in a Warrington Speak Up film, Do You See Me? — a celebration of the lives, contributions, and achievements of local people with a learning disability living in Warrington. We highly recommend watching this inspirational film:


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaLud64or88>



Scan this code
to see film →




We also held our first plant and bug box sale at an Easter Fair, had the opportunity to host the Co-op for The Great Big Green Week event, and enjoyed several visits within our community, doing what we love most — helping others improve their gardens. We also had great fun creating a silk-dyed flag featuring our own designs with the Batida Rio Samba drumming band as part of the Warrington Arts Festival.



We have been so lucky to have had many visits from local companies volunteering their time and skills to help improve our gardens around The Old School. Each visit gives us the opportunity to shine and show how skilful we are — all while planting, potting, growing, composting, and weeding!

CONGRATULATIONS!



We entered Britain in Bloom with the RHS North West for the It's Your Neighbourhood award again, marking our fourth year running. We had an amazing day at the awards ceremony, achieving another Outstanding – Level 5, and were both shocked and humbled to receive an additional very special award. Out of all the entries in our category across the North West, we were recognised with the 2025 Award for Best New Landscape! As you can see from our faces in the photos, all the hours of hard work, dedication, teamwork, development, fun, laughter, and sometimes chaos have truly paid off — we are absolutely thriving!

With every new member, our friendships grow stronger, and the Garden Gang is determined to make 2026 even more exciting!

Mag Writer Nathan continues his four part article about his experiences visiting airports and flying..

The Bird's-eye
view to
accessibility.
Part Two

"In the airports around the world, as a man who's been traveling since I was young, I've had a wide and varied collection of experiences. Over the past 15 years I've been asking myself the big question of how accessible are airports, aircrafts and the path to and from them, are for people with disabilities?"

I must say, I think the facilities on board all aircraft are frankly too small for all passengers, especially those with physical disabilities or restricted mobility. There are two main issues. Firstly, the doors open in the wrong direction and are an awkward shape. As a consequence, I have to rely on a cabin crew member to hold the door open while I, along with a family member, struggle to enter the tight space and close the door while positioning myself to reach the toilet.

My second serious issue is that the space inside the toilets is negligible. Additionally, there are no grab rails, which means I cannot hold myself in position — this is not acceptable. I also believe that the facilities in baby-changing rooms are equally tight, with insufficient space for anyone. This would make it very difficult for babies or passengers who wear pads or other continence equipment to be changed during the flight, which I believe is both undignified and unpleasant for them and for other passengers.

In my opinion, a strong possible solution would be to remove a row of seats and extend at least one bathroom on each plane. I personally think this is unlikely to happen for two reasons: reducing the number of seats would mean losing two to four passengers per aircraft, and the cost of transforming the facilities would deter many airlines.



I suggest that many people with disabilities have been deterred from flying due to inaccessibility. I find myself looking at the future of flying and thinking I may never fly again because of the inadequate facilities.

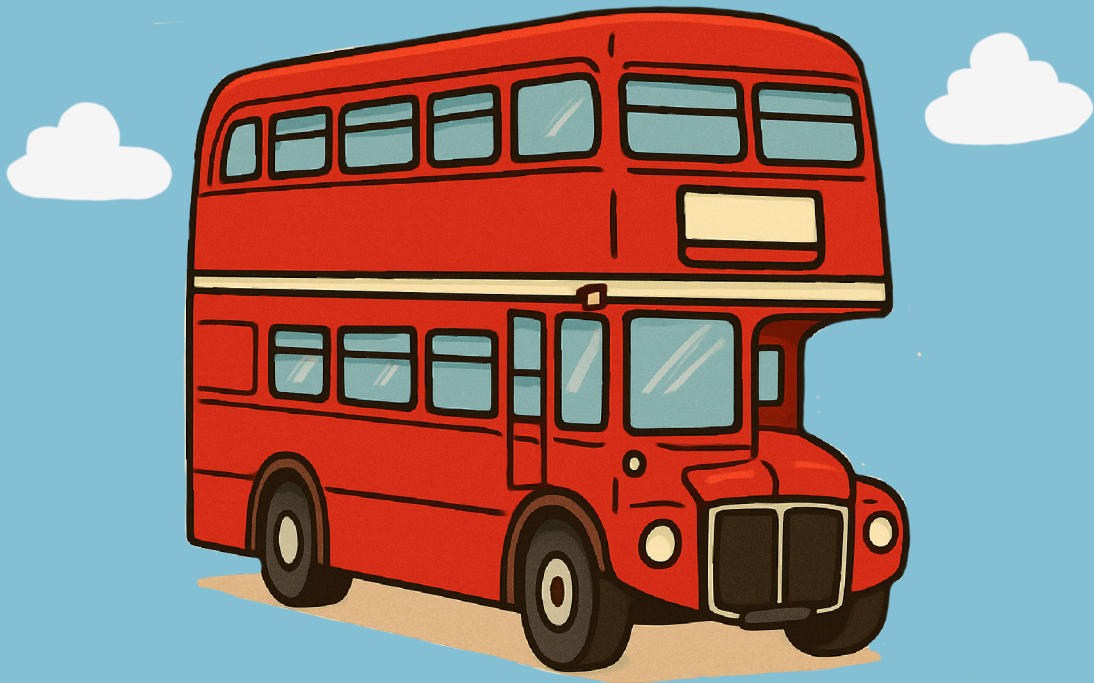
Airline Safety

Under international law, all flights must provide a safety briefing before takeoff, which is demonstrated by the air crew. Some airlines provide a video on the screen in front of you or a pamphlet in the seat pocket. I believe these are very hard to reach under the chair without obstructing others, which is a significant safety issue during passenger evacuation.

