

January 2020

Look who's 40!



The Sherrick House short breaks service celebrating its 40th birthday with a barbecue in the back garden. Find out more on page 2

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From the Editor

I was really pleased to see so many people at the AGM. Members, staff, volunteers and supporters packed into St Paul's to hear about our work and the highlights of 2019.

It is important to us that people with learning disabilities and autism have a real presence in the community. This newsletter illustrates the work we did at events across Barnet in Hate Crime Week.

Barnet Mencap is always looking to innovate, and it is exciting when new projects get off the ground. But we should not forget what a vital role is played by some of our long-standing projects. Sherrick House has celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. For families, short breaks are as important today as they were in 1979 but the way we offer them can change. The article beside this one shows how the model of the short breaks service continues to develop.

Equality Housing has been providing support to tenants for a long time too. On page 7, some of the tenants describe what this support means to them.

Nadia Topper is Barnet Mencap's new Fundraiser. In the next edition there will be more information about her work and plans to increase funding for Barnet Mencap. The financial situation is a worry and something we are determined to tackle. The Board, staff and volunteers hope to take things easy as the year comes to an end and re-charge our batteries.

With our best wishes for 2020.

Ray Booth

Sherrick House: A Ruby Anniversary

Sherrick House celebrated its Ruby 40th Anniversary in 2019. The property, located in leafy Hendon, North London, has seen hundreds of clients through its doors over the past 40 years and has provided a vital service of short breaks within the London Borough of Barnet.

One client has been staying at the service for the past 3 decades. Their primary carers believe that the service has been 'life-changing' for them, providing a well-earned rest when times have been particularly challenging.

'Our stress levels dramatically reduce due to Sherrick House. It's far better to be refreshed than to continue long days of caring - especially when I had a full-time job. Our personal time is important. We need to value our own needs and wants in addition to our roles as being Mum and Dad!'

Another client used Sherrick House for only a year, but this gave them the independence skills to move into their own supported living property.

'I would like to thank the staff at Sherrick House. I have learned lots of new skills including preparing my own meals and managing my money. I will miss Sherrick House, but I am looking forward to moving into my new home.'

Over the years, the faces may have changed, but the principles of providing tailored short breaks and respite remain the same. Next year, we are diversifying our short breaks programme by offering our biggest 'Just Holidays' range ever. This includes trips to the USA, Spain and our classic British favourites. The programme will also expand to offer a day service provision based at Sherrick House during weekday daytime hours. Providing short breaks within our client's own homes is also new for us but ensures that we are offering the most flexible services to everyone.

We all love a party at Sherrick House and our anniversary was celebrated with a summer barbecue and live music. Clients and carers past and present and staff enjoyed a sunny afternoon with dancing, succulent food and a wonderful slice of birthday cake. Here's to the next 40...



Reshma Hirani, our Hate Crime Reporting Coordinator, with Ray Booth, our Chief Executive, at a stall during Hate Crime Awareness Week

Focus on... Hate Crime Week 2019

This October, as part of **National Hate Crime Awareness Week**, Barnet Mencap hosted a number of events across the borough.

We teamed up with Barnet Council, the Safer Transport Team (Metropolitan Police), Inclusion Barnet and Community Security Trust to raise awareness about reporting hate crime. Hate crime is an issue that affects the entire community. No one deserves to be targeted because of their disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, race, religion or national origin. Hate crimes include offences such as verbal abuse, criminal damage, bullying, assault, harassment and offensive graffiti. There has also been a recent increase in online hate crime through social media.

We held Hate Crime Reporting Stands at Broadwalk Shopping Centre (Edgware), BOOST in Burnt Oak and Childs Hill and Golders Green Bus Station, where we talked to members of

the public about identifying hate crime and how to report to the Police. This included information about Barnet's Hate Crime Reporting Centres, where vulnerable adults can get support if they need assistance to speak up about hate crime. A stand at Barnet Council's offices in Colindale focused on training staff and visitors. A number of Barnet's Councillors also attended our events, pledging support to Barnet's anti-hate crime campaign.

During the week, **210** people signed up to become **Hate Crime Reporting Champions**, pledging to report hate crime if they witness it. Reporting Champions receive regular Hate Crime Bulletins and opportunities to attend workshops for refresher training.

