

# Challengers

— Serious about fun for all disabled children and young people —

## Impact Report 2020

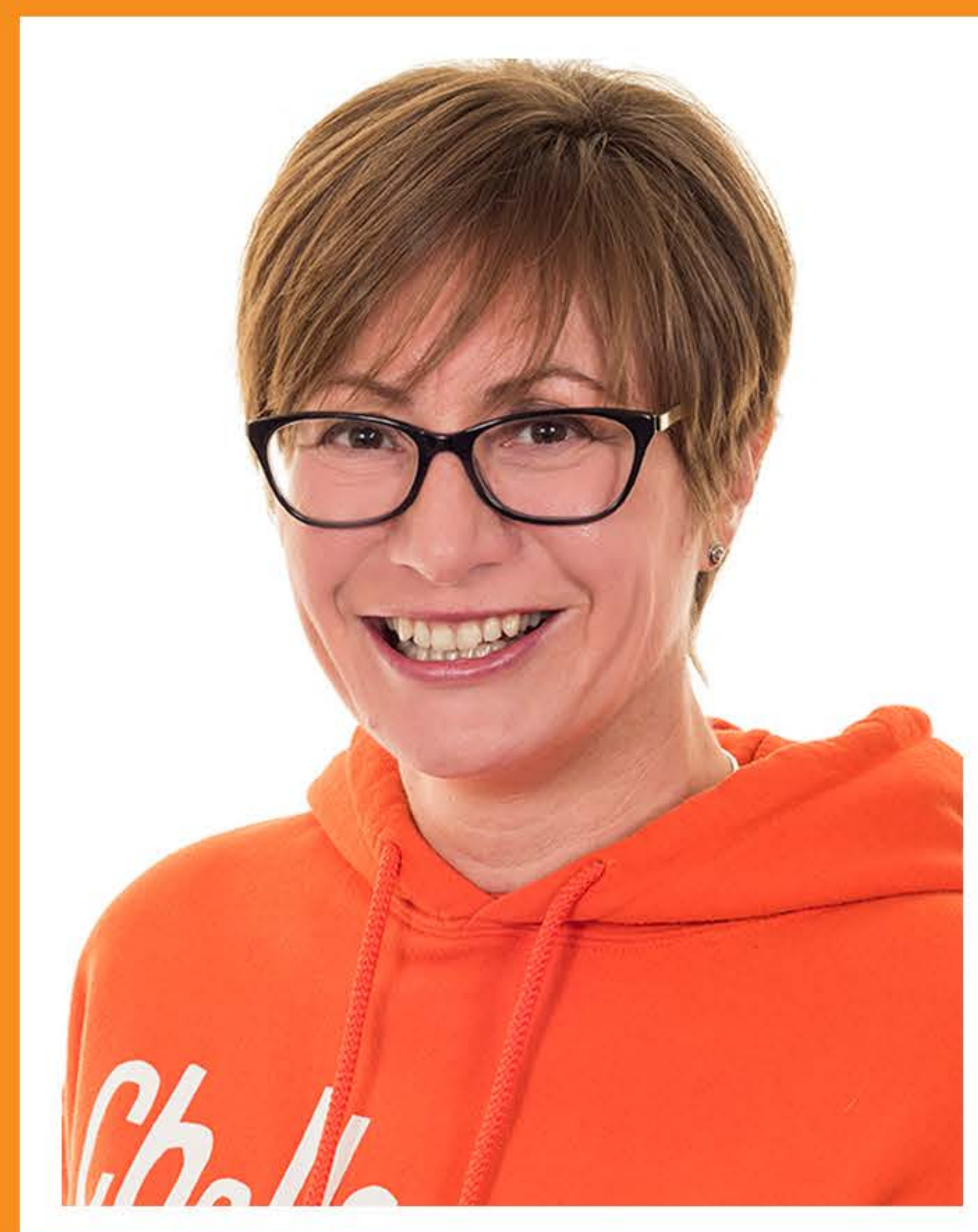
A year like no other...



# Introduction

## Amanda Matthews

### Acting CEO



Since taking up the position of Acting CEO from the end of March, when the coronavirus pandemic first came to light, I can wholeheartedly say that I have been blown away by the hard work, commitment, and enduring support of the Challengers staff and supporters.

The complexities brought on by COVID-19, which still continue to challenge us, have tested all of us in ways we never expected or even thought possible, however Team Orange has approached the situation with positivity, creativity, and the determination to get schemes safely up and running again.

We've enjoyed seeing friends of Challengers take on amazing fundraising challenges and attend virtual and socially distanced events throughout the year, all to support the charity to continue its important work. I am so very proud that despite everything that has been thrown at us, together we have been able to adapt to adversity and deliver vital services for disabled children, young people and their families throughout the pandemic.

Even though it's impossible to put into words just how much everyone's support means to us, a year like this calls for some extra special thanks to everyone who has kept Challengers going strong.

First of all, I'd like to say a huge thank you to all members of Challengers staff for everything they have done this year. Without you, we couldn't do what we do, and every day you continue to inspire and amaze me.

Secondly, I'd like to thank Challengers' incredible Trustees for their straight-forward governance and for helping to steer us through these strange times, keeping us on a safe and clear path into 2021.

And last but by no means least, I'd like to thank our wonderful supporters. The support we have received from our local communities, funders and partners, under the stewardship of our amazing fundraising team, has been overwhelming during this period, and many, many families' lives have been enhanced by your generosity.

Thank you all, and I hope you enjoy our year in review!

*Amanda Matthews*

# 2020 in numbers...



## March – November 2020

Impact of COVID-19...

843   
sessions cancelled

896   
in-person sessions run

84   
virtual sessions run

23   
fundraising events  
cancelled or postponed

37   
YouTube videos created to  
keep children entertained  
during lockdown

496   
Facebook posts to  
keep people in the  
loop and entertained

...despite this setback, we  
found ways to adapt and  
deliver a service

124   
litres of hand  
sanitiser used

?   
countless hours spent on  
Zoom calls!





# #SaveOrangeSchemes

## Our Emergency Appeal

In March 2020 we found ourselves in a strange and previously unimaginable situation – a national lockdown. We were devastated to have to close Challengers schemes and see the isolation that we've fought so hard to end for disabled children and their families become an upsetting daily reality.

