

JULY 2015

Makeover magic

Another successful Happy Healthy Fun Day page 2



Huda loved her new look. Other activities included martial arts, Zumba, hand and head massages, nail painting and reflexology

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From the Editor

After a fraught few months when we thought we were going to lose almost all of our Children's Service we have had good news all round. Our bids to various funders and discussions with the borough have been successful and we have managed to hold on to all of our projects plus develop some new work.

Open Door West received three years funding last year from Children in Need and now Open Door East has been funded by John Lyon's Charity for a further three years. In addition Children in Need have awarded us a small grant that will enable us to run Acting Bugs once a month for a year. We are now in a position to develop our play work, offering regular Soft Play sessions and Summer Fun sessions.

We have also received funding from the borough meaning we are able to continue running an advice and information service for 5-18 year olds and their family carers. This new service, Moving Up, which is currently funded for one year covers the whole of the borough. A lot of hard work has gone into making this happen but it was well worth it to see the Children's Service continue and flourish.

This year saw the 8th Happy Healthy Fun Day (front cover). Over 300 people attended. Now starts the task of trying to fund the next one. Contact me if you'd like to donate or set up a fundraiser.

Shelley Gibbons

Business as usual

Barnet Mencap is in the middle of its 50th anniversary celebrations just now. It has been a time to look back and think what has been achieved over this long period. But at any milestone it is important to also consider the challenges that lie ahead.

The new Business Plan sets out what Barnet Mencap will do over the next three years to ensure people with learning disabilities get the support they need. It also talks about some of the other things Barnet Mencap wants to do to bring about changes in the long-term. Barnet Mencap's vision states that it wants to see a world where people with learning disabilities are valued equally, listened to and included. We begin with the steps we need to take now so that this vision becomes a reality.

In the Business Plan, Barnet Mencap re-states its commitment to work with children and adults with learning disabilities and their family carers. The plan has a stronger focus on people with autism.

When we have reviewed what is important to people we have heard the same key messages that families need good support in early years and people need advice and information so they can decide what is best for them. They need good support so that they can live as independently as possible, take part in leisure and learning activities, and work. Short breaks for children and adults benefit the whole family.

Barnet Mencap will strive to maintain its current services which meet these needs, but it knows that it will take more than good services to bring about lasting change for people with learning disabilities and autism. Barnet Mencap will be engaging with the local community to raise awareness about the support people need from everybody – where they shop, play sport, study or use mainstream services.

Some of these changes can only be achieved by working with others. Partnerships, whether with other local voluntary organisations or national groups like Royal Mencap, will be even more important in the coming years.

Our work continues against a backdrop of continuing austerity and huge changes in our local services. The new legislation affecting children and adults will also have an impact on what we do.

In difficult circumstances it is more important than ever that we keep our focus on what matters the most. The staff, Board of Directors and volunteers will continue to work hard and achieve the goals we have set ourselves in the new Business Plan.

THE BIG PICTURE



Actors perform some Tales from Wonderland in their devised drama show

Focus on... Royal Mencap's Strategy

Barnet Mencap has worked much more closely with Royal Mencap in recent years, so it was pleased to see Royal Mencap's new long-term strategy, which was launched at the end of April.

There was an opportunity prior to this for staff, trustees and people with learning disabilities in Barnet to meet with staff from Royal Mencap. They were able to discuss some of the priorities in the new strategy. It was really good to see that these priorities reflected things that are important to us too.

The strategy emphasises the importance of families getting good support, advice and information to make sure that children under 5 get the best start in life. The strategy also recognises that having friendships and strong community connections are vital if people with learning

disabilities are to get the most out of life. People need good support, the strategy says, and much more needs to be done if we are to improve people's health.

Underlying so much of this is the pressing need to change attitudes towards people with learning disabilities. The strategy points to the work that is needed to raise awareness of learning disability amongst the general public and mainstream services. We need to strive to ensure that people are truly respected and treated as equals.

A number of the points in this strategy chime with Barnet Mencap's new Business Plan. As we work to implement it over the next three years, we hope to contribute to the success of Royal Mencap's strategy.



Tom Flynn and Gary Jelen with a 'Licence To Kill' at Bond In Motion

BM 50th ANNIVERSARY

History book takes shape

Did you know that in 1834 the Poor Laws saw the creation of asylums to house the 'feeble-minded'? And that in 1913 the Mental Deficiency Act led to the creation of colonies where people with learning disabilities were separated from the community and controlled?

