

SEPTEMBER 2017

(Un)Common People



Some of the cast at the successful House of (un)Commons COPs drama production at artsdepot's theatre

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From the Editor

It is almost three years since we started work on the Bright Futures contract and on pages 4-5 we have highlighted some of the things this service has achieved.

Zofia started work with Barnet Mencap and has already been busy recruiting volunteers and raising money for the organisation in her role as Volunteering and Fundraising Coordinator.

On 8th November, Barnet Mencap is holding its AGM and we hope as many members and supporters as possible are able to attend. We're at a new venue this year, and the details of this can be found on the back page. This year marks some important anniversaries for us. It is 30 years since the Family Support service started, helping parent carers and disabled children and 25 years for Open Door. This service helped families in those vital early years and both projects are still going strong.

It is also 25 years since COPs started. While the project has changed in that time, it has always given people with learning disabilities and autism the opportunity to make friends, learn skills and have fun.

At the AGM, we will also be presenting a special resolution. Barnet Mencap needs to update its Articles and Memorandum of Understanding. This is our governing document and information will be made available to explain the changes. I hope that you are able to support it when it comes to a vote on 8th November.

Ray Booth

Learning Disability Week 2017

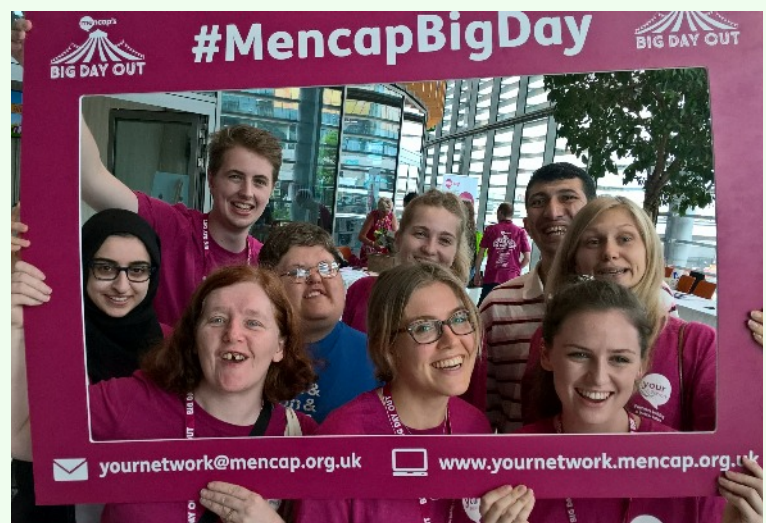
It is important that staff in key public services know how best to communicate with people with learning disabilities. Raising awareness with mainstream services is one of Barnet Mencap's strategic goals.

So this year's Learning Disability Week has been a great opportunity to do that. Barnet Mencap, with members of the Have Your Say group, has worked with the Barnet Learning Disability Service by spending a day with the police and fire service. They talked with police officers at Colindale station, giving them communication tips and dispelling some of the myths around learning disability. They explained how the police could work better with people with learning disabilities who report a crime or are witnesses. They also told officers how to refer to specialist services, where this is necessary to get extra help. Both the police and fire service would like more training and want to have easy read information available.

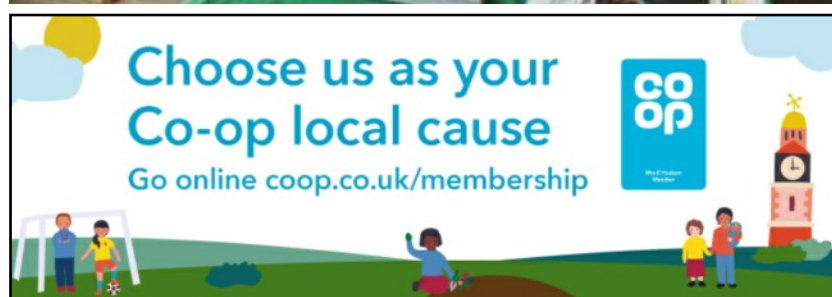
The group also went to the fire stations in Finchley and Hendon and did the same thing. Fire Officers can play a vital role in helping people with learning disabilities with fire safety. They can help with alarms and other measures, as well as advising them on issues like hoarding paper at home. The fire service would like there to be more referrals between them and Barnet Mencap.

Learning Disability Week was also a chance for staff, trustees and people with learning disabilities to meet counterparts across southern England at the Big Day Out.