No one knew how long the lockdown would go on for, but one thing we did know was that within just a few months, we would see a significant shortfall of £150,000 from the forced cancellation of our fundraising events and activities. Like many charities, businesses and individuals, the unprecedented impact of the coronavirus pandemic hit Challengers hard and had an immediate effect on our financial position, leaving the future of the charity seemingly in the balance.

We rely on donations for half of our yearly income, and we knew that without this funding we simply wouldn't be able to continue our work. But that wasn't an option. Challengers services are a lifeline for thousands of families across the South, so we knew that when the threat of the pandemic had passed, we had to be in a position where we could re-open schemes to provide vital play and social opportunities for our young people.

In early April we started an emergency appeal on Crowdfunder and asked people to help us #SaveOrangeSchemes. We didn't know how people would respond, but the support we received was overwhelming.

**Over 1140 people donated towards the campaign and we raised an incredible £67,748!**



“ The support shown for our appeal has been phenomenal. Supporters set up virtual raffles and events, took on running and cycling challenges, and even shaved their heads to raise money to help save orange schemes, which is testament to how much the community values Challengers and the important service we provide for disabled children and their families. ”

Jen Corless, Senior Marketing and Communications Manager



## Challengers Emergency Appeal

### #SaveOrangeSchemes

For 40 years, Challengers has been breaking down barriers to play by providing safe spaces for disabled children and young people to have fun and make friends.

Today, our charity and our Challengers family face an unprecedented threat. The isolation that we have fought so hard to end for disabled young people and their families is now an upsetting, daily reality.

**"Your isolation will last a few months, my child's could last a lifetime."**

When the pandemic threat has passed, we must be in a position to re-open as many services as we can, providing vital play and social opportunities for our young people, and giving their families access to crucial respite from their care responsibilities.

We need your help. The coronavirus pandemic has had an immediate and unimaginable impact on our financial position, leaving the future of Challengers in the balance.

We rely on donations for half of our yearly income. Within just a few months, we are seeing a shortfall of £150,000 directly from cancelled fundraising events and activities.

Without this vital funding, the charity simply will not survive. It is crucial that Challengers continues as a lifeline of support to the thousands of families that depend on us.

**We're asking everyone reading this letter to ask 5 friends to donate £5 to our appeal.**

For our young people and their families, please help to #SaveOrangeSchemes.

- Amanda Matthews, Acting CEO of Challengers & Team Orange



478 shares



46,213 people reached



## Prevent isolation! Challengers Emergency Appeal



Project by Challengers



£67,748

+ est. £12208.75 giftaid

1140

supporters

Donate



## In the media...



ITV News filmed a report about how we were coping during the pandemic. Aired on primetime television, the report featured interviews with our Acting CEO, Amanda Matthews, and Parent Ambassador Charlie Murton.



Scan to watch  
our ITV feature!



# Our COVID-19 Response Team



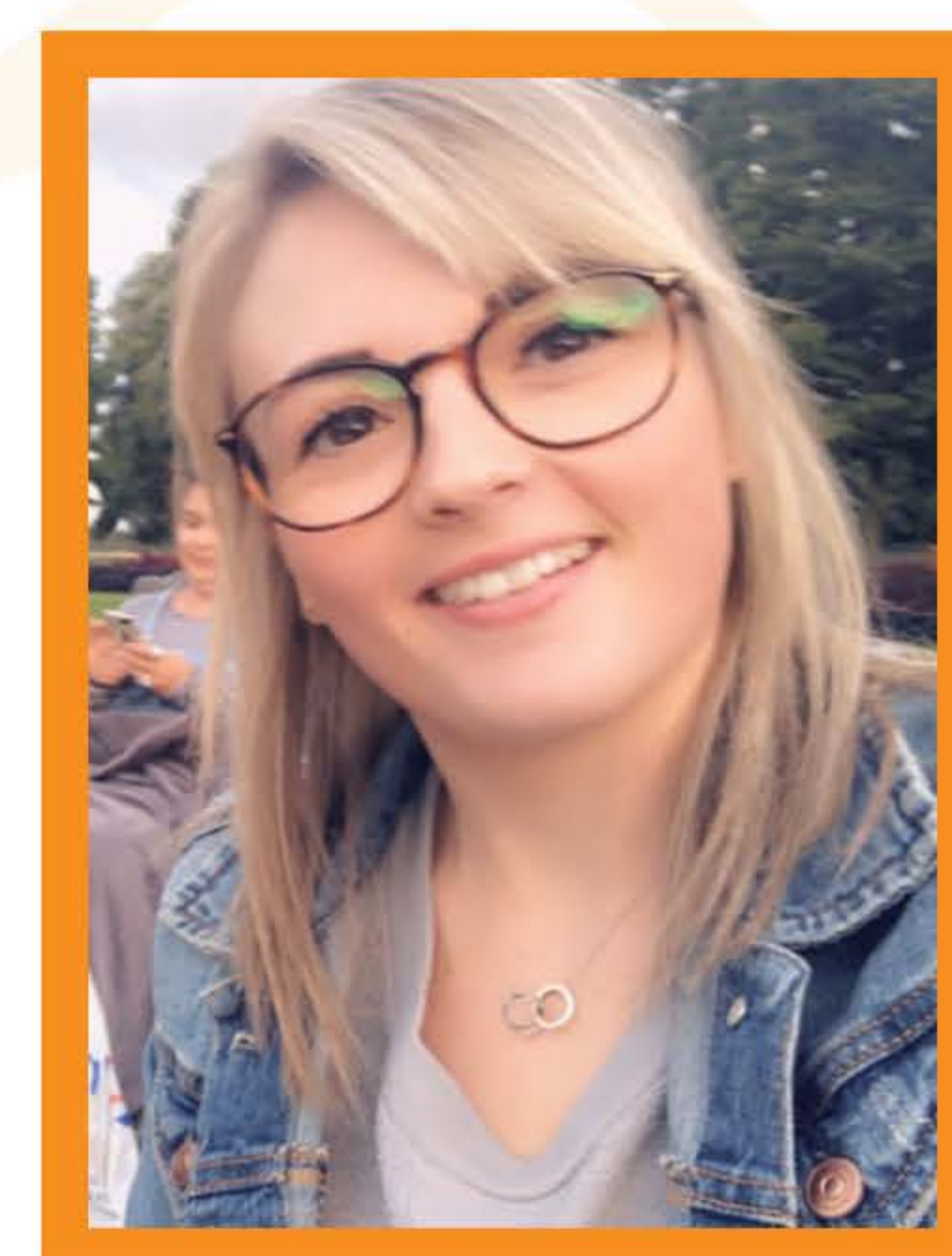
**Ella, Training Manager**

## Not all superheroes wear capes...

Though not quite as exciting as the Avengers, our COVID-19 Response Team “assembled” at the end of March 2020 to devise a plan for how we could safely re-open our schemes. With ever-changing government restrictions and the complex medical conditions of our disabled children and young people to consider, this was no mean feat, but the team quickly got to work and implemented new and creative solutions to get schemes up and running again.

