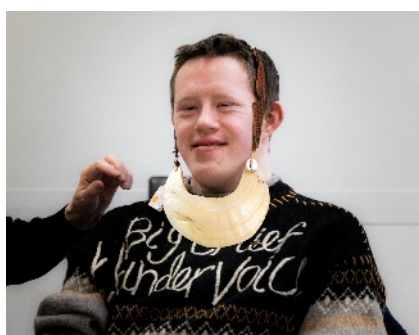


MARCH 2016

## BM at the BM

We go behind the scenes at the British Museum



Michael, Christopher, Shane and Keven handling the artifacts at the British Museum

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## *From the Editor*

Thank you to the family carers who came to the Working Better Together event on March 16<sup>th</sup>. Valuing Carers days, where family carers and professionals can exchange news and views, used to happen annually, but it is a long time since there has been one in Barnet. Family carers were able to get information, hear from staff in the Learning Disability Service and tell the team what is important to families.

Barnet Mencap's Board also wants to hear from anyone who uses our services (see page 6), so that we can improve what Barnet Mencap does and the way we work. Bright Futures has been a great success in recent years and on page 5 the staff show how well the service has worked for Chris.

There is a lot of anxiety about the Welfare Reform and Work Bill, which is currently going through Parliament. People with learning disabilities went to the lobby last month and will be keeping up the campaign against a reduction in their benefits. There will also be a real threat to the future of supported housing services if they are included when the housing benefit cap is introduced. People still have time to raise concerns with their MPs. Good supported housing, along with a job or adequate benefits, is key to enabling people to live independently and be a valued part of their community.

*Ray Booth*

## **Gateway Award**

New to Barnet Mencap this year is an exciting opportunity for up to fifteen 14–25 year olds to take part in The Gateway Bronze Award. This Award (run by Royal Mencap through local Mencaps) provides participants with the chance to acquire new skills and experiences, have fun and make new friends.

There are five sections of the Award to complete. These are Hobbies, Lifestyle, Volunteering, Fitness and The Gateway Challenge. Each participant chooses which activities they would like to complete for each section. Each section involves a commitment of at least 12 hours and the whole award takes approximately six months to complete.

After successful completion of the Bronze Award, candidates will receive a certificate and an award at a presentation ceremony. It is hoped that funding will also be in place for them to go on to complete The Gateway Silver and The Gateway Gold Awards.

Recruitment for the Bronze Award started in December and has proved to be a very popular opportunity as already nearly all the places have been filled. Particularly encouraging is the fact that we have been able to reach several young people who, up to now, had not accessed any of our services.

Participants are currently busy completing various sections of their Award by participating in activities run by Barnet Mencap including ten pin bowling, Golf, Swimming, a film project, Yoga, Martial Arts and Zumba. However, we are also working hard to encourage and explore new activities through external service providers including Burnt Oak Leisure Centre and Finchley Leisure Centre, and also build new partnerships with external organisations like the 'Surplus Food Bank Project' who work with Tesco to distribute surplus food to homeless projects in the borough, and Timebank where people can help themselves and others at the same time.

We hope that the significant commitment and ultimate achievement of completing The Gateway Bronze Award will build confidence and independence, and encourage participants to continue beyond the Award to be more active in their communities and have better health and wellbeing.

It's about pushing boundaries and raising the bar of what can be achieved and we will be supporting and cheering them all on every step of the way!



## THE BIG PICTURE



It's Sharks v Jets as our Fixation Drama Group rehearse 'Our Side Story'

## Focus on... The Local Offer

Since September 2014 every council must publish a local offer. This is an area of the council website which will tell you what support is available for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and their families.

The development of the local offer is part of the wider range of reforms to SEND legislation which was introduced in 2014, and in time it will help families and children and young people themselves to use their own opinions to develop services and meet the outcomes which have become such a significant part of the Education Health and Care Plan process.

The local offer should be your first step when looking for information for any child or young person aged from 0-25 with a diagnosis or where it is suspected they may have additional needs. The local offer will include information from across the local area about education, health and care

services and should include schools and other education settings, childcare, social opportunities and health services. It is not limited to services which are provided by Barnet itself and it is not restricted to services within the borough but should include services which are readily available to residents e.g. services in neighbouring boroughs which are accessible to Barnet families.

The local offer should provide information, advice and guidance on SEND as well as

- information on what is available in the local area
- what services you can expect to receive
- what the access criteria are
- how to access the referral process
- contact details

It is not a directory, but it is a live collection of information which should be easy to use and should be updated regularly. Barnet's local offer ►



Group sessions at Expect the Best's National Quality Checking Conference

► can be found at  
<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/citizen-home/children-young-people-and-families/the-local-offer-and-special-educational-needs.html>

All local authorities have to seek feedback about their local offer and publish their actions following feedback, so please take a look at Barnet's local offer and send your thoughts to [SENDLocalOffer@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:SENDLocalOffer@barnet.gov.uk)

## SHARED LIVES

### An ordinary home

A new exciting scheme is being introduced in Barnet which aims to offer support and care to enable adults with care needs to remain in their local community.

