

## Mencap Sports Opportunities Felixstowe Town Council Grant Report

Mencap Sports Opportunities is, we believe, the only group of its kind in Felixstowe and surrounding area. Thanks to this group, adults and young people with additional needs can access taster sessions of some sports in and around their local area, thus travel is not a problem for them.

We have access to the Mencap mini-bus, which enables us to take our members further afield. We have had up to 14 members in our group, presently however, we have 6 regular attendees. Our group age range starts at 12 years old but has no end age. This means that the members decide when they feel confident enough to know it is time for them to move on and maybe attend one of the taster sports they have experienced full time. It is their decision.

As a group, we have never applied for any grants and so we were so privileged to receive this award from the Town Council as we have always struggled for funds. We are a self-funding group and we usually try and have one sponsored event each year. The money we raise enables us to pay for some of the activities our members are fond of. However, some of the activities, such as archery and horse riding, are very expensive and therefore we are limited on how and when we do them.

Thanks to the Town Council grant we have this year been able to pay for six sessions of Archery, four of which we have already had. Our experts for these sessions are the 'Blue Arrows' who are based in Ipswich at Northgate Sports Centre. Alun and Rob are the instructors at our sessions and they have commented on the improvements they have seen in the confidence and skills of our group. We, the leaders, also take part. Our members actually have a better aim than us!



Alun and Rob- Blue Arrows instructors, setting up the targets.



Geoff having one-to-one tuition with Alun.

Our next archery session is in June and if any of the councillors connected with the grant would like to see how the sessions are run, you would be most welcome to come along.



Waiting to collect the arrows after everyone has finished shooting. Andrews skills have improved greatly with each session. Lots of strength and control needed.



Matthew and Andrew talking to Rob about the arrows and being shown how to hold the bow correctly.

The rest of our grant is to be used for horse-riding experiences. These are the most expensive sessions and cost up to £200 for 3 hours for our members as a group. We are trying to book these now that the warmer weather has arrived. We are waiting to confirm times and dates with the stables.

We have had one previous session at the stables and it was so beneficial to our members that we felt we desperately needed more sessions like this. The stables are looking at when would be the best time for our members to attend, maybe when they are not so busy with other members of the public. Some of our members are worried about contact with such large animals. However, on our previous visit everyone groomed and sat on a horse. Such confidence after only a short time. Our members have been asking for more of these sessions and the £600 from the grant will give us an outstanding experience of a lifetime.

We meet once a month and have lots of space available for new members. If you know of anyone with additional needs who would benefit from sports taster sessions, then please contact us for our programme dates and times. Contact info is: [vicki.ayriss@btinternet.com](mailto:vicki.ayriss@btinternet.com)

Finally, we would like to thank Felixstowe Town Council for all of their support with the amazing grant they awarded us, it is still working hard for us with activities and being spent wisely, as well as enhancing the leisure and social time of members of the community with additional needs.

Vicki and Kate Ayriss and all members of Mencap Sports Opportunities.



A little break to rest our arms and hands.



Supported by  
Felixstowe Town  
Council.