



# PARTY IN THE PARK

## Kaylem - Ophir Road

**In November 2019, Consensus held 'Party in the Park' a company-wide event whereby colleagues and supported individuals from across the organisation were invited to attend a three-day event at Golden Sands Caravan Park in Lincolnshire in celebration of Consensus, our colleagues and the people we support. In total 81 of our 90 services, over 150 supported individuals and over 350 support staff were in attendance.**

The aim of the event was to live our values of opportunity, choice and success for the people we support by providing them with an opportunity to go on a holiday, try new activities and experiences and meet and make new friends in a social environment where they were free to be themselves and have fun.

One of the services that attended was Ophir Road, a residential service in Bournemouth, Dorset, that provides support and accommodation for up to five people with learning disabilities and autism.

Initially, the team had some reservations about whether any of the individuals they support would be able to cope with the six-hour journey from their service in Bournemouth to the venue in Lincolnshire. The individuals supported at Ophir Road are all young guys, between the ages of 20 and 30 years old so for the support team, rather than look at their limitations, it's important to see the possibilities of what they can do and to actively encourage them to do so.

One of the individuals supported at Ophir Road is Kaylem. Aged 21, Kaylem has a mild learning disability and autism. When Kaylem first moved into the service he struggled to manage his anxiety. He would wear ear protectors all day every day and would continuously play with a piece of putty and could not go anywhere without it.

Over the last six months, he has made really good progress. Working in partnership with external agencies the team have supported Kaylem to reduce his medication to zero, which has resulted in him becoming more energetic and active. Since finishing school, the team have also secured more one-to-one support hours which they use to take him to activities he enjoys, including

working on a farm and pottery lessons which has also helped to reduce his anxiety. The team have also gradually encouraged him to get involved in the holistic treatments and activities offered weekly and he now looks forward to reflexology, massage and music therapy. Overall, Kaylem is more verbal, dancing and smiling!

For the team, Party in the Park was a great opportunity to build on this progress with Kaylem while also enabling him to enjoy new experiences, including his first ever holiday and first overnight stay away from the service.

### Preparation for Party in the Park

Although Kaylem is verbal, his vocabulary is limited so the team mainly communicate with him using writing and pictures as he learned to write at school.

To explain what Party in the Park was to Kaylem and ask whether he would like to go, the team prepared a set of videos; one which showed Kaylem what a caravan was and what a caravan park was so that he could understand the concept if it and another video to make sure he understood the concept of 'parties.'

The team regularly host parties at the service, from birthday celebrations to Hawaiian themed garden parties and this helped Kaylem to understand what this would involve and also helped Kaylem to understand this would involve an overnight stay.

At first, Kaylem said "no" but with the encouragement of Registered Manager, Claudia Vaidean who continued to communicate with Kaylem about the event he decided he would like to go.

It was important to have the right support team with the right skill mix and personalities to support Kaylem over the course of the three days. Team leader, Adam has a good relationship with Kaylem and Ellie, who has only been a support worker at the service for four months, has an abundance of positivity, and is always willing to embrace new challenges and experiences.

Kaylem travelled up to the event with Adam and Ellie. To make the journey more manageable, the team stopped for regular rest breaks and pre-prepared lots of food options for Kaylem as he has a very limited diet. They also prepared food to take with them for Kaylem during the event, in case he didn't like the food available.

### Enjoying Party in the Park

When Kaylem arrived, he was really excited and immediately felt comfortable and at ease. When the team went for dinner, they couldn't believe that Kaylem not only ate the buffet meal but also went back for a second plate!

There was a whole range of activities on offer over the course of the two days, including physical activities like laser tag and the Spinner, creative pursuits such as tie-dye t-shirt and Christmas decoration making as well as a Brazilian percussion workshop, petting farm and a range of games and activities in the arcade.

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Kaylem enjoyed taking part in all the activities and especially enjoyed the music and atmosphere during the evening entertainment and was up dancing with his support workers.

### Positive outcomes

Since returning from Party in the Park, Kaylem has told the team that he is looking forward to going again next year. The team are now building on the momentum of Party in the Park and Kaylem's increased confidence to support him with his goal of getting a voluntary job.

"Kaylem is an artist and loves painting and pottery so the team are working with him to skill match jobs that he will enjoy. The team are also supporting Kaylem to get a GP referral to a dietician so that his diet can be improved and become more varied," said Claudia.

Party in the Park was also a valuable experience for the support team who attended. Ellie valued the opportunity to meet and interact with support workers from other Consensus services, share experiences and make new friends. Both Adam and Ellie also enjoyed feeling like they belonged to something special and their confidence levels went up.

Having won the Quarter 2 Divisional Recognition Awards, the team were also delighted to receive their £50 voucher up on stage in front of the rest of the organisation.

"It shows how a small token of appreciation can have such a big impact," Claudia added.



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