### New policies and procedures

Shannon and Ella spent countless hours researching and reading government guidelines and created a COVID-19 manual for Challengers staff with the help of a volunteer Compliance Consultant, full to the brim with new policies and procedures for operating our schemes. The manual constantly needs to be reviewed, so each week they go through updates with staff to ensure that they understand the new policies and are compliant with all of the new procedures, as this is integral to keeping children and staff safe.



**Shannon, Health & Safety and Facilities Officer**

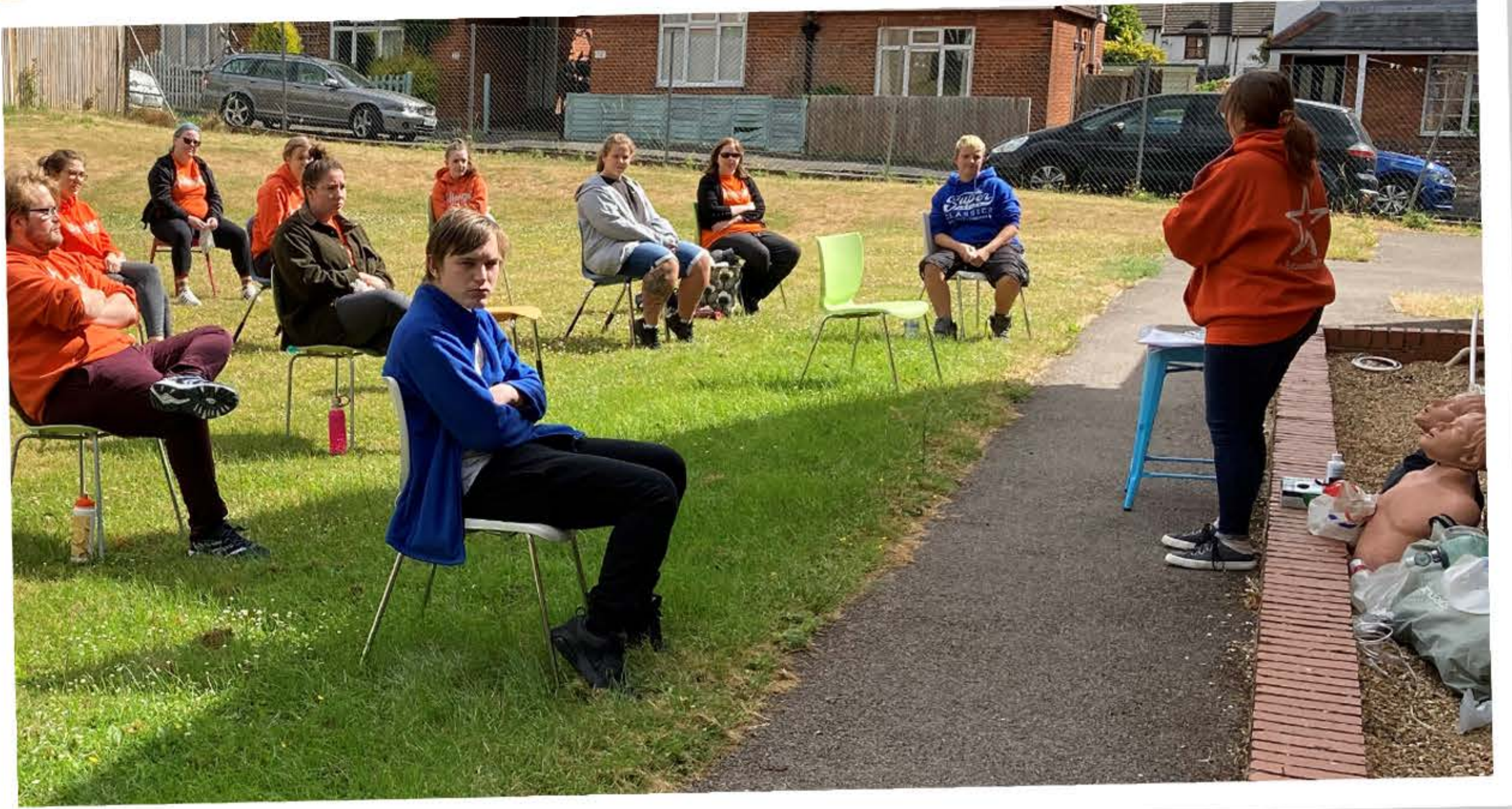
### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Our amazing Nurse Trainer Debbie spent much of early lockdown training doctors and nurses on the front line in proper use of PPE, before training our Play and Youth workers to the same standard and ensuring they can put PPE on and take it off safely...it's harder than it looks! Alongside this, she's been training staff in new first aid equipment and resuscitation procedures, and kitted everyone up with their very own bumbag filled with PPE and cleaning materials.



