



# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

MARKING 50 YEARS OF BARNET MENCAP

## From Backward Children to Bright Futures

The story of the first fifty years of Barnet Mencap



A cake to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary, which was enjoyed by those who came to our AGM.

In 2015, Barnet Mencap has celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The book to mark the first fifty years of Barnet Mencap, 'From Backward Children to Bright Futures,' was launched at the AGM on 4<sup>th</sup> November. It is available to buy (see the back page for details).

**Why 'Backward Children'?** National Mencap can trace its history back to 1946 when Judy Fryd wrote to 'Nursery World' magazine in which she described the difficulties of having a backward child. She received an enormous response which led to the formation of the National

Association of Parents of Backward Children, the forerunner of National Mencap which celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year.

More locally, similar societies were formed in Barnet and in Finchley/Hendon in the early 1950s, which arguably was the ►



► start of Barnet Mencap – however in 1965 local government in London was reorganised which led to the creation of the London Borough of Barnet, and the two societies merged to become the 'Barnet Society for Mentally Handicapped Children' which is taken as our starting point.

## BACKWARD CHILDREN

To form a new group of the National Association of Parents of Backward Children, for the Hendon and Finchley areas, a meeting will be held next Wednesday at 8 p.m. in the Presbyterian Church Parlour, Redbourne-avenue Finchley. Parents of mentally handicapped children, and others interested, will be cordially welcomed.

The Association works through groups sponsored by a county committee, and its aims are:-

1, to promote the material, mental, and spiritual welfare of backward children; to foster mutual help and support among parents and relatives of such children; to promote closer co-operation and understanding between their parents and others responsible for their welfare; to encourage research into the causes and treatment of mental handicap.



## Why 'Bright Futures?'

The work Barnet Mencap is doing through the contract with the Council for services for those with learning disabilities and/or autism is badged as 'Bright Futures.' This was to me perfect for the title of the book as it reflects the journey that has been taken and the entirely different opportunities and potential outcomes for people with learning disabilities now compared to only fifty years ago.

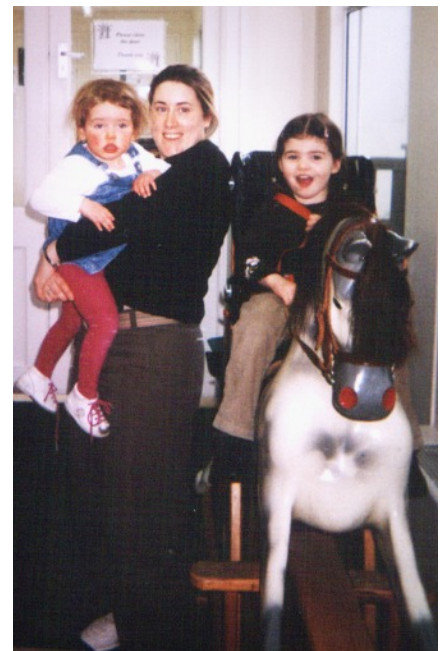
The first anniversary event was a Service of Thanksgiving at St Mary-at-Finchley Church. Service users, members,

volunteers, directors and staff joined with the regular congregation for the Parish Eucharist on 17 May. Our association with the church goes back at least to December 1968 when the first Barnet Mencap Christmas Carol Service was held, and we have been their chosen charity for a number of years. The service was adapted for those with learning disabilities, with the readings from Ruth, Keven and Janette, and familiar hymns chosen. The Rev. Philip Davison gave a very entertaining address that involved balloons ►



**Captions (clockwise):** Backward Children - An article in the Hendon Times from 1953; Mayor of Barnet Clare Thubrun visiting the Outlook Club in 1964; Dancing Club at Outlook House; a group of staff, volunteers and service users in the early 1990s





► which were released high into the roof at the end of the service.

