

DECEMBER 2016

Who said you should never work with children or animals?



Children petting some goats during one of the Open Door under-5s sessions at Belmont Farm

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 From the Editor

2 Happy Healthy Fun Day

3 The Big Picture

3 Focus on ...
Curtains Up!

4-6 News & Events —
Hate Crime Reporting

Gateway Award
Pedal Power
Barnet Parent Carer
Forum
Sherrick House

7 Being ...
Sam Bishop

8 Photo Finish

8 Diary Dates

8 How to find us



From the Editor

A year ago we were reflecting on Barnet Mencap's 50th anniversary. The year was an opportunity to think how far we had come since the organisation was founded. Now 2016 is ending.

This edition of the newsletter looks back at Barnet Mencap's great drama production held in the summer and Happy Healthy Fun Day, which continues to attract hundreds of people.

Barnet Mencap was set up by parents and carers campaigning for the services and support needed by children and adults with learning disabilities. The Barnet Parent Carer Forum is a modern opportunity for parent carers to influence the future shape of services in the borough (see page 5). It is always keen to attract new members.

As the Chief Executive, I am usually busy, involved in meetings, and get used to telling people how the staff and volunteers do such a good job. But in the past few weeks I had a strong, direct reminder of this. Parent carers wrote comments and answered our questionnaire to say how important the Moving Up project is to them and what a difference the staff member's support makes to their families. Also, at Gateway's award ceremony it was great to see the excitement and sense of achievement shown by the young people receiving their bronze medal, and their families who came to support them.

I'd like to finish by drawing attention to the letter from Peter Carter to our readers and the appeal for donations, and to wish everyone well for the holidays and the New Year. We have been committed at Barnet Mencap to do all we can to improve support for people with learning disabilities and their families. In 2017 we will be ready to do it all again!

Ray Booth

Happy Healthy Fun Day 2016 - New venue but just as happy, healthy and fun!

On a lovely, sunny day in September the eighth annual 'Happy Healthy Fun Day' took place at Allianz Park. The new venue was very large and bright with activities taking place in several locations within the park. Everything was well signposted and there were lifts to every level so accessibility was not an issue.

The event was an information day for adults with learning disabilities, with many stalls offering the chance to chat to local community services, nursing and health teams as well as pick up leaflets and brochures (and in some cases free pens and other goodies) about the services they provide. The focus of the nursing team this year was to raise awareness of cancer screenings. Sweet Tree Farm's stall gave the opportunity to have an encounter with a rabbit. Barnet Mencap's stall debuted a new video showcasing our Fit2gether service, which was very well received - you can watch this by searching for Barnet Mencap on YouTube. Each stall was decorated with blue and white balloons, the theme colours of the day.

On arrival, people were given the opportunity to sign up for a variety of free activities which included relaxation, travel skills, sensory stories and falls prevention, as well as the ever popular yoga and dance. Once signed up people were given a different coloured sticker for each event they wanted to attend and a small army of helpers, all wearing a smart blue sash, made sure people got to where they needed to be at the right time.

Feedback from these groups were that people received a lot of good information which they will be able to use away from the day, and that the falls prevention and dance classes were great fun.

As well as the activities, there was also the chance to win prizes, including a year's free membership of our social projects, by entering a quiz. The free membership was won by Naomi Mushin, with Juliette Harris as the runner up.

All attendees were given a voucher to get a *healthy* drink at the bar and there was lots of free fruit to snack on. If you wanted something less healthy, there were snacks available to buy at the bar and large tables to sit at and relax with other attendees.

The event was officially opened by Matthew Kendall, Director of Barnet's Adult Social Services, who spent time talking to both people attending the day and the stall holders.

With over 150 people attending it was a huge success. Roll on next year!

THE BIG PICTURE



A shot from the sold out Wounded Hearts performance in the summer

Focus on... Curtains Up!

Earlier this year, Barnet Mencap and Fixation Theatre were asked to take over the long-running Bravo! drama group.

On April 11th Barnet Mencap and Fixation Theatre teachers Laura Davitt, Sarah Akokhia and Maria Garrido were very honoured and pleased to attend their first ever session. Pina Griffin and Mandy Formosa, paved the way for a smooth handover, allowing plenty of time for the students to get to know their new teachers before Barnet Mencap and Fixation Theatre took over full time after the summer break, supported by the volunteers who had been with the group for years.

The group, which consists of over 20 adults with learning disabilities and or autism from across the borough and further afield, has gone from strength to strength and has since renamed itself 'Curtains Up.' They are currently in rehearsal for their 2017 show, which is set to be a great one, with lots of acting, singing, dancing

and jokes!

Barnet Mencap and Fixation Theatre already run the very successful Monday 18+ dance and drama groups in partnership with each other. This summer they put on a brilliant performance of 'Wounded Hearts', a production devised by the service users themselves. Wounded Hearts follows the story of three pensioners in a retirement home as they look back on their experiences of war. These memories are brought to life through flashbacks of the front-line. It had a sold out performance at ArtsDepot. The group is already back rehearsing now and devising a new production for 2017.

