



## A New Challenge for Jenny, Penny and Susan

At Harpenden Mencap, we empower the people we support to build confidence and make their own decisions about how they want their life to be. This means we listen to what they want to achieve, help them make plans, support them towards their goals, and celebrate their successes.

When a much-loved manager was diagnosed with cancer, Jenny, Penny and Susan wanted to do something that would show just how much they care. They chose to take part in the 5K Race for Life in St Albans and raise money for Cancer Research UK in honour of everyone they know who has been affected by cancer.

Jenny said, “My mum, aunt and uncle passed away from cancer. Recently, our manager has been on my mind too. Everyone’s been touched by cancer. But you can always do something to help, no matter how small.”



Penny said, “We wanted to do something to show we care. And we enjoy exercising together and so thought of a sponsored challenge.”

Penny, Jenny and Susan will be accompanied by Harpenden Mencap Support Workers, Angela, Cassie, Emma and Heather, on race day. The team is looking forward to the challenge and supporting each other to finish the race.



Susan said, “This is my first race. I have never done anything like this before. I am excited!”

Jenny explained that the team is training hard. They have been walking and dancing around their block twice a week. They also take part in a Sunday morning health and wellbeing session organised by Support Worker Cassie, enjoying yoga and group walks. Recently, they’ve been learning about the importance of warming-up to prevent stiffness and injuries.

“I love the Sunday session!” Susan exclaimed.

Both Penny and Jenny are also keen members of Special Olympics St Albans and were excited to demonstrate their favourite exercises and techniques.



Penny said she loves keeping active, “It improves my coordination.” For her own training, she has been playing golf and dancing to Bruno Mars. She has also taken an extra step and is preparing herself mentally by watching TV programmes on health topics.

Penny is excited to test her endurance. “I will do my best to keep going to the end of the race! I might lose count of how many times we’re supposed to go around the park...”



Penny doing chair exercises

“But you’ll have us there to help!” Support Worker Heather added. “We’re a team and we’ll look after each other. If someone is feeling tired or like they might be left behind, we’re going to slow down and keep pace with them, aren’t we?”

Jenny agreed, “Yes, we’re mostly going to jog and speed-walk. We might slow down, but we’ll keep going.”

Jenny has been giving the team advice on pacing. She won first place in Special Olympics athletics 100 Metre Race Walk. Recently, she stepped into leadership at Special Olympics St Albans and become a volunteer. She has some great advice on athletics.

“I’m going to bring jelly babies.” She said, “They’re tasty and easy to eat, and will keep my energy up.” One of her neighbours, who is coming to watch the race, suggested he throws jelly babies every time the team passes by to keep them motivated.



Jelly babies

Penny is going to try drinking Lucozade to boost her energy.

Support Worker Angela thinks her motivation will be the thought of jumping in the lake after they reach the finish line. Especially if it’s a hot day!

The race team have lots of friends and family coming to support them, as well as those supporting from afar. They're hoping to wear pink tutus on race day, so they'll be easily identifiable, though if you see a group running with their mouths open catching jelly babies, you'll know it's the team from Harpenden Mencap!

Over the coming days, we'll be cheering them on as they prepare for the race on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July. If you'd like to support their fundraising, you can find their page here:

<https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/team/harpenden-mencap>

**Story written by Lucy Barrett**

From experiences shared by the Harpenden Mencap race team