The scheme is for individuals with mental health issues, learning disabilities, or older people with support needs.

Shared Lives carers are ordinary people in the community who host an adult in their own home, for long or short periods of time, or

provide support in other ways such as day care.

Shared Lives carers can be from any background or any type of family. They could be working or non-working, retired or semi-retired, but they must be over 18. They are vetted, trained to a high level and receive ongoing support as well as payment. They are carefully matched with suitable adults.

Many of the people who use the service would otherwise live in residential settings and instead are able to live with a family within a community setting.

Adults who live with carers blossom in an environment that

- encourages them to have self confidence and become more independent
- gives them the message that they matter, they are cared for and they are entitled to be part of a community as well as a family.

There are Shared Lives schemes all over the country, used by 12,000 people in total, and the sector increased by 14% in 2013/14.

The Care Quality Commission has reported that the Shared Lives was the best performing sector in adult social care in 2013/14. ►



- The scheme is being run jointly by Barnet and Harrow Councils. They are recruiting more carers.

For more details contact Barnet Shared Lives on 020 8736 6070 or email [sharedlives@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:sharedlives@harrow.gov.uk)



**Shared Lives: 'Supporting local people to live enriched, great lives'**

## EXPECT THE BEST

### Quality Checking Conference

On Thursday, 3rd March the very first National Quality Checking Conference took place at Friends House in Euston, London – and it was a big success!

Whilst quality and quality checking have featured as part of other social care conferences in the past, this was the first national conference to focus entirely on improving care and support services through quality assurance.

The day was packed with interesting and varied speakers including a keynote address from Professor Ursula Gallagher, the Care Quality Commission's Deputy Chief Inspector of General Practice and Integrated Care. She highlighted the wider importance of quality checking in NHS services: *"If NHS services aren't serving the most vulnerable well, then they probably aren't serving anyone else well either."*

Find out more about the conference at [www.expectthebest.org.uk](http://www.expectthebest.org.uk)

## WORKING FOR YOU

### Working for Chris



**Chris: 'I feel a lot happier now'**

Many of you will have heard of Barnet Mencap's Working for You project, and may even know that we provide advice and short term support for adults experiencing a range of problems with things like benefits, housing or health issues. But what is it really like to get support from Working for You? We asked Chris, who was referred to us by his Job Centre advisor for help with getting a freedom pass.

When we met with Chris we realised, while talking to him, that he needed some help with lots of other things. Where he lived was not very comfortable and his benefits were not being paid correctly. Chris also wanted to get back into work and perhaps have the opportunity to get out socially with people his age. Here is what his experience of Working for You was.

"When I first met people from Working for You I thought that they were very nice and friendly and I felt happy to have them help me. I was struggling quite a lot financially and it was very cramped where I was living. I couldn't move around a lot. I was feeling a bit lonely and I couldn't see how I was going to sort everything out. I even had to go to a food bank as I had no money. I trusted Working for You to help me get things sorted. I now have a new place to live and all my benefits have been sorted out.

I have more money now and I have a voluntary job two days a week. Working for You referred me to the Bright Futures Employment Project, run by Royal Mencap. I had help to apply for jobs and go for interviews ►

► and now I have been offered a job! I have also joined COPs and might make some friends with them. I feel a lot happier now.” Chris, January 2016.

So if you need some help, no matter how big or small the issue is, give Working for You a call on 020 8349 3842 and we will try to help you solve it.

### ALLOTMENT PROJECT

## Whetstone Stray Allotments

Whetstone Stray Allotments is a large allotment site on Holden Road, N12 with a friendly, busy community of all ages and abilities.

This year they will be setting up a community plot for groups of people who need support to grow vegetables. The aim of the community plot is to improve health and well-being through growing vegetables, fruit and flowers. The project will be a safe space for people who would not be able to take on an allotment plot by themselves.

The community plot will have a large polytunnel, storage, raised beds, wide paths, secure fencing, water supply and a meeting/resting area. Facilities on site include ecological composting toilets. All tools will be provided.

Growing fruit and vegetables on an allotment is a great way to stay fit, healthy and happy.

You can learn gardening, develop new skills and interests and cook and eat what you grow. You can take part in activities and events on the site such as the annual barbecue, plant sale, bonfire and vegetable show. You can also watch the birds and other wildlife, and benefit from being out of doors and engaged with nature. Whetstone Stray Allotments want this new project to attract a wide range of participants from the local community, including people with learning disabilities. They would also like to hear from anyone who would be interested in joining the Steering Committee, take part as a volunteer to set up the plot, support users and/or teach gardening skills.

If this project interests you, please get in touch with Brigid Falconer at [info@whetstoneallotments.co.uk](mailto:info@whetstoneallotments.co.uk), visit [www.whetstoneallotments.co.uk](http://www.whetstoneallotments.co.uk) or contact Barnet Mencap for further updates.



