



Newsletter

November 2023

Catching the last sunshine of the year!



Nadine and Pat at the seaside on a Barnet Mencap supported holiday to Butlin's in Bognor Regis - we're planning more holidays for next year, get in touch now if you're interested in going away with us in 2024!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 From the Editor

2 Oliver McGowan
Mandatory
Training

3 Focus on... Hate
Crime Awareness
Week

4-6 News & Events
Mental Health

Summer Activities

Fundraising

St Mary's Heritage
Project

7 Being... James
Wheatley

8 Photo Finish

8 Diary Dates

8 How to find us



From the Editor

As we start to wind down in 2023, it often feels like a good time to look back over what we've achieved during the year. We were excited to bring holidays back for the first time since the start of the pandemic, with trips to Hastings and Butlin's, and we're looking to do lots more of this in 2024 so get in touch now if you'd like to see our brochures when they're ready!

We had another successful Hate Crime Awareness Week, despite having to adapt the plan for the week due to the ongoing horrifying situation in Gaza. We've got updates on our Children's Services summer activity offerings and recent fundraising activities, which include challenge events, a festive singalong session and ways you can get involved to support Barnet Mencap. We also have a piece about the new Barnet Mental Health Charter launch, which aims to support the mental health of everybody who lives or works in the borough. We've also got pieces on Oliver McGowan mandatory training and a nice project we will soon be working on with our neighbours at St Mary-in-Finchley church.

On a final note for this column, forgive me for getting a little bit personal but I wanted to thank everyone that's read this newsletter over the past 12 years or so, and everyone I've interacted with at Barnet Mencap as I will soon be leaving for pastures new - I've put more about this in the Being... article!

Whether you celebrate or not, we're wishing you and your families all the best over the festive season and into 2024!

James Wheatley

Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training

Oliver McGowan died in 2016. He was autistic, had learning disabilities and was aged only 18. An independent Review concluded that his death was avoidable and resulted from mistakes by the medical staff who were treating him.

Mencap has campaigned for many years to improve the health care of people with a learning disability, and its report *Death by Indifference* was very influential in highlighting failings in the health and care system.

Oliver's parents said that he died "as a result of ignorance and arrogance of doctors." The case reinforced again the importance of doctors, nurses, and other health staff listening to people with a learning disability and their families. Oliver's parents campaigned following their son's death and as a result the government announced that all health and care staff should be trained so that they could provide the right care for autistic people and people with a learning disability. It is now a statutory requirement for staff across the country who work in CQC-regulated services.

This training is called the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training and is currently being run for staff across North and Central London. It has been co-produced, that is, developed with people with a learning disability, and their families.

People with lived experience, who are autistic or have a learning disability are key in the delivery of the training and will be telling staff what is important to them about their health and care.

There will be monitoring to check the number of staff who have been trained and to ensure the training is of a high quality.

Barnet Mencap is very pleased to see that this is happening in our area. Our staff work closely with staff in primary care, in hospitals, the specialist team and with health commissioners, to make sure that people with a learning disability and autistic people get the care they need.

The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training has come about through the campaigning of his family. If staff understand the importance of listening to people and using the Health passports, and My Health Matters documents, it will improve health care and address avoidable deaths.



Chief Executive Ray Booth with our Hate Crime Reporting Coordinator Reshma Hirani and Cllr Sara Conway at an information stall during Hate Crime Awareness Week

Focus on... Hate Crime Awareness Week

This year's Hate Crime Awareness Week was a little different to our usual community events. For the past five years (except during the pandemic), our staff and volunteers have taken to Barnet's streets, town centres and public transport hubs to spread awareness about reporting hate crime.

Our Hate Crime Awareness and Information Stands are set up across the borough and experts from Barnet Mencap, the Council, the Metropolitan Police and our Hate Crime Reporting Centres come together to speak with residents and give advice, information and guidance about reporting hate crime. We also have information about the support services available for victims and witnesses of hate crime, including Victim Support, MIND, Barnet Well-being Hub, Resources for Autism, Community Security Trust, Tell Mama and GALOP.

Sadly, this year because of the outbreak of war in the Middle East, we were unable to

set-up our stands and meet with residents. Personal and public safety are of course our biggest concern and with the Police working tirelessly to patrol the community and make sure that residents are safe from hate crime, including abuse and harassment, we took the difficult decision to postpone our community Hate Crime Awareness Week events.

During the week, we were however, privileged to visit St Joseph's Pastoral Centre and deliver a workshop to members and their carers/support workers. The workshop focused on identifying and reporting disability hate crime and included role plays and easy-read information. It was a joint session with the Metropolitan Police Safer Transport Team and it was wonderful to meet the members at St Joseph's. Thank you for your warm welcome and positive feedback!