For more information or to receive our Hate Crime Bulletin, please contact Barnet's Hate Crime Reporting Co-ordinator Reshma Hirani at reshma.hirani@barnetmencap.org.uk.

LeDeR

The Review into Learning Disability Mortality

The Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) programme was established in May 2015 to support local areas across England to review the deaths of people with a learning disability.

By reviewing those deaths we are able to generate learning in relation to best practice versus poor practice and drive service improvement for people with learning disabilities. LeDeR reviews are part of a range of initiatives to reduce health inequalities for people with learning disabilities, a priority in the NHS.

The NHS Long Term Plan commitment to the LeDeR programme is welcomed as the learning from reviews is converted into improvement in partnership with families and carers, which is vital in providing a perspective that could make a difference to the care of others.

Since LeDeR was fully implemented in 2017, the programme has received over 100 notifications reporting the death of a person with a learning disability. In Barnet we have a local steering group which comes together regularly to identify themes from reviews and to work more cohesively with our partners across the borough.

Learning from local and national LeDeR reviews shows detecting early warning signs of deterioration is key to providing timely and effective care.

As some people with a learning disability are not able to communicate they are feeling unwell, across Barnet we have adopted the **Stop and Watch tool** (below) to help people recognise those early warning signs. We have promoted this across GP practices and will continue to roll out the initiative to care homes and carers using pocket sized 'Z-cards'.

Please contact Caroline McGirr, LeDeR Coordinator for further information on the LeDeR programme at caroline.mcgirr2@nhs.net



The Stop and Watch tool to recognise early warning signs

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Reflecting on the year

We were delighted to see so many of our friends and supporters at our AGM in November. The room was full of a mixture of clients, carers and guests including Madam Mayor, Councillor Caroline Stock; representative of Royal Mencap; and many commissioners from the borough.

We celebrated 40 years of short breaks and respite at Sherrick House and explained that we are still very committed to providing short breaks to families, even as we face hard times. Take a Break offers short breaks for children and young people and is also thriving with its school holiday camps and the security of being on the new list of approved providers.

Our treasurer explained the accounts and financial side of our business. Wider economic uncertainty has its impact on us, as well as coping with increased costs and a reduction in use of some services, but we are working hard to provide the highest possible service in times of austerity.



Ray Booth gave an overview of the year and picked out highlights from each project which are explained in our new look annual report available on our website (<https://www.barnetmencap.org.uk/our-newsletters/>) or

from the office. The new report has fewer words and more photos to enable more people to enjoy it.

Questions from the audience mainly related to the lease we have on our offices, which is due for renewal in the winter of 2021-22. Families were reassured that there will be as little disruption as possible, even if we do have to move. Next year we

want to build on the Q&A session so more people feel included.

The meeting concluded as everyone enjoyed the film about inclusive rugby featuring our clients and Mill Hill Rugby Club. Take a moment to watch this lovely short film which is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80RAQMv1sRU>.

DRAMA PERFORMANCE

Curtains Up for the Greatest Showdown



Curtains Up and Showdown are weekly dance and drama groups run by Fixation Theatre Company in partnership with Barnet Mencap. Each year, our members work with the drama/ dance teachers and musicians to produce original shows.

This year, they joined forces to put on *Curtains Up for the Greatest Showdown*. One of our service users, **Janette Hauff**, went to see the show:

"My church friends drew me a map to show me how to get to the venue, and I travelled with my friend Evelyn, a week before, by bus to the theatre so I wouldn't get lost on the day of the show. I met my brother there and he kindly bought us both a ticket. I wanted to see my housemates Tom and Chris star in the show!

There was lots of singing and dancing and the audience were encouraged to join in! I really liked singing 'Summer Nights' from Grease and ABBA's 'Mamma Mia'!

There was a raffle and my brother bought us three strips - he won a bottle of spirits and he was very happy! We all thoroughly enjoyed the show!"

MENTAL CAPACITY ACT

Talking about the Mental Capacity Act

Before the Mental Capacity Act 2005 became law it was often common to view any person who had a diagnosis of a condition affecting their mind or their brain (for example dementia or brain injuries following an accident, or a stroke, mental illness or learning disabilities) as not able to make any of their own decisions. This was simply on the basis that they had a diagnosis of that condition.