**Debbie, Nurse Trainer**





### Risk assessments and audits

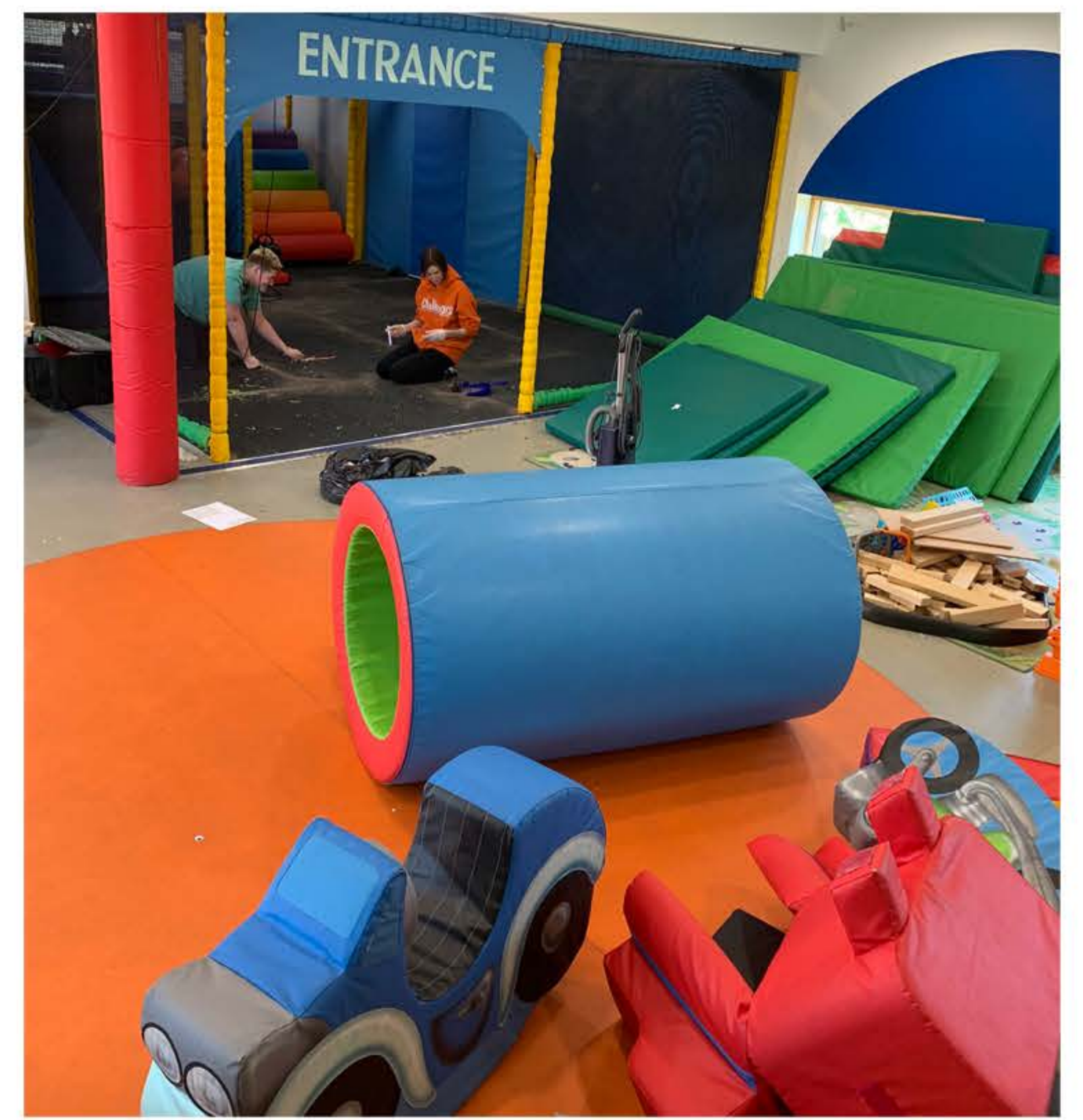
The team have been preparing individual risk assessments for each scheme and visiting schemes weekly to check that the highest health and safety standards are being maintained, and that new procedures are being followed correctly. Getting used to a new way of working is tricky, but our staff teams have taken it in their stride and are gaining knowledge and confidence with each day that goes by.

### Updated training

As Training Manager, Ella has been in high demand delivering lots of new training on topics like safeguarding, moving people and behaviour support which takes into account enhanced COVID-19 risks. The lack of routine during lockdown was very difficult for disabled children to adapt to, leading to the emergence of challenging behaviours in many of the children we support, so thorough and relevant staff training on how to handle this has been more important than ever.

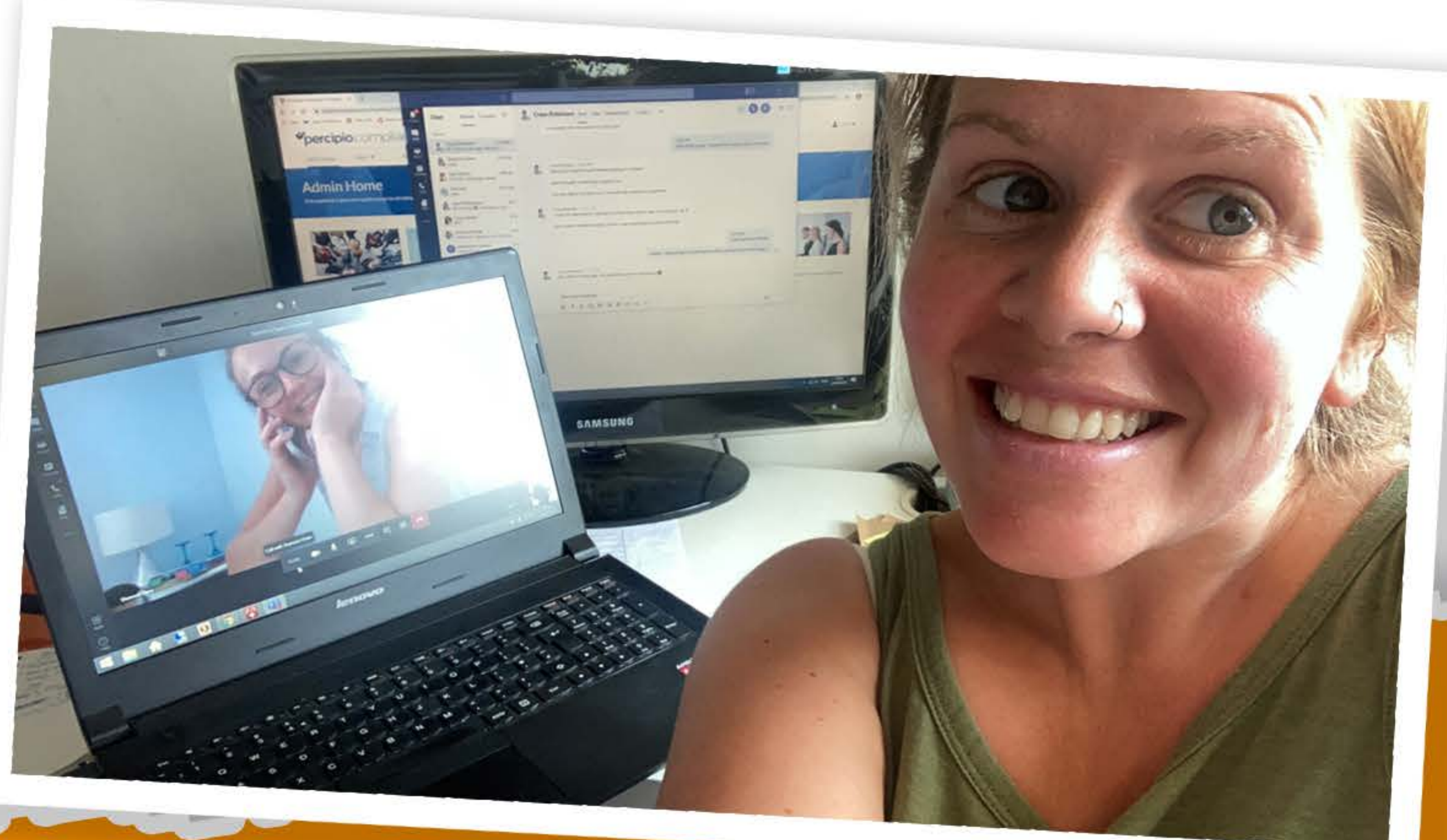
### ...and a whole lot of cleaning and tidying

