



Newsletter

May 2024

Launching Barnet's Autism Hub!



The grand opening of our new Autism Hub! Read all about it on page 2

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From the Editor

We may have taken slightly longer to get this latest edition out, but it has meant it comes with even more exciting updates!

We're so proud and excited to launch our new Autism Hub! You can see a photo from the launch event, and more information about it in the column next to this. We're really keen to have as many autistic adults involved in the co-design of the Hub as possible!

Aside from that, we've been on a couple of holidays! After pulling back from holidays (for obvious reasons) since the pandemic, we're happy to have been on a couple of successful holidays within the UK with some of our adult clients - and we aren't stopping there, we have plenty more planned!

We have had a few successes when it comes to Fundraising recently, so please head to the article on page 5 to read about those as well as how you can get involved and support Barnet Mencap!

In this issue we also have some important information on voting in upcoming elections, as well as about the Safe Places work we've been doing in the borough!

On a personal note, I am Annette Zippis and I am new to Barnet Mencap. I started working here in March as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and I look forward to meeting and speaking to many of you at upcoming events!

Annette Zippis

Barnet Mencap Autism Hub

Since our last newsletter, Barnet Mencap have launched our new Autism Hub! We launched this during Autism Acceptance Week on Wednesday 3rd April 2024, holding our 'Grand Opening' event in our new office at 23 Hendon Lane - right next door to Barnet Mencap's Main Office!

We're really excited as this redesigned service will replace the previous Autism Screening Service, and will provide both pre- and post-diagnostic support for autistic adults in the borough of Barnet.

The Autism Hub is a free service offering a wide range of support and activities for autistic individuals, including social activities; mentoring; information, advice and guidance; peer support groups; drop-in sessions; workshops; and psychoeducation. The Hub aims to create an autistic-friendly space where members can be their authentic selves and engage with others in a supportive environment. The Autism Hub will offer workshops to support individuals with pre-diagnosis questionnaires.

We are really excited to launch the Autism Hub and offer more support for autistic adults in Barnet. Our aim is to support autistic people and provide them a space to be, and build the service that they would like.

The service operates under an ethos of co-production, working in collaboration with Hub members to ensure that the space meets their unique needs and preferences and to be key in the future design of the service.

We've had a great start so far, with new and old service users getting engaged with the Hub and helping to run activities and shape the service going forward.

We have lots of plans and want to support and work with as many people as we can, so if you are a Barnet resident and suspect you may be autistic - or if you are already diagnosed - you can self-refer to the Autism Hub by calling 020 8349 3842 or by emailing the service at autismservice@barnetmencap.org.uk

For more information about Barnet Mencap and the Autism Hub, please visit our website at www.barnetmencap.org.uk

THE BIG
PICTURE



One of our super popular games sessions with COPs

Focus on... Employment

Royal Mencap run the Employment Service from our office in Hendon Lane as part of our Bright Futures contract. They work to find employment opportunities for adults with a learning disability and autistic adults. Here's an update from their Coordinator, Zeeshan.

Our learners, Sacha, Afsana, and Niaz, joined the recent All Party Parliamentary Group on Learning Disability's meeting on enhancing employment opportunities for those with a learning disability. This meeting united different stakeholders to discuss the employment challenges they face.

During the session, Sacha, Afsana, and Niaz shared personal experiences, showcasing the hurdles they faced - as well

as the support they received. Their presence emphasized the importance of representation, highlighting the realities of individuals on benefits seeking employment.

Afsana shared struggles with neurodiversity and agoraphobia, underscoring the need for tailored support. Niaz's journey highlighted resilience and the importance of finding the right workplace fit. Sacha's passion for music demonstrated the diverse talents individuals with learning disabilities offer.

Their participation advocated for inclusive employment practices, promoting awareness and support.

Let's ensure all voices are heard in shaping policies for inclusive workplaces!

ELECTIONS

Voting in Elections - what you need to know

As you may know, we've recently had the London Mayoral election, London Assembly election, and Local Council elections at the beginning of May. There has been a lot of speculation there there may also be a General Election later - either this year or in January 2025.

Everyone should have their say on polling day. Having a disability should not be a barrier to participating in elections.

There are many areas of life that are affected by politics, such as policing, transport, housing, care, planning, and the environment. These can affect everybody.

If you are registered to vote you will have received a polling card in the post for the recent election. If you didn't receive a polling card, you can sign up to get one. In Barnet, you can request a paper form to register to vote by calling 020 8359 5577. You can also register online at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

What has changed from past elections is that you now have to have a photo ID or apply for a voter authority certificate. Unfortunately at the recent elections **some people found out that they didn't have the right kind of photo ID or left it at home, and were not able to vote.** We don't want to see anybody turned away from voting.

The ID you can take with you when you vote will be one of the following:

- Passport
- Driving licence
- Older Person's Bus Pass
- Freedom Pass
- Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- Blue Badge
- Biometric immigration document
- Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- National identity card issued by an EEA state



A meeting on the Have Your Say group, discussing things such as politics and local concerns



A polling station during the recent local elections

- Oyster 60+ Card
- Voter Authority Certificate or a temporary Voter Authority Certificate

If your photo ID is out of date, it is ok to use it if the photo still looks like you.

For more information about what you can use as photo ID, go to the Electoral Commission's website (electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID) or phone the help-line on 0800 328 0280.

If you do not have any of the ID on the list, or you are not sure if your photo ID still looks like you, you can apply for voter authority certificate.

If more information around voting comes out in the lead up to the proposed General Election, we will be sure to share information in future newsletters, on our website, and on social media.