Curtains Up rehearse every Monday at The Bull Theatre, High Barnet. If you'd like to find out more information or get involved, please telephone 020 8349 3842 or email projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

HATE CRIME

Hate Crime Reporting in Barnet

Hate crime has been in the news over the past few months. A rise in crimes that feature race or religious hatred is worrying and this needs to be tackled. However, other forms of hate crime are also felt to be widespread, including those targeting disabled people, but the number of reports remains very low.

Since last summer the newsletter has kept people up to date with the review of hate crime reporting in Barnet. There are plans to make it easier to report when people are the victims of hate crime. These changes will help people with learning disabilities and their families when they have been the victims of crime or experienced physical or verbal harassment. As well as reporting this directly to the police, they can do it at a Hate Crime Reporting Site. Voluntary organisations all over Barnet will have staff trained to take reports and forward them to the police and offer sensitive and well-coordinated support to victims.

Barnet Mencap and HfT, an organisation in High Barnet for adults with learning disabilities, have volunteered to make Hate Crime Reports. We would encourage anyone who thinks they are the victim of disability hate crime to come forward. We will support individuals and help the police to take action against the people who carry out hate crime. By building up a picture of hate crime and incidents, the new system will help the police and others direct resources to deal with 'hot spots', such as bus stations, schools and town centres.

The new system was launched formally on 10th October at the beginning of Hate Crime Week. Across the country there were events to raise awareness of all kinds of hate crime and press home the message that this is something people should never have to put up with just because of who they are.



Aaron Ogbeide working at Halfords as part of the Gateway Bronze Award

GATEWAY AWARD

Gateway to Opportunities

This year is the first time Barnet Mencap have run the Gateway Bronze Award. Fourteen participants each completed a total of at least 60 hours of activities across five different areas: volunteering, hobbies, fitness, lifestyle and the Gateway Challenge.

The participants chose a wide and diverse range of activities some of which wouldn't have been possible without the support of local organisations including Timebank, Chickenshed, North London Hospice, Arsenal, Saracens and Halfords in Whetstone.

For the hobby section, three of our Participants - Patrick Saunders, Jacob Gherson and Aaron Ogbeide - created a promotional anti-smoking video with Cut Films. This won awards in their local Borough competition and then went on to win two more awards at the National Cut Film Awards held at BAFTA!

Halfords were so impressed with Aaron Ogbeide, who did 12 hours as a voluntary bike mechanic, that they have offered Aaron the chance to continue on a voluntary basis with a view to giving him 16 hours a week paid work as soon as a vacancy comes up!

Well done and congratulations to all the Gateway participants who have either finished or are nearing the finishing line to their Bronze Award...what an amazing achievement!

PEDAL POWER

Cycling for all

Pedal Power is a cycling club for teenagers and adults with learning disabilities, meeting in Finsbury Park on Tuesdays and at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium on Thursdays.

Their mission is to provide cycling opportunities for people of all abilities, to encourage all members of the family to cycle, and to get support workers cycling too so they encourage the people they're supporting. They achieve this through a range of different accessible bicycles, tricycles and scooters (including duet wheelchair bikes) to suit all abilities.

Several Barnet Mencap members regularly attend sessions at Pedal Power, but they're always looking for more cyclists!

To find out more about Pedal Power, head to www.pedalpowercc.org or telephone coordinator Jo Roach on 020 8809 7718.



Denise taking a break at Pedal Power

BPCF

Barnet Parent Carer Forum's AGM

The Barnet Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) held its second AGM in September at St Paul's Church, East Finchley. The event was fairly well attended and it was great to see some new faces in the audience. We were fortunate to have a very informative talk from Belinda Blank from the Advocacy and Support Partnership, who acts as an independent advocate for families with a child with SEND. She outlined her role for us and there were a number of very interesting questions regarding EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans), social care provision, transition and school placements. Belinda also runs seminars on a range of subjects - details of which can be found on her website, www.advocacyandsupport.co.uk

Our second speaker was Phil Cockayne from the Good Governance Institute. He explained the structure of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and its role in commissioning health services. He was also very interested in gaining the views of members of the public into how they perceive the service – and he received a number of responses from the audience on this point! To this end, the CCG would like to organise a public consultation, details of which will be on the BPCF website shortly.

BPCF's Chair, Robin Dawson, reported on the activities of the Forum over the last year. There was a period of considerable upheaval in the Local Authority with a lot of restructuring and staff changes. This made it quite challenging for the Forum to build working relationships with the LA but recently we have made some promising progress. Our members have been involved in the development of the 0-25 service and the Local Offer and are about to do some public consultation work with the SEN team. In addition, we attended the annual SENCO conference and raised our profile among mainstream schools. We have also been active in liaising with the National Network of Parent Carer Forums and the CCG, as well as taking advice from Contact a Family on how to develop

the Forum. Our aims for the next 12 months are to increase our membership, raise awareness of the Forum among parents and professionals and consolidate our links within the Local Authority, with the goal of shaping the services our children receive.