The team have been busy with multiple deep cleans of our buildings, as well as the mammoth task of getting the office ready for staff to return and work safely. Kelly's Storage provided shredding bags and storage boxes for free which has been a huge help.



“It's been an extremely busy and tiring few months, but we're extremely proud to have got Challengers services up and running as quickly as we have done given the circumstances. All of the hours of risk assessments, training and audits are worth it when you see the children playing and enjoying themselves.”

Ella, Training Manager



# A big orange THANK YOU!

2020 has been more challenging than we ever could have imagined, but thanks to our amazing staff and supporters we've been able to continue our vital work.

This page is dedicated to showing our gratitude for some of our wonderful supporters – we couldn't have done it without you!

## Our Pre-school heroes!

Thank you to the Guildford Pre-school team who offered services for keyworker children and worked tirelessly to keep them happy and safe throughout the lockdown in April.

Other play staff also worked extremely hard to deep clean our centres and prepare resources for families at home.



## Kelly's Storage & Charity Events

Kelly's organised a number of virtual sports fundraising challenges including 'Walk Together, Apart' and 'Run The Race', keeping people active throughout lockdown and raising vital funds for us. In total, the events raised over £14,000 for Challengers!

They also moved and stored items from our offices and playfloors to help us increase space and safely welcome people back into our centres.



## Face Masks from the community

We'd like to say a huge thank you to the Eastleigh Rotary Club who provided 300 hand-made face masks for our staff, as well as Masks Enchanted who delivered 150 masks to our Guildford Playscheme.

Thank you also to The Make It Studio in Farnham who have been donating profits made from their face masks to us.





### Farnham Waitrose & Partners fundraising

A huge thank you to Waitrose in Farnham who nominated Challengers to be supported by John Lewis' 'Your Partners Through It All Community Fund'! We were one of the lucky 250 charities to receive an amazing £2,000 through their application, and if this wasn't enough Alice and her team also set up a Just Giving Page raising £600 to support Challengers at our time of need. The Farnham store has also supported us through their Green Token scheme, raising an incredible total of £3,266 this year!

### COINS Foundation Grand Tour

The brilliant team at COINS took on an enormous challenge by virtually accumulating the distance from their Dallas office to Sydney, Australia by cycling, walking, running and even travelling by quadricycle! The team raised sponsorship money for the event and reached a staggering total of £7,400 for Challengers! Well done all!



### Local Landmarks Half Marathon heroes

Our brilliant team of London Landmarks Half Marathon runners were devastated when the event, due to take place in March, was cancelled. They were determined not to let their training and fundraising efforts go to waste, so they decided to run 13.1 miles around their own local landmarks instead! In total they raised an incredible £7,832...you are our heroes!

### Community Foundation for Surrey

In April we were extremely grateful to receive a grant of £4,173 from CFS towards essential IT costs which enabled us to continue operating during the pandemic. In addition to this, we received a significant grant of £22,000 towards our Head of Operations' salary to help us adapt our services and continue offering activities safely.



NFU Mutual

### NFU Mutual funding

Thanks to a nomination from their Godalming branch, we received a share of NFU Mutual's £1million national fund to support frontline charities. We've been granted £3,164 to help fund our schemes - thank you!

# A new look for our schemes

If you could be a fly on the wall at one of our Play or Youth schemes, you'd usually see the children and young people getting creative in the kitchen, having water fights, getting messy with goo and slime...you name it! But in order to deliver our schemes in a safe manner, things look a little different at the moment.

## New activities at Guildford Youth: Sophie Reading, Operations Manager

"The young people have been really happy to be back at Challengers and have adjusted to the masks and all the cleaning! I love walking into scheme and suddenly forgetting COVID exists because there are young people and staff running around with massive smiles on their faces.

I am proud to have set up a Sunday session for Guildford Youth, which doubles the opportunities for young people to come each week. I have a brand new Sunday leadership team, and we are increasing the number of young people we can have each session.

I have missed having activity providers come in to scheme to run activities. I have been in contact with someone with a gorgeous therapy cat who will hopefully be coming to visit our schemes sometime next year!"



## Spotlight on...the Basingstoke Play team: Mark Carr, Operations Manager

"Sadly we have been unable to run our Basingstoke Play scheme since COVID hit due to venue restrictions, but the Basingstoke staff team, led by Georgina Fitzpatrick, stepped in to address staffing shortages by successfully running a full-capacity scheme at Eastleigh Play this year.

The team and children were completely new to one another, and there was the added pressure of operating in a brand-new venue, but the scheme has gone from strength to strength, and their commitment and willingness to travel from one side of the county to the other daily has meant Eastleigh Play families have been able to access a much-needed service that they rely on.

Staff have had to re-think how they can bring fun, learning and new experiences to the children alongside barriers of PPE and the intrusive aromas of antibac sprays and gels, which can be triggering for many children who are sensitive to smells and environmental factors. What's more, the team have been inspiring role models to new starters and have gone above and beyond their roles to induct new Eastleigh Play staff, ensuring there is a seamless transition for families."



