

December 2020

## The Great Barnet Bake Off



Ready, set, bake! Moley trying his hand at making some cupcakes as part of our Short Breaks day services offer! We offer lots of fun social, craft and cookery day sessions at our Sherrick House site - contact us for details!

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## *From the Editor*

The pandemic continues to dominate all our lives. It presents enormous risks to our health and for the economy. There is growing evidence of how hard people with a learning disability and autism have been affected by Covid-19. At Barnet Mencap, we are determined to make sure people get the support they need. The newsletter sets out how our projects are responding to the pandemic, such as a big increase in the number of parent carers of disabled children contacting us. You can also read how health checks can help people and their families to get good health care.

The pandemic meant that members could not attend the AGM in person. Instead, Trustees took part online and many members cast proxy votes. Andrew Waite stepped down as Chair, after his 3-year stint, and will be succeeded by Sheila Oliver. Tom Glenister also resigned, and we thank Tom and Andrew for all their work on behalf of Barnet Mencap.

The accounts for 2019-20 (which are available on our website) showed a deficit of £81,100. This is a huge concern for us at Barnet Mencap. Fundraising is a major priority, and I would urge all supporters to get behind our fundraising efforts over the coming months.

We can reflect at this time on a turbulent year, with so many worries, but also stories of tremendous courage, care, and hard work across the country. We are all hoping for a better 2021 and everyone at Barnet Mencap sends you best wishes for the holiday season.

## **Changes to our Short Breaks service**

Our Short Breaks service has undergone lots of changes recently. Since October 2020, Sherrick House is no longer able to provide overnight short breaks in Hendon. This is because in the last couple of years the demand was getting lower and lower and it wasn't sustainable.

After forty-one years, we had to take some very difficult decisions and implement changes looking to attract our regular and new clients with our new offer.

Instead of overnight short breaks, we have decided to introduce day support at Sherrick House and one to one support out in the community where we can enjoy the outings and activities tailored to our clients' needs.

This new service is slowly growing, and we are looking into providing structured group activities from Monday to Friday with arts and crafts, exercise, nature walks, life skills and healthy cooking classes.

But not everything has changed! We are still offering our very popular supported holidays through our Just Holidays project, and despite of all the challenges which we all have faced this year, we recently went to Butlins in Bognor Regis and we hope to go to Centre Parcs this year (if restrictions allow it) and we are starting to plan couple of trips for 2021 as we would like to visit Cambridge and Blackpool.

Our Take a Break service is also still providing vital support to our young clients. This was recently expanded by the recruitment of several new sessional workers.

Even though Covid-19 and lockdown have made our work a bit more challenging this year - and we had to introduce lots of new measures to make sure we are all keeping healthy and safe - we have enjoyed our regular half term activities with children and are making plans to offer our best support around the Christmas break.

We look forward to what the future holds!

If you are interested in daytime short breaks or in a holiday with Just Holidays, please contact Karolina Michalczyk via [karolina.michalczyk@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:karolina.michalczyk@barnetmencap.org.uk) or our office at 020 8349 3842.

THE BIG  
PICTURE



Phil about to make a delivery of food and essentials to some of our vulnerable service users - thanks to the Barnet Community Response Fund for awarding us the money to do this

## Focus on... Fundraising

Covid-19 may have sent the whole world into lockdown, but it certainly did not stand in the way of our fundraising!

Having needed to cancel our face to face fundraising events for the foreseeable future, we explored other avenues to generate funds. We organised an art competition and received some excellent landscape artwork - and the competition was won by Tom Flynn.

Barnet Mencap continues to strengthen links with organisations including St Mary's Church, who have very kindly agreed to donate again this year. We have created new partnerships with organisations including the Southgate Progressive Synagogue who have selected Barnet Mencap as one of their chosen charities to support, for their High Holy day appeal.

We have been very successful with numerous grant applications over the past few months including Barnet Community Respond Fund, London Community Response Fund, the Edward Gostling Foundation Fund and the Inequalities Fund.

These funds have already helped several of our service users, both adults and children who have received food and essentials items purchased and delivered by our Barnet Mencap staff. IT equipment has enabled digital inclusion.

We are very excited to announce our involvement in the Big Give Christmas Challenge. We have secured several pledges for this campaign from individual supporters, trustees and Kinloss Synagogue. Donations for this match funded challenge open between 1st - 8th December 2020 through <https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a051r00001efc7bAAA>

Staff, volunteers, service users and supporters will all be getting involved in activities including walks, runs, mad hair days, fancy dress and much more - see overleaf for more details!

Stay safe and do get in touch if you would like ideas on socially distanced activities for this challenge or fundraising in general.