Due to my mobility limitations, I find it difficult and uncomfortable for others to lift me. This raises the question: How can people like me use an evacuation slide?

In the event of cabin pressure dropping, oxygen masks are released from the panel above your head. During the safety briefing, passengers are shown how to use the mask. If I were to travel alone without assistance, I could not reach it unless it dropped lower. I would also struggle to fit it around my head correctly, making it challenging to wear it appropriately in an emergency.





Buses

As some of my support team members cannot drive, I am a fairly frequent user of public buses. Over the years, I have encountered a number of awkward and challenging situations, not least the difficulty of positioning my wheelchair correctly. This is primarily due to the large poles on many older buses, which greatly reduce the available space. Additionally, there is usually only one space allocated for wheelchair users. If this is already occupied, passengers may have to wait for another bus, which can take some time — particularly inconvenient in bad weather.

Another challenge is that some people can be unkind or impatient, especially when waiting for passengers like myself to get into position, which is unacceptable and contributes to why I am not a massive fan of buses.

Despite these challenges, there are many positives to using buses. They are affordable and frequent, providing excellent opportunities for people to access local shops and facilities. They also offer a method of independence for anyone who cannot drive or would otherwise rely on friends or family. I also believe that, in the vast majority of cases, bus drivers are extremely friendly and accommodating, which goes a long way toward making public transport a more positive experience and helps reduce my anxiety about using buses.

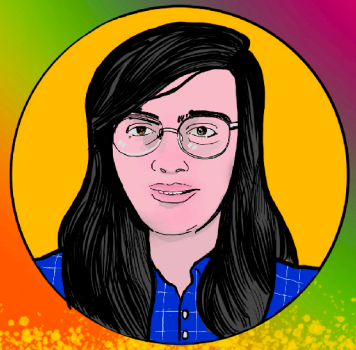
Trains

I visited Chesterfield train station to assess its accessibility for myself in a wheelchair and to explore the possibility of travelling by train. I was impressed from the moment of arrival. All my observations are based on a single visit at 2 pm on a Wednesday. There is level access upon arrival, automatic doors, and a clear display of the station layout on a map. I spoke to the ticket staff, who answered all my questions about accessibility. I also took a brief look at Platform 1 to see how I could board the train. To access the other platforms, there is a tiled tunnel with a modern lift on either side.

I picked up an EMR (East Midlands Railway) pamphlet called Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers. If you are travelling alone or need extra help, you can pre-book assistance online or by phone to ensure support is available when you arrive. You can also turn up and request support on the day, but there may be a longer wait if pre-booked passengers are being assisted. EMR will also call ahead to let your destination know you need help.

EMR is compliant with the Sunflower Lanyard scheme. They can also provide a card called the EMR Talk Card, which informs staff that you need extra time to speak and patience. You are able to book seats ahead of time, and staff can assist you to your seat if required. While you cannot pre-book railway spaces for wheelchairs on the train, 4–6 slots are generally available. There is a fully accessible toilet on board this carriage.





THE AUTISM NETWORK with Jess Sutton

Hi! My name is Jess, and I am the Autism and Self-Advocacy Lead for MacIntyre.

As 2025 comes to a close, I thought it would be nice to look back on everything we have achieved at the Autism Network. In our online network, we have discussed many topics, from how autism is represented in the media to ways we can support ourselves and each other in our day-to-day lives. We have learned a lot together and welcomed many new voices.

In Warrington, at our in-person network, we have come together as a community to build a friendly, welcoming space where all autistic people can be themselves. We have had guests come in to teach and share their experiences. Together, we have developed our knowledge and skills and made plenty of friends along the way!





Chris Bonello

As well as our networks, we have the Autism Special Interest Groups. These are large online events where speakers from outside Macintyre come to share their experiences and skills. We had Chris Bonello, a professional autism advocate, talk to us about his journey with employment and navigating the world as an autistic person. We also had Cary Amato, an autistic actor, speak about his mental health journey.

Looking ahead to next year, we will have even more meetings and events, and you are more than welcome to join! I would love to see you there. To get involved, check out the events page on the Macintyre website. You can also email me at jess.sutton@macintyrecharity.org if you have any questions or need any help. See you soon!



Scan this code to sign up for our next Autism Network meeting. It would be great to see you there.