It took 68 years after that until 1981 before an Education Act was passed that all children should be educated in mainstream schools wherever possible.

Well I've learnt these and many other interesting and perhaps surprising nuggets of information in doing my research for the 50th Anniversary book about Barnet Mencap.

Work on the book is well underway. It will tell the story in words, pictures and newspaper cuttings etc. from our formation, in 1965 (and prior to that), right up to the present day.

It will show how Barnet Mencap and its predecessors have moved from their humble beginnings as an entirely voluntary organisation with all the work being done by parents and friends, through its first employee in the 1980s to the thriving company it is today, with over 50 employees and an expected turnover in 2015/16 of around £1.4 million.

And just as Barnet Mencap has changed, so have the prospects for people with learning disabilities. I've been researching the archives, looking through old year books, scrapbooks, photo albums, minutes and newsletters, while another board member, Sally Wickenden, has undertaken a number of interviews with prominent people associated with Barnet Mencap over the years.

There is still time to contribute. If you have anything that you think may be of interest you can contact me at mike.wiffen@gmail.com. It is planned that the book will be available at the Annual General Meeting in November.

MYVOICE PROJECT

Help for the autistic young

Ambitious about Autism is a national charity for children and young people with an Autism spectrum diagnosis. 1 in 100 children and young people in the UK have a diagnosis of autism affecting some 100,000 young people in this country. Young people with autism make up a significant part of our society yet are also underrepresented in all areas of life.

It is likely that you know someone who is autistic or who has been affected by autism but it is a problem that wider society would prefer to ignore. 83% of young people with Asperger's Syndrome say they have been bullied in school and only 15% of adults with autism are in full time paid employment.

Recognising these shocking statistics, Ambitious about Autism has partnered with the Department of Health to deliver the myVoice project. Over the next three years myVoice will enable young people with autism aged between 16-25 who live in the London boroughs of Barnet, Bromley, Haringey and Islington to have better representation in society.

myVoice will recruit young people with autism to inspect their local health, education and social care services and report their findings to Local Authority Commissioners so these services can

better reflect the needs of young people with autism.

myVoice has also launched a new website for young people with autism to find out more about themselves and the world they live in, with content made by young people with autism.

The website was launched in April and is initially focusing on the areas that young people with autism have told us they want to know about most: Autism, Bullying, Relationships and Employment.

myVoice volunteers will also be facilitating online chats on the website with experts that they think the autism community needs to hear from so that young people who use the website have a variety of different methods with which to access content.

Starting in 2016 myVoice will expand its reach and start training young people with autism to join youth councils, Healthwatch boards, scrutiny groups and other participation projects.

For more information about how to get involved please email myVoice@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

BARNET MENCAP HUSTINGS

Grilling the politicians

A few weeks before the general election took place Barnet Mencap, in partnership with Royal Mencap, hosted a hustings (a meeting at which candidates in an election address potential voters).

This was part of Hear My Voice, the national campaign being run by Mencap. There are over 1.4 million people with a learning disability and/or autism and their families who face issues like poor healthcare, hate crime and social isolation and they have rarely had a chance to have their voices heard. These issues are hardly ever debated and most politicians don't understand how these things impact on people's lives.

Candidates were invited from the two most marginal seats in the borough. These were Hendon and Finchley and Golders Green.

The audience was made up of people



Remember, we celebrate our 50th anniversary this year. Look out for news of events commemorating this important milestone in our history



Candidates representing the Labour Party, Green Party and UKIP at the Hear My Voice hustings session – chaired by Shelley Gibbons – take questions from the audience

► with learning disabilities and/or autism, family carers and professionals.

Although all candidates were invited some didn't attend. Those who did represented Labour, Green and UKIP. There was disappointment that there was no representation from the other key political parties.

On the day there was a pre-meeting so that people had a chance to discuss what was most important to them and what to ask the candidates.

Topics included issues with transport, the candidates' understanding of autism, concerns around benefits being cut and the quality and monitoring of care services.

When the candidates arrived the key questions were addressed (other questions were forwarded to the candidates after the meeting).

The discussions were very lively. Sometimes the candidates seemed to forget who they were addressing but mainly they stayed on track with a little help from the Chair.

For many people in the audience this was the first time they had such an opportunity to

meet and question parliamentary candidates. Some had never exercised their right to vote in a general election before.

After the meeting (which took place at St. Paul's in Finchley) many people said that it had helped them to decide who to vote for.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Looking forward

Members and other interested parties turned out to have their say at the recent Advisory Council Meeting held by Barnet Mencap at St Paul's in Finchley Central.