Whetstone Stray Allotments: A safe space

### YOUR SAY

## Looking Forward

At the last meeting of the Advisory Council we talked about the best way for people with learning disabilities and their families to give us their views. People agreed that meetings were too formal and it would be better to have some coffee mornings where people could just chat.

We decided it would be better if Barnet Mencap's Board of Directors and managers went to see people where they use our services, rather than expect them to come to formal meetings. So, in future, we are planning to go to Sherrick House to meet visitors and their families, to Equality Housing to meet the tenants and to Open Door Sessions to chat to parents there.

We held a drop-in coffee morning at our office in Hendon Lane on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March. People came for coffee and cake for a little while and told us what they think of our services and what we could do differently.

We also need your views on being a member of Barnet Mencap. We need more members – especially younger ones! Does the joining fee put you off? Are you worried about what you would need to do? What should we offer members? We are asking other local Mencaps what has worked for them and we would like your views, too, so please come along to our coffee mornings and tell us.

Please look out for the dates we will be sending out.

# Being... Billie-Jean Lockhart



**Billie: A passion for travel**

**L**et me start from the beginning of how I came into social care.

When I left school I spent two years studying hospitality and catering because I thought I wanted to be a chef. After leaving college I joined my mother in her catering business. I really did enjoy the social side of it, meeting new people and the general banter, but right from the beginning I knew it wasn't for me.

Whilst working in catering I joined a social care agency to see if I would like it. My first placement was a weekend post at a day centre for young adults with learning disabilities. I loved it right from the start. One of the things for me was being able to bring ideas and suggestions of alternative ways of working to involve the adults I was supporting. It was an eye opener for me as I was really comfortable in this working environment and found myself smiling every day.

I eventually decided to hand in my notice at the catering company and joined the agency full time. I was almost immediately offered a full-time job as a day centre officer where I did my first placement and I have never looked back.

Some of my various roles within social care have been support worker, a deputy manager, a trouble shooter, quality improvement manager and supported living manager before joining Barnet Mencap as a Short Breaks Manager. I am now the registered person at Sherrick House respite service where we provide in excess of

1200 nights' support annually to adults with learning disabilities and or autism from Barnet, Haringey and Enfield.

I also manage the Take a Break project which provides short breaks to children and families within their home and the community.

Within my role as short breaks manager I also oversee several supported holidays each year. The Just Holidays scheme is a service which facilitates holidays for adults with learning disabilities. We aim to provide the people we support with opportunities to experience new things and meet new people.

Over the last three years we have organised more than 20 holidays across England and Europe. This has been such a success; I'm so proud of what my team and I have been able to achieve and the interest in the service just continues to grow.

Between my various roles in social care and joining Barnet Mencap in 2012 I have married, had children and travelled lots!

I have two daughters who keep me busy as their personal chauffeur. I'm always inundated with requests to collect or drop them off somewhere. My husband supports Arsenal football team and works at the Emirates Stadium. Football is always a topic of conversation with the various visitors at Sherrick House, especially those that support opposing football teams.

I love to cook and entertain. I tend to use my family as guinea pigs first and get them to sample everything I cook. I have to admit the feedback is not always as positive as I'd like it to be. I'm told it's constructive criticism.

I like to think that I'm quite creative. In my spare time I like to revamp old furniture. One of my most recent projects was to make over an old chandelier and I'm currently working on a picture made entirely of buttons.

One of my greatest passions is to travel and I always like to try new things and can be a bit of a daredevil. I have a bucket list of places that I'd like to visit which I am slowly working through.

Among my travels I have swum with turtles in Mexico, stingrays in Jamaica and dolphins in Egypt; I have driven an air boat through the Florida Everglades and quad biked in the Sahara desert at night.

I'm hoping to learn to scuba dive this year in the Caribbean ... I'll let you know how that goes!



# Photo Finish



Nicola and Tom with Liam Walpole at Royal Mencap's benefits lobby



## 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](mailto: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

35 Hendon Lane, Finchley, London N3 1RT

Tel: 020 8349 3842 Fax: 020 8349 2192

Email:

[projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk)

Website: [www.barnetmencap.org.uk](http://www.barnetmencap.org.uk)



[www.facebook.com/barnetmencap](https://www.facebook.com/barnetmencap)



@barnetmencap

## Diary Dates

### Monday 20th - Sunday 26th June 2016

#### **Learning Disability Week**

Barnet Mencap will have lots of activities planned for Learning Disability Week this year - we'll put details of these online as soon as we have them, as well as in the next newsletter

### Late July - Early August 2016

#### **Open Door Summer Sessions**

Our usual programme of Summer Fun Sessions for the under 5s (and their siblings) will return in late July - for more information please contact

[projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk)

### September 2016

#### **Happy Healthy Fun Day**

The Happy Healthy Fun Day will be slightly later than in previous years, taking place in September. Stay tuned for further information nearer the time.



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

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