Barnet Mencap contributed to the session on early intervention services for children and families and its role in the North West London Mencap Consortium. People from Barnet Mencap volunteered on the day and everyone found it a useful way to cement the relationship with Royal Mencap.



Big Day Out: Nicola and Amir representing our Have Your Say group with volunteers at the Big Day Out



Zofia at Barnet Volunteer Fair and East Barnet Festival, and Annalie with Mayor of Barnet Councillor Brian Salinger

Focus on... Volunteering/ Fundraising

It is a very exciting time at Barnet Mencap due to a number of volunteer positions opening in the past few months. We have already recruited 10 new volunteers who will support our activities, reception desk and office as well as the Childs Hill Library service. We have participated in the Barnet Volunteer Fair which took place at artsdepot's theatre in early June and gave us a chance to spread the word about our opportunities and services. The event also allowed us to award two of our amazing volunteers, Annalie and George, for their endless support, skills and enthusiasm!

We were very happy to attend the East Barnet Festival where we sold DVDs and toys and we were able to reach out to the local community and promote our work and services. Another exciting project that we launched in June is our Crowdfunding Campaign, which we run with Kisharon. Together we want to turn Childs Hill Library into a thriving community space where

everyone is welcome. We want everybody from the area to be able to benefit from film screenings, picnics, workshop space and a children corner which will be funded through this project! For more information and to pledge any amount you can to support this campaign, search for 'Spacehive Childs Hill Library'

We are also extremely happy to work closely with local Co-operative stores as we run our Community Fund Co-op campaign to raise funds for a sensory room at Sherrick House. We are half way through the campaign and we still need to raise another half of the funds! Please choose us as your Co-op local cause. All you need to do is get a Co-op membership card and you will be able to support us every time you shop!

We are looking for devoted fundraising volunteers who would help us raise the money and promote our presence in the borough! If you are interested please get in touch with Zofia Piotrowicz at zofia.piotrowicz@barnetmencap.org.uk.

BRIGHT FUTURES

Three Years of Brighter Futures

We're fast approaching three years of our Bright Futures project, which combines our usual social and learning activities through COPs, our Working for You advice, information and guidance service, and Royal Mencap's Employment Project. As we reach this point, we're looking back at some of the things we have achieved over the past few years.

Employment

The Employment project is a specialist programme of support to help people with a learning disability get a job. We have proven success rates getting people into employment, combined with a high quality person-centred approach, which makes us the leader in this field.

We believe the best way to support people with a learning disability into paid employment is through practical support. We help people to identify vacancies and provide support on the job, while also identifying training needs.

Giuseppa from Barnet was deemed 'surplus to requirements' from a supermarket at the end of February 2017. She got referred to Royal Mencap from Barnet Mencap and the Job Centre as they tried to keep her in work, but were unable to secure her a job.

"I got referred to Jon as I was told he will help me find employment. When I left Sainsbury's I went straight to the Job Centre as I have a family to provide for and needed some money coming in. The Job Centre referred me to Jon and within a week he secured me a job interview with McDonalds. He supported me at the interview and helped me with my online Food and Safety training course. I'm very grateful to Jon and his team for such a quick turnaround from being unemployed to working full-time at McDonalds".

Royal Mencap helped Giuseppa apply for jobs by searching online and helping to fill in application forms. She has dyslexia so with the aid from Royal Mencap she was able to fill in the McDonalds online application form and get support completing the online test.

She has been wonderful to work with and the quick turnaround of getting her into paid employment within a month is a great good news story.

Since the start of the contract, we have placed over 75 people like Giuseppa into work.



Top: The Employment project has found work for over 75 people. Bottom: The COPs group at Whetstone Stray Allotments (photo from @comm_plot on twitter)

Community Opportunities

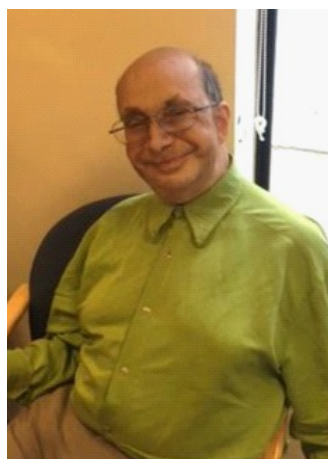
COPs provides a wide range of community-based social, leisure, educational and cultural activities during the day, evenings and at weekends for adults with learning disabilities, Asperger's or autism. We currently have 175 members accessing the service which has steadily increased over the past couple of years.