Ray Booth (Chief Executive) welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through what had been achieved over the last year and what was being planned for the future.

In particular he talked about some joint working with Royal Mencap which was giving people with learning disabilities and/or autism a voice.

Ray went on to tell everyone about some of the plans Barnet Mencap has for the next three years. Then, to give everyone a chance to have their say, people split into small groups and talked about which projects and activities they thought were the most important.

Generally it was agreed that the social activities, learning, campaigning and fundraising were some of the most important things that Barnet Mencap does and people would like these to continue.

Next, the groups talked about the best way for service users and their families to put forward their views.

On the whole the groups agreed that formal meetings weren't always very accessible and didn't work for everyone.

It was felt that it would be more helpful to have some coffee mornings where people could chat informally or for trustees and staff to meet people attending the different projects to get their views.

At the end of the meeting Ray thanked everyone who attended for helping us to plan for the future.

Being... Nicola Saunders



Nicola Saunders: very excited about everything

My name is Nicola and I was born in Bedford Hospital on 22nd March 1984. I weighed 7lb and I was late being born, so my Mum told me. I went to different schools in Bedford and London and ended up later at college in Grahame Park.

At college I learnt how to use a computer and learnt some good communication skills. This was learning how to talk in a group and to be more confident with people.

I have also worked as a volunteer in a charity shop for a short time. My job was sorting out the clothes and labelling them. I also had the job of putting the books into alphabetical order.

At the moment I live with my two brothers, my parents and my fish Rob, Bert and Tock (Tick died) and Rosie the cat, but I am looking to move to one of Equality Housing's shared houses in the near future.

I have already chosen the colour blue for my new room and decided on some pastel colours for my bedding. I am looking forward to it but I will miss my family.

I joined Barnet Mencap in November 2013

and became a member of COPs and Fit2gether. I also have a link worker for two hours a week to help me learn new skills.

I really like going to The Queens Arms pub with COPs because it is good fun and I can socialise with people. I have become friends with people like Tom, Janette, Chris and Dimi.

I also like the drop-in and find it interesting and helpful when the police come and tell us how to keep safe on the buses and trains.

I really enjoy doing exercise with Fit2gether. I like Zumba, martial arts and yoga. I am going to try and lose weight and get fit. I'm also going to try Slimming World sometime soon.

Last year I did the Cook and Eat course with COPs and I learnt how to make lots of really nice things.

I also went to The Houses of Parliament and they told us about voting and MPs. It was busy when we got there and it was hard to find a seat.

I went to a Hear My Voice talk and met some of the people who want to be MPs. I am going to vote in the general election. I have only voted for local councillors before.

Last year I went to see a show at Chicken Shed. It was good.

Before I joined I didn't do any activities but I am much happier now. I like to keep busy.

I am going to hopefully be starting volunteering at the Barnet Mencap office working on the reception. I will be answering the telephone and taking messages.

I was on an interview panel and helped to choose the new link workers for Equality Housing. I got paid and really enjoyed it.

I enjoy support. I have two new link workers called Anne and Pam and they help me to learn to cook, help with my letters and support me to appointments at the job centre and the doctors.

They are going to help me move as well. I am looking forward to it.

I am also saving for a holiday as I have never been away before. I would like to go to the seaside.

This is going to be a really busy time for me and I am very excited about everything.

Photo Finish



Children playing at the Open Door under-5s Soft Play Session



General Information

You can also view this newsletter on your computer! It's on our website in the 'Newsletters' section, or please email james.wheatley@barnetmencap.org.uk to be added to the emailing list, so you'll save paper and never miss an issue!



How to find us

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Email:

projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

Website: www.barnetmencap.org.uk



www.facebook.com/barnetmencap



@barnetmencap

Diary Dates



August

Summer Fun Sessions

For under 5s with additional needs and their siblings
(up to the age of 7)

Four sessions in August

For more details contact projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

Wednesday 2nd September

Learning Disability Partnership Board meeting

1pm at Barnet House, 1255 High Road, Whetstone N20 0EJ

Thursday 17th September

Healthwatch Barnet AGM

For more details contact projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

Wednesday 4th November

Barnet Mencap AGM

For more details contact projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk
or call 020 8349 3842

The next newsletter, with all the latest news and features, will appear in October

Barnet Mencap Registered Charity No.1089388 Company Registration No.4274621