# What families say about Challengers

Play & Youth scheme survey – August 2020

**99%**   
scored our scheme staff  
as good or excellent

**95%**   
rated use of PPE,  
cleaning and sanitising processes  
as good or excellent



“We were very happy with the COVID-19 precautions and preventative measures in place at the sessions.”

– Challengers Parent

“Smaller groups worked so well for my children and they have so much fun! I really appreciated having a little time to myself.”

– Challengers Parent

“It has been incredibly challenging to have two autistic children at home during the pandemic. Challengers re-opening has been fantastic for my son. There's nothing more they could have done, they have been incredibly supportive and the communication has been great.”

– Challengers Parent

Farnham & Guildford Preschool surveys – August 2020

**100%** 

rated facilities, activities,  
and safeguarding as good  
or excellent

**96%** 

say Challengers helps  
improve their child's  
social skills



# Challengers goes virtual

For the last several months we've been running free virtual sessions via Zoom for young people and their families.

It was important that we could still offer some kind of support and social interaction, even if we couldn't see them face to face. It's been wonderful to keep in touch with everyone and for the young people to see their orange friends!

## Spotlight on...Sara Trott, Chichester Youth Leader



"What I have really valued is seeing the group engage with people they have never met and watching them grow in confidence. The dance classes are fantastic as they get everyone moving and range from Bollywood, to samba, to pop! We get to learn routines together and

watching everyone on screen at the same time dancing is incredible.

They love getting to show their skills to each other, be it drumming a solo part, their awesome chopping skills, busting some dance moves, or even building spaceships from spaghetti and marshmallows!

I look forward to every Zoom session knowing that for 60-90 minutes there will be lots of smiles, laughs and learning new things. It's such a nice image when everyone joins the session waving and saying hi to each other."

**"The virtual sessions reminded my daughter that there was still a world outside her window."**

– Challengers Parent

### What's on offer?

- ☆ Drumming workshops
- ☆ Samba dancing
- ☆ Animal visits
- ☆ Baking sessions
- ☆ Fortnite games
- ☆ Quizzes
- ☆ Yoga
- ☆ Talent shows

## Youtube videos & virtual activities

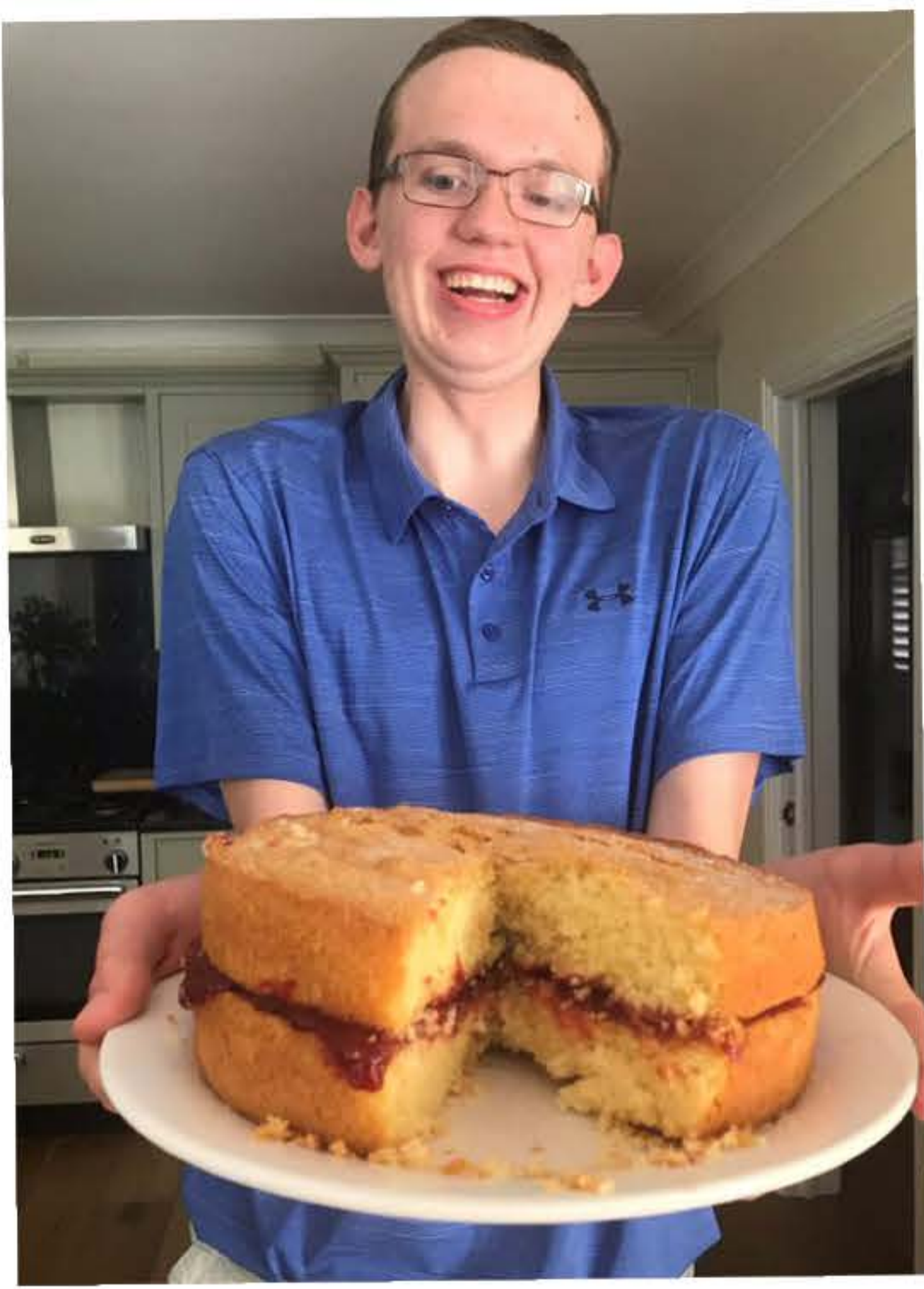
### Challengers Virtual Saturday Sessions!

We know how much children and young people are missing our weekend schemes, so we're bringing you virtual Challengers Saturday Sessions to enjoy from home!