During Learning Disability Week in June we staged exhibitions at four of the main libraries in the Borough of Barnet – Burnt Oak, Chipping Barnet, Church End Finchley and Hendon. A poster display told the story of what we do, current leaflets and newsletters were available along with a list and display of available books related to learning disabilities, many of which were taken out by the general public. The displays were very popular and we thank the library service for their help and interest, particularly at a time when their own future is so uncertain.

At the end of that week there was a Choral Concert by the Harrow Apollo Male Choir, also held at St Mary-at-Finchley. This was held to celebrate the life of Carole Heasman, alongside our anniversary. Carole, who had Down's Syndrome, was born in September 1947 and died in August 2014. Her arrival in the world led, indirectly, to the early development of what became Barnet Mencap due to the

involvement of her parents, Tom and Doris Heasman, and friends.

Carole's brother, David, is the conductor of the Choir and a lively and varied show with songs from 'The Dambusters March' to 'You Raise Me Up' was put on by the Choir, together with stories from Carole's life and this was enjoyed by an audience of approaching a hundred.

The annual Sherrick House Barbecue took place in August. Around thirty people attended including a number from COPS for the first time. A very successful morning was enjoyed by all.

The Big Disco took place at the Meritage Centre, Hendon, on 14<sup>th</sup> November. All who attended the event had a fantastic time, dancing to the music of Andy's Disco. A number of prizes were awarded and everyone left tired but happy, looking forward to another one next year!

None of these events would have happened without people volunteering their time, but particular thanks must go to my fellow directors Karen Bilkus and Meg Kirk for all their hard work with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

*Mike Wiffen, Treasurer*

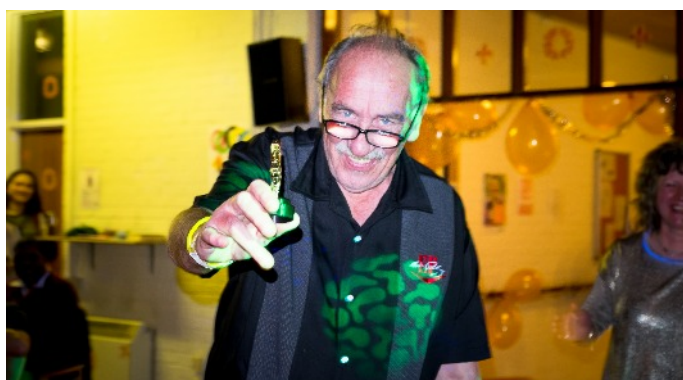


**Captions (clockwise):** Outward Bound in 1994; Nia with some children at Open Door; The award-winning group behind our CutFilms video in 2014; Royal Mencap Chief Executive Jan Tregelles presenting a certificate to Ray at our AGM





**L-R:** Having a cup of tea at the Thanksgiving Church Service; a library display; The Harrow Apollo Male Voice Choir; Tom at our Big Disco



# 2015 - A Year of Celebration

## From Backward Children to Bright Futures: The story of the first fifty years of Barnet Mencap

*"Brilliant! What an enormous amount of work. So impressive. Thanks so much for making this enduring record of a very special organisation. I'm sure it will be appreciated by so many people."* Janet Solomons

To read about our history in a far greater detail than you have here, you can purchase a copy of our book, "From backward children to Bright Futures: The story of the first fifty years of Barnet Mencap".

The book, written by our Treasurer Mike Wiffen, charts the first fifty years of our history. It has a foreword from both our Chairman, Peter Carter, and Royal Mencap's Chief Executive, Jan Tregelles (who also spoke at our AGM).

Thanks to hours of research and interviewing many of those who have been involved throughout the years, the book is a comprehensive guide to our first fifty years, whilst also looking at the history of learning disabilities. It also features lots of photographs from our history.

If you would like a copy of the book, please contact Project Support via [projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk), 020 8349 3842 or pop by our office. The book is priced £6.



**Top:** Copies of the book. **Bottom:** Mike signing a copy