SCAN ME



ON TOUR by Sui-Ling

During November and December, the Best Practice Team, including myself, have been travelling around the country visiting MacIntyre hubs to help set up self-advocacy groups in their area. Self-advocacy is all about speaking up for yourself and the things that matter most to you, and our goal is to make sure everyone supported by MacIntyre has their voice heard. So far, we've visited Bedford, Leicester, Oxford, St Albans, and Warrington — and it has been amazing!

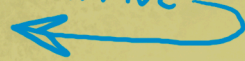
At each hub, we spent time talking with people about what really matters in their lives. We used worksheets and our new Chat Mat, a fun tool that uses pictures to communicate for people who are unable to write. People were also invited to share their ideas and important priorities in our letterbox, helping us make sure their voices guide what we do next. It's been inspiring to see so many people getting involved and excited about self-advocacy!

We had a great day at Kennington in Oxford





Iain and Meg in Bedford waiting for everyone to arrive



Asking questions from my chat show cards at Station Road in St Albans



Susan at Crosby Close using our new chat mat



WELL BEING

I4T fund raise for Ashgate Hospice.

On 17th September, i4t, Staveley, Holmewood, and Queens Park teamed up for a sponsored walk from Friends Meeting House to Ashgate Hospice — and what a day it was! Decked out in t-shirts and armed with donation buckets, we set off with big smiles. At the hospice, staff treated us to drinks, cakes, and biscuits, and we had a lovely chat, took a group photo, and then walked back.

We also learned how to set up a JustGiving page and asked friends and family to sponsor us. We were pros at rattling our buckets — especially for passing workmen! Everyone had a blast, and we raised an amazing £693.97 for a great cause!



WELL BEING

Charlottes London adventure

On 1st October, I went to London with my Mum and Dad to see Oliver! the musical. We caught the coach from Slacks Coach Depot in Matlock and stayed in a lovely hotel near the River Thames. The show was fantastic — I especially liked the actor who played Fagin, as I recognized him from the film Nativity!

The next day, we had breakfast and then went off to explore on our own. We crossed the Thames on a cable car and took the Tube to Westminster, where we saw the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben striking eleven. We spotted horses in Whitehall and visited the Cenotaph. Walking through St James's Park, we saw pelicans and ended up at Buckingham Palace.

We met the coach at 3 pm and headed home, full of memories from an amazing London adventure!





Olivia's London adventure.

I caught the train to London with my Mum, Dad, and my niece Evie (9). We had lots of fun playing Uno on the way! When we arrived, we went to Covent Garden for lunch and then walked across the bridge over the River Thames to the London Eye. At the Houses of Parliament, we stopped for a photo.

After dinner, we went to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane to see the Disney musical Hercules. We also visited Westminster Bridge, Westminster Abbey, Whitehall, and Trafalgar Square. At the British Museum, we explored Egyptian mummies and admired Greek statues, including Hercules himself. It was an action-packed day full of sights, fun, and memories!

TAKE 
NOTICE

WELL BEING

Sharon scarpers to Scarborough



I had a lovely, busy week in Scarborough with my support worker. We stayed in Cayton Bay, which was very peaceful. When we first arrived, we unpacked and relaxed a bit before heading out in the evening to enjoy bingo and entertainment.

During the days, we went out for chips and ice cream — but had to watch out for seagulls dive-bombing us for our food! We visited Filey, where I had my photo taken with the fisherman statue, and I even paddled in the sea, feeling the sand between my toes. We also explored Bridlington Market.

In Filey, we saw a statue of a seal called Bonzo. He's a recycling seal — people put their cans and plastic bottles in a slot under his head, and they are collected at the bottom. This helps stop rubbish ending up on the seafront or in the sea.



WELL BEING

Leannnder becomes a Auntie.

In September my sister Laurie had a baby boy called Aster. He is gorgeous. He is my first nephew and I was sooooo excited to be and auntie. He has ginger hair like his mum and dad. He cries a lot but loves having cuddles. I love to sit and cuddle him. I cant wait to read him stories and play toys with him.



Home and Hobbies by Jenyth Elcombe.

I live independently on my own, and I'm really enjoying it. It's my choice to live this way, and I love playing my CDs and dancing in my lounge. I also have a tablet for colour-by-numbers and games, and I write in my diary every day — although sometimes I forget!

I enjoy watching TV programmes like Law and Order, Hollyoaks, and The Big Bang Theory. On weekends, I like watching DVDs, and sometimes I have a beer in moderation. I have a keyworker, Calley, and sometimes we go out for a meal together. Next month, I'm planning to go Christmas shopping for my flat.



WELL BEING

Gemma goes swimming

I book my swimming tickets the day before and travel to Pon's Forge by bus, train, and on foot. We go for the 12:30 pm slot, which gives plenty of time to get ready for the session. I need support from staff because of my disability and coordination, including help getting into the pool. Once I'm in, I'm off — staff just have to keep up with me!

BE ACTIVE



The Mag



JustGiving



The Mag is free for everyone at MacIntyre but if you would like to donate anything you can afford to help us cover our costs, please scan the code above. We will give you a shout out in a future issue.

The Mag team

The Mag



What's inside?



**THE AUTISM
NETWORK**
with Jess Sutton



ON TOUR



**Rory's
Stories.**



...And much more !

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