- ☆ Each week we'll post a collection of short videos that are accessible for all age ranges and abilities, covering everything from singing and stories, to interactive quizzes and activities.
- ☆ Challengers Saturday Sessions will go live on our YouTube channel each Saturday at 11am, so you can tune in then, or watch later at a time that's convenient for you.
- ☆ We'll also post a schedule of the coming week's activities on social media so you can prepare for any interactive activities in advance.

Watch Saturday Sessions on our YouTube channel:  
[www.youtube.com/channel/UCm1tChallengers](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCm1tChallengers)





## Meet Matthew

16-year-old Matthew has loved joining the virtual sessions and having fun with his orange friends while at home. His mum Jenny tells us how life has been during lockdown, and how our online sessions helped Matthew find his voice at Challengers.

“Since joining Farnham Youthscheme, Matthew has really loved the trips out, in particular Legoland and going on the railways and picnics. Matthew has blossomed at Challengers through the activities and trips out, and has now moved from having one to one support to being independent on scheme.

Despite this, even though Matthew has been at Challengers for many years, no-one has ever really heard him talk.

Over lockdown we have coped ok because despite his difficulties, Matthew is a lovely placid and easy-going young man. Although initially, he was asking “What are we going to do today?” all the time, we then settled into a routine of walks and household chores. Matthew does understand about the virus but he has been missing his friends and social contact dreadfully.

The weekly Zoom sessions from Challengers have helped us stay in touch, especially as Matthew has been unable to go to school. As soon as the children and the scheme leader April appear on the screen Matthew is desperate to see them – it was the highlight of Matthew’s week during lockdown! What has been amazing and fascinating is that we’ve actually heard Matthew talking to others for the first time. I really hope this will help Matthew when he goes back to Challengers to make a connection with others on scheme.

The Challengers weekly Zoom chats have helped us have a real connection with the outside world, and I don’t know what we would have done without them.”

## Meet Fran

Fran is 16 and has been attending Challengers in Alton and Farnham since the age of 4. Her mum Louise explains how much Challengers means to them and how our virtual sessions have allowed Fran to be her usual sociable and happy self at home.

“During lockdown it’s been tricky at times, we started off with home schooling and it was working well but as time has gone on it’s got harder and harder.

When you have a child like Fran it can be very difficult as she’s asking lots of questions all day long and at other times she has seemed depressed and quiet, which is very unlike her as she is normally a happy girl.

She’s found it very hard and really misses people, so when we found out about Challengers’ Zoom sessions it was such a boost! I remember when I told Fran about the virtual sessions it made me cry as I saw her face absolutely light up. Those virtual Zoom meetings have been absolutely great for her, she looks forward to them every week and is really happy afterwards.

Fran has desperately missed Challengers. It has always been her place, and she loves her friends and the activities. It has been such an important part of her life as so few places like Challengers exist. It’s somewhere Fran can go to just be herself and be accepted for who she is.”



# Life on Zoom!

Do you ever feel like you spend your life on Zoom? If so, you're not alone, but one thing's for sure – we couldn't have survived the pandemic without it!

Head Office staff have been working remotely since the end of March, so keeping in touch with colleagues through regular meetings has been increasingly important. Zoom has enabled everyone to work successfully from home has proved useful for more than just meetings...we've held virtual catch ups, quizzes and events, and even our annual Orange Day on it. Not to mention we've used it to provide children and young people with access to Challengers virtual sessions.



Everyone turned up in their best orange outfit for our Orange Day in October...even the pets got involved!



## Zoom events

We held two exclusive Q&A events with sporting stars this summer. Supporters enjoyed sharing a virtual glass of wine with Challengers Patron and Pro Golfer, James Morrison, while he spoke about his golfing career, and our Business Club were delighted to quiz our newest Patron, England Cricketer Dom Sibley, about his experiences.

We hope we'll be able to return to the office soon, but for now, we're quite enjoying life on Zoom!

# Adapting our events

One of the things that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted most this year was our fundraising events, the majority of which had to be cancelled. We were lucky however that we were able to deliver two of our big events this summer, with a socially distanced twist.



## Wood Street Village Jazz Festival – August 2020

We were delighted to go ahead with our annual Wood Street Jazz Festival this year, with rigorous social distancing measures in place. Attendees sat in their designated household 'zones', brought along their own picnics and enjoyed some fantastic live jazz music!



It was a huge success, attracting around 300 people and raising over **£6,000** for Challengers!

## Challengers Motoring Event – September 2020

After lots of careful planning, we were able to go ahead with our ever-popular Motoring Event. Participants followed a stunning route across the Surrey countryside before arriving at a private car museum where they enjoyed picnics next to their classic cars and perused the impressive motor collection in small groups. It was a fantastic day that raised an incredible **£6,285!**



## Our Virtual London Marathon 2020 heroes!

Our #TeamOrange London Marathon squad didn't let a postponed, then cancelled event stop them from taking on this epic challenge!

On Sunday 4th October they took part in the virtual London Marathon, running 26.2 miles around a route of their choice.

With none of the usual crowds to cheer them on, they battled gruelling wind and rain - all in aid of Challengers.