## LOCAL OFFER

### Barnet's Local Offer of Services for Families

Have you recently looked at Barnet's Local Offer website? The Local Offer is a single place online where you can find up to date information about the services and organisations available in Barnet for families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

You can find information related to Education, Health, Social Care, Leisure, Preparing for Adulthood, Transport and much more. There is also a 'Jargon Buster' to help understand the acronyms and terms that you might come across which you may be unfamiliar with.

The website is useful to parents, carers, SENCOs, other professionals as well as to young people themselves. Although the Local Offer has sections which may be more relevant to one of these groups such

as The Young People Zone, SENCO Zone or Parent/Carer Zone, the information in all sections is available to everyone.

There are also some great links to relevant resources for supporting your child at home. For instance, in the News section of the Parents Zone, you will find some fantastic recently added content on developing keyboard skills, useful iPad/iPhone apps and digital images to support literacy.

One important feature on the website is the calendar of events to let you know what is happening around Barnet such as conferences, courses and workshops.

The website is kept as up to date as possible and new content is added regularly. For instance, information and presentations from Barnet's recent Virtual SEND Conference are now available on the website.

See what else is new by visiting the website at [www.barnetlocaloffer.org.uk](http://www.barnetlocaloffer.org.uk).



ONE DONATION, TWICE THE IMPACT

Support Barnet Mencap  
in the Big Give Christmas  
Challenge - 1st - 8th  
December 2020

#ChristmasChallenge20



We are taking part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge between 1st-8th December, where donations will be doubled if we hit our £2,000 target.

We are taking on the London to Lapland challenge, to see how far we can walk/run/cycle or travel in wheelchairs between our supporters, staff, volunteers

and service users! We'll see if we can travel the whole 1,844 mile distance between us! We are also having a Funky Hair and Hat day on 2nd December for anyone to take part!

To donate to our campaign, head to: <https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a051r00001efc7bAAA> or contact us to get involved!

## PRE-HEALTH CHECK QUESTIONNAIRES

### Making Health Checks Easier

A pre-health check questionnaire is a questionnaire document that the Learning Disability GP Liaison Nurses from Barnet learning disabilities service have prepared to assist the GP and practice staff in completing the annual health checks. It is aimed to make the annual health check easier to complete as the GP will have most of the information present ready for the check. Taking the varied needs of people with a learning disability into account this pre - health check questionnaire allows the GP to dedicate more time talking to the patient and completing examinations that are required. The annual health check is a lengthy appointment and there is a lot of information to obtain, this questionnaire concentrates on freeing up the GP and practice team valuable time to concentrate and to dedicate the time allocated to the person.

As we are all working in difficult and different ways due to the current Covid 19 situation this will inform the annual health check, therefore limiting the time spent at the practice for the patient keeping everyone safe and healthy. It is still a vital part of the annual health check that examinations should continue eg blood pressure, blood tests, ears and eyes checking, weight, and cancer screening such as breast and testicular examination.

The pre-health check questionnaire can be sent out to all patients, family or care givers to complete before their appointment and this will be sent by the practice. You can request one from the BLDS team on 020 8359 6161 or email [clcht.gpldnurse@nhs.net](mailto:clcht.gpldnurse@nhs.net) if you have not received one from the practice.

We suggest that the patient or care giver send or email the form back to the GP surgery to inform the annual health check before their appointment (however do check with your surgery of their requirements). It is an accessible information / Easyread document that is very straightforward and simple to complete with the service user.

The form also highlights any health concerns that the service user might have to help you discuss with the GP at the annual health check appointment.

If you have any further questions about the AHC questionnaire please do not hesitate to contact [clcht.gpldnurse@nhs.net](mailto:clcht.gpldnurse@nhs.net)

## COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES PROJECT

### COPs changes

COPs has been through a difficult time during the pandemic. All activities were cancelled for a few weeks due to the lockdown, however we didn't let Covid beat us, so we pulled together and started producing some online activities such as quizzes; virtual tours; jokes with Simon Turner; Makaton with Carole; cooking with Rose; life in lockdown from a client and family/carers' perspective. These sessions were all popular and all vital in keeping up morale and keeping us in touch.

From July, we started to have some face to face activities outside, weather permitting, such as sport sessions of football, rounders and badminton delivered by Phil, our new coordinator.

We have continued to put on sessions throughout summer, with some visits to museums, lots of walks, picnics, arts and craft sessions and more online sessions.

To support members during the pandemic, we have applied for grants to support COPs to be able to continue delivering new and regular sessions.

# News & Events

We purchased tablets for use by clients and ran some IT support sessions. This is an area that we need to develop as some people felt isolated during lockdown.

The session of bell boating at the Phoenix Outdoor Centre was well attended and there will be more to come.

Swimming did restart between lockdowns. Zumba, badminton, tennis and martial arts are taking place at Copthall. GLL have worked very closely with the COPs team to ensure the safety of our clients following all government guidelines.