The activities and short courses we offer are decided by the members, such as trips to museums; the theatre and other attractions in London; our walking group; a huge range of sports and fitness activities and much more. We have also run courses on e-safety and sexual

health and relationships, as well as cultural evenings.

COPs works in partnership with many other organisations to promote as many opportunities as possible. Recently we have offered two days at Sweet Tree Farm, where members learnt about the day-to-day running of a farm, caring for the livestock and growing food - which was harvested and cooked for all to try.

COPs caters for a wide range of abilities and ages and this is reflected in what we offer. We have just had our first wheelchair basketball taster session at Middlesex University which was very popular and great fun. We are now in our third year of supporting Silver Week, which is a national initiative promoting services and activities for those aged 55+ who are sometimes isolated or who have health and mobility issues. From Silver Week last year, COPs has a monthly "Nosh Night" supper club held at our office. Each month a different cuisine is served - as chosen by the members - alongside a social activity. The aim is to bring together people over 50 who are isolated, giving them the chance to have a good meal while socialising and making friends.



David at one of our Nosh Nights

David (pictured) was unknown to Barnet Mencap before he joined our allotment course. We were made aware that all of his family live overseas, he has quite a few falls and lives alone. He came in to Working for You, and decided to join COPs to help with his isolation, including joining the Nosh Night group. He turned up to the first session in a suit and tie, and thoroughly enjoyed himself, chatting away. He said it was "the best meal he had eaten in a long time" and told staff that often he "can't be bothered" to cook proper meals so this was "really special". He plans to continue attending our future events.

Working for You

Working for You provides information, advice and guidance to adults with learning disabilities

and/or autism in the Borough of Barnet. We have successfully worked with over 500 people over the past 3 years. Every day is different, with the range of issues we help with as varied as the individuals with whom we work.

We regularly support people to complete benefit applications, and attend assessments and tribunals. We have advocated for clients in court and helped with a myriad of housing issues, budgeting and debt advice, understanding correspondence, supporting with health issues and appointments. Sometimes we are just a sounding board and offer emotional support, but whatever the issue, we work closely with the individual offering them tailored support to get the outcome they need.

One client, Mr X, is 45 years old with a learning disability, depression and anxiety. He contacted us when he received an eviction notice from his private landlord.

Our staff worked with Mr X and after almost 2 years of perseverance, frustrations and disappointments, he finally secured a one bedroom flat. During this time, Mr X was supported to see a housing officer, complete a self-assessment, financial assessment and consent form. Mr X was supported to renew his passport as this was needed for ID and to obtain medical reports from his health professionals. Staff attended an assessment with regards to a ESA benefit claim as well as attending a court hearing regarding the eviction.

Mr X was secured temporary accommodation until eventually he was offered a one-bed property. Although this case took 2 years, it had a very positive outcome thanks to the staff involved constantly advocating on Mr X's behalf to achieve the best outcome.

Mr X is very grateful for the support he received and feels he would not have been able to navigate the bureaucracy or the stress of the situation without us.



Peter meeting with a Working for You client

TRUSTEES

We're looking for trustees!

Barnet Mencap has vacancies for volunteers to join the board. The words trustee, director and board member are often used to describe the role, but they all mean the same.

As a trustee, you are required to act in the charity's best interests and ensure that it is carrying out its purpose properly. In practical terms this means attending Board meetings every couple of months with the Chief Executive to hear about the ongoing work of the charity and have an opportunity to ask questions. Although the business of the evening is formal, the atmosphere is friendly and informal with breaks for tea and coffee. There are always policies to approve and a financial report from the Honorary Treasurer as trustees are expected to carefully manage the charity's financial resources.

Each trustee brings their own unique skills and experience to the board to the benefit of Barnet Mencap. Currently, trustees have backgrounds in finance, education, fundraising and risk management but more is needed! Board meetings are always interesting and often you learn as much from your fellow trustees as the professional staff who manage the various projects. Trustees can also sit on various sub committees, help in the office, attend social events and the AGM.

We would be delighted to hear from you if you are interested to learn more about becoming a trustee. There is also a helpful leaflet on the gov.uk website which explains the essential duties of a trustee.

If you are interested, please contact projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk.



UNICEF

Supporting disabled children

Barnet Mencap supports the rights of disabled children, and Barnet council is committed to building child and family friendly communities. But it is not always clear what that means or how we do that in our day-to-day work.

Over the next couple of years a new initiative will help us to make sense of this and find concrete ways for us all to recognize and



respect children's rights.