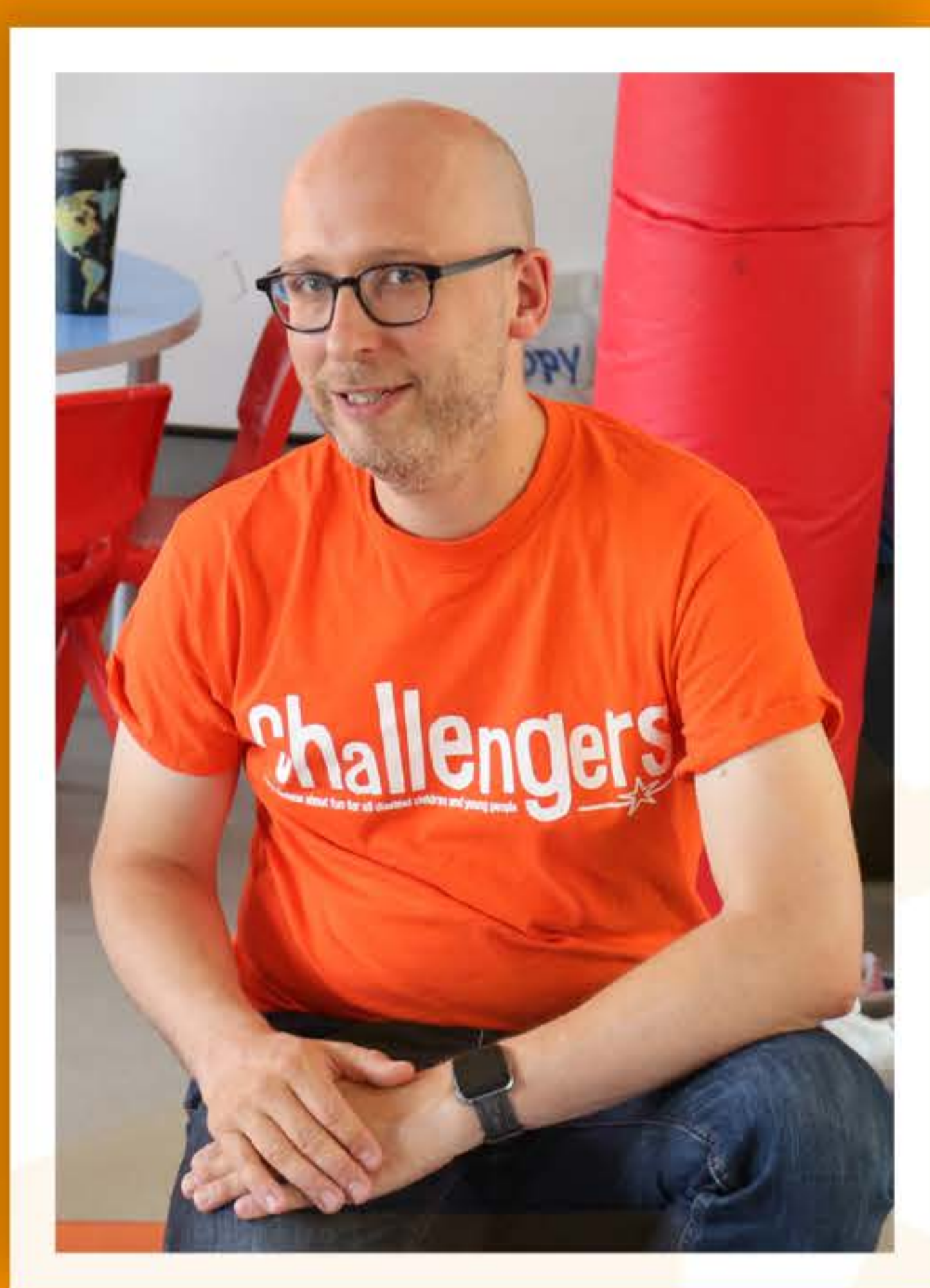
Their inspiring efforts raised **£13,000** for us!



Your support  
keeps us going



2020 has been a testing year for everyone, not in the least for Challengers families. We really hope that 2021 is more positive and gives us the opportunity to offer play and leisure for even more children and young people. We can't wait to get back to full capacity at our schemes and be able to run activities without restrictions.



### A message from our Chairman, Graeme Stretton:

"2020 has been quite a year for Challengers. It's never easy making changes, but if there's one thing that this difficult period has made apparent, it's how tenacious, resilient and adaptable this wonderful charity is. Despite the many challenges that 2020 has thrown at us, Team Orange has continued to provide an amazing service that is valued across our communities. I have no doubt that 2021 will continue to present significant challenges, but equally I know that Challengers will tackle them head on and continue to provide play and leisure opportunities for all our children. I take my hat off to all involved and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank each and every one of you for your support this year."

## Your words of support

Challengers is an amazing organisation that brings fun and friendship to children of all abilities. We'd be lost without you. Xx

I've seen first hand how amazing everybody at challengers have been to many families, I loved working at challengers and making memories with many young people. I hope the money needed will be raised ❤️

Challengers has played a huge part in making who I am today. The most inclusive workplace I've ever worked at! Please do help the staff and the children out in any way you can.

My Grandson Jack absolutely loves going to Challengers. There aren't many activities outside the home he can take part in, so please keep going!

When my son was young I could never imagine a world without Challengers. To say it was a lifeline is a huge understatement. This small charity is vital to parents and children. IT MUST SURVIVE.

This is a wonderful charity which does so much to relieve the heavy burden of care faced by many loving families

Saw your story on the ITV news. Amazing charity and very happy to help 👍

Donating some of my travel expenses as I've saved lots of money being at home. Challengers is amazing, I'm proud to be part of #teamorange and a champion of inclusive play. Every child deserves to have fun! ❤️❤️❤️

An amazing charity that needs our support as everything comes to a standstill. You will come out the other side and once again provide crucial care and access for these beautiful children.

I miss working as a deputy leader at Challengers every day. Cannot imagine a world without them and their brilliant work and the ethos of not excluding!

You do an amazing job and make our lives so much better. I do hope that if everyone can spare a bit that we can raise enough to keep the schemes open. Thank you for all you do.

Play for children is so important and for all children to be included.

Here's why we  
do it...



Connor, age 16

## TO challenges

im gonna be really hon  
onest with you <sup>tasha</sup> <sup>carly</sup> <sup>beth</sup> <sup>April</sup> <sup>Tom</sup> and  
Shera hope and ~~cameron~~ my  
bruv ~~cameron~~ you <sup>you</sup> <sup>will</sup> <sup>always</sup> <sup>be</sup> <sup>my</sup>  
my ~~closest~~ best friends  
best and ~~closest~~ friends no  
matter what happens. I love  
~~it~~ I really appreciate how  
nice all of you have to me.  
you are ~~incredible~~ <sup>incredible</sup> and ~~always~~  
always will be incredible  
and excellent people. I will  
I also really like all of  
your personalities and im so  
glad i met all of you.  
and i will remember ~~of~~ all  
of you and challenges ~~for~~  
the rest of my life.  
so Thank you so much.

and i appreciate the head  
strokes so much and ~~you~~ <sup>with</sup> you  
will and can and will be  
able to stroke my head again  
when this is all over.

and we will also make new  
memories together that i will  
also remember ~~for~~ the rest  
of my life. so again thank  
you so much. ♡ ♡ @ @ @ @

not  
on



# Challengers

— Serious about fun for all disabled children and young people —

[www.disability-challengers.org](http://www.disability-challengers.org)

Challengers, Stoke Park, London Road  
Guildford, Surrey GU1 1TU

Charity number: 1095134  
Company number: 4300724



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