We also had the opportunity to deliver a Hate Crime Information Fair for staff at Barnet Council. This focused on how staff can engage

with and support vulnerable adults, including adults-at-risk, people with physical and learning disabilities and autistic adults and children to identify and report hate crime.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers and partners for offering their support and we plan to offer a full programme of events when possible.

MENTAL HEALTH CHARTER

Barnet Launches new Mental Health Charter



Different organisations represented at the launch event

Barnet Council has launched a Mental Health Charter, to actively support the mental health of people living and working in the borough and foster a culture of positive mental well-being.

The charter, which was launched at a special event on 10th October 2023, on World Mental Health Day, has been designed with the Barnet Together Alliance and received input from over 200 residents and 30 organisations across the borough.

Councillor Alison Moore, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing and Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board, said: “The Charter is a key part of our shared work with our communities to make Barnet more inclusive and to tackle inequality. One in four people have mental health problems at some point in their lives, and it is often a hidden

condition still seen by some in society as a stigma. We need to change attitudes about this which will also help people feel comfortable and confident to get the help they need. The Charter is an example of how we’re working with residents and partners to address this.”

Councillor Paul Edwards, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: “Poor mental health touches almost everyone at some point in their lives, whether it’s directly, or through a friend or family member. With this new Charter, we expect to see lots of positive change over the next 12 months.”

The Charter steering group, consisting of experts, chosen thanks to their experience, voluntary and community sector representatives, adult and family services commissioning and public health, met several times earlier this year and identified four key areas for the Charter to cover:

- What mental health means to us
- Why we are a supportive and inclusive borough
- How Barnet residents feel
- What we expect our services to do

Later this month the council will be launching a new campaign which aims to support the mental wellbeing of children and young people.

At the launch, our Chief Executive Ray Booth commented, “I think it’s a really important initiative. We will be committed making sure the charter works for adults and children with learning disabilities and autistic people, who face extra challenges a lot of the time getting access to mental health services. Good health and good mental health is important to everybody to live the kind of lives they want to live.”

To find out more about the Mental Health Charter, visit:

<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/mental-health-and-wellbeing-barnet/barnets-mental-health-charter>

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Summer in the Children's Service

We have had a busy, fun summer this year in the Children's Service with both our Open Door and Take a Break Projects putting on a fun packed programme of activities.

The Open Door Project is our service for families with a child five and under with developmental delay, learning disability or who is autistic. It supports families with Information, Advice and Guidance as well as fun, family activities. Siblings are also welcome at the activities, usually up to age 8 but sometimes older siblings can also attend depending on the activity.

This year we visited Aldenham Country Park, had two Ice Cream Parties at Lewis of London, picnics at the park and had trips to Chickenshed Theatre. We also saw Nick Cope, Tales from Acorn Wood, and We're Going on a Bear Hunt at The Arts Depot. The activities were free to families thanks to the funding from John Lyon's Charity.

Our Take a Break Service (TAB) ran a varied programme of activities this summer, with something for everyone. These activities had a charge, and most families used their Short Breaks funding to pay for them.

There were activities at Sweet Tree Farm, Aldenham Country Park, Soft Play, swimming and sports activities, park visits, craft activities and sessions with Fixation Performing Arts Academy. The activities covered the whole six weeks of the summer with three days of activities offered each week.

If you are interested in either our Take a Break or Open Door Projects, please contact us at Barnet Mencap on 020 8349 3842 or email projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Challenge(s) Accepted



Kate being cheered on for her swimming challenge!

We have seen an increase in the number of supporters taking on challenges on behalf of Barnet Mencap! We are proud to have secured a place in Swim Serpentine and the Royal Half Parks Marathon and our supporters did a fantastic job raising a total of £953.40. Thank you to Finchley Lido for allowing our fundraiser to take place in the pool for free. Thanks also to Copthall for the vouchers which we used for prizes at our fundraiser. If you are interested in taking on any challenges, including fancy dress, cake baking, funky hair or perhaps a sky dive please do get in touch – the world is your oyster!

Please let us know if you or anyone you know would like to leave a gift in your Will. With a gift in your Will to Barnet Mencap, you could have a powerful impact on children and adults with a learning disability and autistic people. Your money will help us to secure high quality services and support in the borough of Barnet. If you would like to leave a gift in your Will, we strongly recommend you that you speak to a solicitor to ensure that your wishes will be carried out as you intend.

We'd like to give a huge thank you to the Baily Thomas Charitable Fund and BKL

Continued ►

News&Events

Accountants who have given us funding for our important office phone upgrade and sensory equipment for Take A Break children's sessions.

Looking ahead to Christmas and to 2024, we have some beautiful Christmas



Our 2024 calendars are now on sale!

cards and calendars for sale – designed by our very own service users. Please get in touch to purchase your calendar and cards. Black Friday falls on Friday 24th November and this is a great opportunity to snap up some excellent deals

before Christmas! EasyFundraising means you can do your online shopping and raise money for Barnet Mencap without it costing you an extra penny. Sign up today at www.easyfundraising.org.uk, find your favourite brands and donate to Barnet Mencap.