Unicef is best known for its work overseas but it is also active here in the UK. There have been some pilot projects looking at

aspects of children's rights and now Unicef will be working with LB Barnet and their partners in the voluntary sector. Starting with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, there will be work done locally to raise awareness of children's rights across the community.

The intention is to develop work on important areas like inclusion, good physical and mental health and ensuring children are safe and secure. The focus will be on children's rights, making services more child-centred and to strengthen multi-agency working. Children will be helped to engage in their communities.

This is a really promising initiative. Barnet Mencap will be involved so that we can learn more and help to make it a success for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism.

Unicef will provide support, training, mentoring and resources. Barnet Mencap's staff will help to plan the work and take part in the training on offer.

What we want to see is real equality for disabled children and young people so that they have opportunities like their peers. A vital step towards equality is for people to know their rights and for them to be respected in education, health, employment, in the family and in all areas of their lives.

Being... Chris Clements



My name is Christopher James Clements and I was born in 1976 in Belgium in a place called Tongeren. My dad was stationed there with NATO in the RAF. In June 1976 we came back to the UK and went to live in RAF Locking near Weston-super-Mare. In June 1977 my dad's service in the RAF ended and we moved back to Edgware where my mum came from. I have one sister called Sarah who was born in November 1978 and I see her during the holidays.

I went to Grove Park School which was in Colindale and then Whitefield School (which is now a sports college). After that, I went to Oak Lodge School which is in East Finchley then into a worklink course at Barnet College and then First Run. I enjoyed school, and the teachers weren't bad. Lots of Barnet Mencap members were at school with me.

I have been going to Community Focus for ten years on and off. In Community Focus I did creative writing and drama and I also do painting

and drawing.

I go to Finchley Youth Theatre where I do many drama plays with other people from Barnet Mencap. In the most recent play, House of Uncommons, I played Gordon Ramsay. The performance went really well, but in rehearsals I tripped over a cable and fell over! This hurt my leg and arm but I was ok for the show. My mum was there to watch me.

I have been going to COPs (Barnet Mencap's project for leisure and learning activities) for many years. I remember Sarah (Akokhia) interviewing me when I joined. I like it because I enjoy meeting with my friends like Dimi, Gary, Tom and others, and I like making new ones. I enjoy going bowling and to the pub with the group. I also help with the mailout for COPs, putting the flyers in the envelopes and stamping them ready to go out to members. I do this once a month, and have done it for about 6 months.

I have started to go to a pottery class at St Joseph's. I have been to pottery classes before and I enjoy doing it. I have made quite a few things in pottery like a letter rack, a vase and a plant holder. I hope to make even more when I start back in September! I'm looking forward to doing lots more pottery in the future.

Earlier this year I began living in one of Barnet Mencap's Equality Housing shared houses in East Finchley where I hope to become more independent, but I still come to my mum and dad at the weekends, where we hang out and go shopping.

There are five of us who share the house, two women and three men, so we all have to try and learn to get along. We are like a family – we might have arguments but we sort ourselves out and get on well. My favourite thing about living here is that I like the company. I would like to learn to cook more for myself – especially Italian food - and keep my room tidy and do more everyday tasks.

In my spare time, I love to go out and about. My last holiday was to Great Yarmouth through (Barnet Mencap's) Sherrick House. This was good – especially being with my friend Dimi, and my favourite part was when we got to have a nice big conversation at night. I would really like to go on holiday with my friends again!

Photo Finish



Dancers at Sherrick House's Navjyot Gala, which took place at the Shree Aden Depala Mitrimandal Centre. The event featured Bollywood dancing, music and a buffet.



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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Website: www.barnetmencap.org.uk



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Diary Dates

1st - 7th October 2017

Silver Sunday Week 2017

As part of the 'Silver Sunday' over-50s initiative, there will be a range of activities across the country. We will be providing artwork and Christmas cards from our Over-50s art group as well as hosting some events

For more information on Silver Sunday Week events in Barnet, search for 'Barnet Silver Sunday' or contact us on the address below.



If you are unable to come along but would like to purchase some art work or Christmas cards, please contact the office on 020 8349 3842 or projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

Wednesday 8th November 2017

Barnet Mencap's AGM

Everybody is invited to come along to our Annual General Meeting, at a **new venue!**

10:30am-12:30pm at St Paul's Centre, Long Lane, Finchley N3 2PU

For more information, please contact Project Support on projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk or 020 8349 3842

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

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