As always, we are keen to welcome new members and fresh ideas – please see our website www.barnetpcf.org.uk

SHERRICK HOUSE

Garden Revamp

During the summer months, Sherrick House met with the National Citizen Service (NCS) as part of their Team Challenge. Team Challenge is a project which supports young people aged 15 to 17. It helps young people build skills for work and life, including management roles, and the young people are supported by their mentor to take a lead in organising projects which would include fundraising to raise money to complete projects.

The chosen project was a revamp of the Sherrick House garden to make it more of a sensory garden which would benefit our users greatly. We had to give a presentation to 12 young people which outlined what services we provide and how best NCS could help and support the service to have the garden revamped. This was followed by a lot of questions. The enthusiasm from the young people was amazing. The willingness to learn about Barnet Mencap and the services we provide prompted them to fundraise in central London and spread awareness about people with learning disabilities and autism, especially to the younger generation, at the same time raising money to complete the project at Sherrick House.

The revamp was completed in over 6 hours and included completing a mural on the back wall of the garden, painting benches and garage doors, restoring paint work to the swings and potting lavender plants and flowers.

An enjoyable day was had by all and the young people did a great job! Their hard work has really paid off.



The helpers from the National Citizen Service - in front on their mural - who did such an amazing job in the Sherrick House garden

Being... Sam Bishop (née Gibbs)



All smiles! Sam with husband Gary

Well let me begin! I started my working career many years ago, working in a retired teacher service for the Teacher's Benevolent Fund called Elstree Manor with my Mum. The service was closing down so I looked for another job and got lucky when I was appointed as a support worker for Royal Mencap.

This was my first experience of working with people with learning disabilities in a supported living service and I enjoyed it. I completed lots of training and worked in loads of different types of Services, meeting some of the staff who have also worked for Barnet Mencap along the way - Lorraine Jarman, Julia Hine and obviously my sister Laura Arlington.

After a few years I needed a change and came to work at Barnet Mencap as a Community Link Worker with Equality Housing when we were based at The Burroughs and Pat Jones was the manager. The team was quite small back then, but some of the staff still work here - Lucy Clifford, Ray Booth, Tim Forbes, Teresa Skiba and Peter Nyamekeh. As Barnet Mencap got

bigger, there was a need for larger premises so we moved to Hendon Lane.

I've key-worked many of the tenants over the years and seen so many positive changes - people who wouldn't go out now travelling the world unsupported - and some sadness as we have lost people.

Again, I fancied a change so off I went to sunny Cyprus to live, only to return to Barnet Mencap after an extended holiday - two years to be exact!! And back to where I started, but now my long-time colleague and friend Lucy was the manager.

I worked my way up the Barnet Mencap ladder and across different projects and am now manager of Community Services (Adults and Children) which has not happened without the support of my colleagues.

Anyone who knows me knows that I enjoy food, cooking and travelling. I have been to many exciting places over the years: India, Barbados, Jamaica, Cuba (where I experienced hurricane Sandy - never again!) and of course Cyprus, to name but a few.

And I love going to different restaurants, the Hand and Flowers being my favourite in Marlow, give it a go if you have a chance! Then I like practicing my cooking skills by trying the dishes I've tasted, my husband being the main taster and he doesn't put on any weight - so unfair!!

I also love animals and I am a foster carer for the RSPCA. I currently have a cat named Pearl, who is sixteen years old and completely blind.

My family are really important to me and I enjoy spending time with them. I went to the Elstree Manor Hotel recently for afternoon tea with my Mum - yes, you read it right, it's next to what was Elstree Manor where I first worked - funny how life comes around.

I have recently got married to Gary after six years of being together. It was an amazing day, and I am looking forward to my honeymoon in the Dominican Republic later in December - two years after we got engaged there.

I am not sure what life holds for the future, but am looking forward to hopefully being happy, healthy and enjoying married life.

Photo Finish



Brian and Wendy at the Happy Healthy Fun Day



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

35 Hendon Lane, Finchley, London N3 1RT

Tel: 020 8349 3842 Fax: 020 8349 2192

Email:

projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

Website: www.barnetmencap.org.uk



Like Barnet Mencap on Facebook



Follow @barnetmencap on Twitter

Diary Dates

Please note the Barnet Mencap office will be closed from 24th December 2016 to 2nd January 2017



Thursday 16th February 2017

60's Valentine's Night

7:30pm - 11pm at The Clissold Arms, 105 Fortis Green, London N2 9HR

Service users, family carers and friends are all invited to our 60's Valentine's Night. There will be a live band playing hits from the sixties, a raffle, and a prize for the best sixties fancy dress costume! Tickets £10 (including a drink) - to book yours, come to the Barnet Mencap office, telephone 020 8349 3842 or email bookings@barnetmencap.org.uk



Sherrick House's 'Just Holidays' project provides supported holidays for adults with learning disabilities. The 2017 timetable is available now - please contact projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk for a copy, or ring Sherrick House on 020 8203 4860 for more information.

The next newsletter, with all the latest news and features, will appear in February 2017

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