Barnet Mencap doesn't know what the future holds and the changes in guidelines is challenging for us all, but as the Manager of COPs I really want to say thank you for your support to clients, families and staff and we will do our best to offer you as many sessions as we can.

Keep Safe!

## EQUALITY HOUSING

### Vacancies in our shared houses

Barnet Mencap have vacancies in our supported accommodation houses!

Through our Equality Housing project, we encourage our tenants to live full and active lives in our 3 shared houses across the borough. Not only do we work to improve people's practical skills, but we also want to see our tenants develop emotionally and socially to increase their confidence and enjoy life!

We promote personal choice within all aspects of tenants' support and their participation in the development of the service.

Many of our tenants are in full or part-time employment or have voluntary jobs, attend college or have other day activities.



One of our tenants cooking in one of our shared houses

We encourage and facilitate our tenants to take an active part in all decision-making in Equality Housing and Barnet Mencap. We want our tenants' views and opinions to be heard and valued.

The houses are Victorian family homes, light and spacious, and all three are well-positioned close to busy high streets. With shops and transport links close by, everyday living is made easier. Each house has a garden with patio areas where tenants can enjoy BBQs or just sit outside in the sun.

Each tenant has their own room and they share a kitchen, bathrooms and lounge. Tenants spend time together and support each other, creating a real family atmosphere in each house. The lounge is often used by the tenants to watch films together or for socialising with a cup of tea.

Our committed team of Community Link Workers visit the tenants and give them support in many areas of their lives, including around shopping and cooking, finances and encouraging a social life.

If you, or somebody you know, is looking for supported accommodation, head to [www.barnetmencap.org.uk/what-we-offer/adults/housing-outreach/](http://www.barnetmencap.org.uk/what-we-offer/adults/housing-outreach/) or give us a call on 020 8349 3842 to have a chat or arrange to look around our houses!

# Being... Phil Simpson



**I** was born in South London in 1969 where I attended primary and secondary school and I have 8 siblings - 6 sisters and 2 brothers! My hobbies are football (watching and playing), reading, keeping fit, music and watching movies.

Whilst in my schooling years, I started working at the age of 13 on a market stall in Brixton on the weekends, selling children's clothes. At the age of 15, I worked in Tesco on a Friday and Saturday, (night shift) stacking shelves just to earn my own money.

When I did leave school at the age of 17, England was going through a very bad recession and there was roughly 3.5 million unemployed, making it very difficult to find a job. I did, however, find a full-time job in a shoe shop on Oxford Street, which I hated because of the rude customers! I worked there for 6 months then found what I would class as my first REAL job - working for Midland Bank (now HSBC, showing my age!). This was a dream for me, as I wanted to work in a bank. I was made redundant 18 months later and found it very hard to find another role.

*“I played football semi-professionally and professionally for a total of 12 years”*

Throughout these years, I kept playing football for local teams and people kept telling me how good I was, so when I was made redundant, I started to play for a local side. I was spotted and as a result was given my first semi-professional contract with Stevenage Borough.

I played football semi-professionally and professionally for a total of 12 years until I had to retire through injury. I then went back into the working world - back to reality.

I started working for Royal Mencap in 2017, in the employment department, which I enjoyed, but due to redundancies and changes, I resigned which led me to working for Barnet Mencap as Community Services Coordinator.

Working here for Barnet Mencap is one of the most rewarding roles I have had, the reason being, you realise the difference and help you can bring to people's lives and see the happiness on their faces. I have built up a trust between myself and the service users/parents/support workers we work with, which is key to the success of the work that we do.

Through the experiences I have had in my life, it has given me the understanding that we are here to help each other as much as we can, and that karma is a REAL thing that should not be taken lightly.

My ethos in life is to know yourself, trust yourself, believe in yourself and look after yourself, before you can do this for others.

All of this is hard work but who said life would be easy? Enjoy as much as you can, you only have one life!

# Photo Finish



Amir showing us what he made in a COPs Arts & Crafts session.



## 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

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## Diary Dates

### The Big Give Christmas Challenge

1<sup>st</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020

During 1<sup>st</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> December all donations made via <https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a051r00001efc7bAAA> will be match funded to help us raise even more money! We're taking part in a London to Lapland challenge, to see if, between our supporters, we can walk/run/cycle the distance from London to Lapland! Contact [projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk) to get involved! One donation, twice the impact! #ChristmasChallenge20



Barnet Mencap's Christmas cards are now for sale! If you'd like cards with our new design, or designs from previous years, they are available for 50p each or a set of 12 for £5. Contact [projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk) or ring 020 8349 3842 to get yours now!

The next newsletter, with all the latest news and features, will appear in early 2021

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