St MARY'S

St Mary-at-Finchley - Give Me Shelter Partnership

St Mary-at-Finchley have been awarded a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to transform their church and churchyard. This, alongside funding from the London Borough of Barnet and fundriasing, means they can get this project off the ground. As many of you will know, St Mary-at-Finchley is just across the road from our office, and we're delighted to be working

with them on parts of this project.

The project will include a number of different elements - notably repairing their leaking roof and monuments; creating a community garden; digitizing their information to make it available to people worldwide; and republishing literature and images from its history (from the 13th century onwards).

We will be helping them develop Easy Read and audio tools to make the site more accessible to all visitors. We will also be using and helping to develop their garden for horticultural and social activities. We're really looking forward to this partnership, and strengthening our links to the community. Stay tuned for more updates!



St Mary-at-Finchley church

We need you!

We're looking for more sessional workers to support children and adults with a learning disability and autistic people!

We're looking for caring people with varied experiences and a passion for supporting people. This can be around your schedule, whether that's daytime, evening or weekends.

Find out more and apply today!

<https://www.barnetmencap.org.uk/get-involved-2/jobs/>

Being... James Wheatley



I have worked for Barnet Mencap and on this newsletter for over 12 years - now that I am leaving, I felt this was a good time to be featured on this page!

I'm from Essex originally, where I grew up in a little village with my mum, dad and sister. After university and then a year spent working for a disability and equalities charity in Leicester, I came back down South and started looking for a job. This is where I came across Barnet Mencap and joined as a Project Support Officer in July 2011 - at the time I definitely didn't imagine sticking around for quite so long!

I have some family from the Barnet area so I knew the area a bit, but even to this day people ask me about bus routes around here and I have no idea!

Aside from a short stint living in Mill Hill, I've always lived a long way from our office, firstly in Bromley and nowadays Basildon, which means a 2-hour each way commute - which isn't ideal!

After a few years being a Project Support Officer, I became the Communications Coordinator and then the Business & Strategy Manager, the role I've been in since 2021. These role changes definitely helped keep things interesting for me, and I learnt a lot along the way from my two previous line managers, Teresa and Hilary.

Outside of work, I love the cinema and go at least once a week; I also love going to the theatre when I can. My main hobby is cosplay. This is basically dressing up as characters from movies, TV shows, games etc for comic cons and events, but through this, I've met my girlfriend and most of my closest friends, who are spread across the country. It's also given me some amazing opportunities like invitations to movie premieres and being featured in magazines and videos. I also support Tottenham, a habit I haven't been able to kick over the years.

I'm leaving Barnet Mencap because I'm moving down to Plymouth, where my partner's family are from. We're buying a house with a garden for our dog, Chewie. We'll be on the doorstep of the sea and of Dartmoor - Barnet and Basildon can't really compete with that. I'm looking forward to not having that 2-hour commute eating into my cinema-going time in the evenings!

I want to end by saying thank you to all of my colleagues over the years, especially Ray and my team of Bhavini, Nadira, Nadia, Joby and Vicknes who I've loved working with. Also to the volunteers who've helped us out massively - to Annalie (who's been here even longer than I have!), Shyam, Rona, Simon, Malti, Mansi and Sacha. I've become close to loads of people during my time here, some I've mentioned above, but also so many of the clients - who I've got to know well over the years - and their family members. I'll definitely miss Barnet Mencap but wish everyone all the best for the future!

Photo Finish



Some of our Equality Housing tenants having a 'roar'some time before seeing the Lion King in the West End

**Barnet
mencap**

General Information

You can also view this newsletter on your computer! It is on our website in the 'Newsletters' section; or email projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk to be added to the email list so you'll save paper and never miss an issue!



How to find us

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Diary Dates

Barnet Mencap's Annual General Meeting (AGM)

10:30am- 12 noon on **Wednesday 22nd November 2023**

Wesley Hall, 9 Stapylton Road, Barnet, EN5 4JJ

Everybody is welcome to come to our AGM to hear what we've been getting up to over the past year, as well as a chance to speak to our staff and trustees.

Everybody is welcome to attend, but it would help us to plan if you can let us know you are coming by contacting projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk or 020 8349 3842.



In the last issue of our newsletter we shared the sad news that Chris Clements, one of our clients for many years, had passed away. In Chris's honour, we held a session to raise money for GutsUK, a charity who describe themselves as 'the charity for the digestive system'. GutsUK are very important to Chris's

family, so we were very pleased to be able to donate £345 to them. To find out more about Guts UK, head to

www.gutscharity.org.uk

The next newsletter, with all the latest news and features, will appear in February 2024

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