To do that nowadays is not only discriminatory but against the law in terms of the Mental Capacity Act (MCA).

A large part of the purpose of the MCA is to try and make sure that people are not prevented from being able to make their own decisions purely because they have a condition that affects their mind or brain.

More than that - it can never be said that a person is not able to make their own decision unless 'all practicable steps' to help them to do so have been taken without success.

This means that it will always be important to make sure people are given the time they need and the support they need when you are trying to help them come to their own decision. Care should always be taken about what would be helpful in each individual situation and what would be the best approach in order to give the person the best chance of making their own decision.

Sometimes, despite all of the above being done as it should, the outcome of a Mental Capacity Assessment is that the person does not have the capacity to make their own decision. This may be because they cannot understand the information about the decision they are

making, or cannot communicate their decision in any way. Only then can the person be said to lack the capacity to make their own decision.

It is important to remember that capacity is not an 'on - off' switch and even where a person has been assessed as lacking capacity, their wishes and feelings must always be taken into account, as much as possible, when any decision is being made in their best interests.

In many ways you are trying to determine what that individual person would be likely to have decided if they were able to make their own decision.

When trying to work out what is in a person's best interests Section 4 of the Mental Capacity Act and chapter 5 of the Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice explain in more detail and give helpful guidance on what has to be done.

Liz Sinclair, Lead Practitioner Mental Capacity Act and DOLS, London Borough of Barnet



Well done and thank you to Amy, who ran a 10km in Hackney and raised over £500 for Barnet Mencap!

Being... An Equality Housing Tenant



Independent living is both exciting and scary. Barnet Mencap's Equality Housing project aims to 'take away the scary' to provide supported living opportunities for people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

Equality Housing has three supported shared houses where you can learn the life skills you will need to live independently - things like cooking, shopping, paying bills and many other skills. We spoke to a number of our clients to hear what they had to say about living in our supported living properties.

Ricky said, "When Mum was alive she put me in this house, because she wanted me to be safe. Now she's gone I'll tell you the truth, everything is perfect now."

Nicola added "Before I lived here I didn't have any skills, now I can cook and clean and do other basic skills for living". One of our newer clients, **Chris**, said "I like living in the shared house by myself with my new friends".

Gary also lives in one of our houses and said, "I feel safe with Equality Housing."

Our support workers visit you every week and can support you with a wide range of skills to get you started on an independent life.

Simon appreciates the support he received with his finances, saying "I like doing bank stuff with my support worker".

All of the clients in our houses and those that we support as outreach clients have access to social activities, such as group trips to the theatre or cinema, bowling and day trips. This is what **Melvyn** enjoys most about Equality Housing, saying, "I like taking part in activities."

David agrees, "I like going to the men's group and meeting friends."

Laurence said, "Before I came to Equality Housing I just sat indoors".

Equality Housing helps provide the life skills to help people live independently, and one client who now lives independently is **Amanda**, who said, "I don't live in the shared houses anymore, I now have my own flat and I use the skills I learnt in the shared house. I couldn't have made the move without Equality Housing. I am still getting support through their Outreach."

You can view some videos of our tenants talking about the service on the Barnet Mencap website on the 'Housing & Outreach' page

We currently have vacancies within our shared houses and outreach program. Are you an adult with a learning disability or autism who would like to live in Barnet and would like to take the first step to living independently?

If you would like to find out more about being an Equality Housing tenant and starting your journey towards independence please call Lucy Clifford on 020 8349 3842.

Photo Finish



Wrapped up warm! A Springboard social group trip into London in December



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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Diary Dates

Spring Party

Friday 17th April 2020

A party for adult service users, their friends and family and support workers with a live band!

We will share more details closer to the time.



Fancy a holiday in 2020?

Our **Just Holidays** brochure is now out for 2020. We offer a wide range of holidays for people with learning disabilities and/or autism from Butlin's to Florida!

If you'd like a brochure or some more information, contact us via projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk or 020 8203 4860.

The next newsletter, with all the latest news and features, will appear in February 2020

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