If you have any questions about voting, please do get in touch with our advice and information service by calling our office on 020 8 349 3842 or by emailing projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

SAFE PLACES



Creating a safe community for all

We'd like to give a huge thank you to the Clifford Chance Foundation who awarded us £5,000! We were delighted to receive this funding which has enabled us to create a Safe Places scheme across the borough of Barnet!

We have 44 safe places across the borough, including Monica's Café and Victoria Park up the road from our offices.

The initiative is to ensure vulnerable residents feel safe and reassured when out and about in the community.

Those with a learning disability and autistic people who feel scared, anxious, threatened or at risk can visit a Safe Place. A trained member of staff can offer individuals somewhere to sit down and help them to call a family member, carer, friend or support worker.

Please seek help if you feel unsafe, frightened or need assistance. Look out for the Safe Places sign or window sticker.

If you run a shop, restaurant, café, pub, leisure venue or community centre in a public location in Barnet and would like to join the Safe Places Scheme, please get in touch today!



Shyam and Annalie with police officers at a Safe Places stall

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising Update

Barnet Mencap have secured 3 places for the **Big Half Marathon** which takes place on Sunday 1st September! What better way to kick start the new year than securing a place in the marathon! It's set to be a fun, exciting and rewarding challenge. The Big Half is a vibrant, inclusive half marathon with a fun, festival atmosphere. The 13.1 mile course weaves through London from Tower Bridge to the iconic Cutty Sark in Greenwich. Please get in touch to book your place today.

Do also get in touch if there are other challenges that take your fancy – anything goes, from swimming, to sponsored silences and skydives!

We've got off to a great start in 2024 in the world of fundraising! We'd like to give a huge thank you to the **Baily Thomas Charitable Fund** who awarded us funding for sensory equipment and our office phone upgrade. The sensory equipment will be warmly received and utilised in our Take a Break (TAB) children's sessions. There's massive thanks also to **The Screwfix Foundation** for awarding us with £5,000 to refurbish our shared houses! This will make a huge difference to our Equality Housing provision as these improvements are very much needed. Recent fundraising highlights include a fantastic quiz night and sing along session where our service users had a blast - and a successful bag packing event at Tesco, Ballards Lane!

We are always on the lookout for ad-hoc volunteers for fundraising events – if you are interested in being a volunteer do get in touch with us! You will get to help out at a few events per year, working with Barnet Mencap staff and service users. This includes fun days, quiz nights, challenge events and bag packing.

HOLIDAYS

Holidays with Barnet Mencap: Back with bang!

The last few years have seen a great increase in demand for holidays for Barnet Mencap's Just Holidays service.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic we had to put this service on hold. For 2024, though, we are back with a bang with a range of fantastic, supported holidays available throughout the year that offers something for everyone!

The first holiday back took place in March – to Manchester, which included a full experience tour to the Coronation Street set. This was a massive success! All of the clients thoroughly enjoyed their 3-day trip very much!

They especially enjoyed wandering around the famous cobbled street and got the exciting opportunity to meet a star surprise cast member. They met Calum Lill who plays the character Joel Deering on the soap opera.

They also enjoyed a visit to the Imperial War Museum and dinner in the busy Northern quarter, which is very popular for its bars, restaurants and live music venues.

Clients were supported by Claudette and Sam for this trip, who Co-ordinate and Manage the Just Holidays service, respectively.

The next trip is very soon - to Butlins, Bognor Regis later in May. We're looking forward to supporting more clients to enjoy another fun and entertaining break!



Two of our new holiday trips! Above: on the Coronation Street Set

Below: Butlins, so popular that we're going again!



Being... Sacha



Sacha in the recording studio

I am Sacha and I have been with Barnet Mencap since summer 2022 when I joined COPs (Community Opportunities Project) and later moved into one of the Equality Housing (EQH) shared houses in summer 2023.

I really enjoy being a part of Barnet Mencap. As a tenant, COPs member, employment client and an office volunteer. I love meeting new people at Barnet Mencap and building up my confidence.

In 2022 I joined COPs after lockdown and shielding and had become very isolated this was a very hard time in my life.

I had a hard time watching my brother Dextar and sister Nicetta move out of our family home. This is what made me make the decision to move out into a shared housing with EQH. Since my move I have gained many independent life skills such as cooking, cleaning and socialising and maintaining positive relationships with my housemates.

I recently enjoyed a trip to the theatre with EQH to see Back to the Future and

Mamma Mia and I have a very long list of shows I think Beth (Salmon, Equality Housing's Manager) should book. I enjoy a lot of the activities in EQH.

“Through my links at Barnet Mencap, I have been given the opportunity to meet the King! ”

I also joined the Bright Futures' Job Club where I have learnt to deliver sessions and have a better understanding of cyber security. I have learnt how to write about myself in a positive way giving me more confidence. I have improved my interpersonal skills and communicational skills. This has led to me gaining a job working at the Shard in London, where I will be working as a cleaner on the 43rd floor!

Through my links at Barnet Mencap, I have been given the opportunity to meet the King! Myself and Zeeshan from the employment service will be travelling to Buckingham Palace on the 21st of May for afternoon tea and a visit with His Royal Highness, King Charles.

I have a keen interest in music - check out my YouTube channel @Sachamonteiro, where I have posted songs written and produced by me. I have even made my own music videos featuring me in some very expensive cars. I have recently obtained a grant from Barnet Council with help of Royal Mencap to set up a music studio to give people with learning disabilities the opportunity to make their own music and be heard.

Photo Finish



One of our Community Opportunities Project groups on a trip to Greenwich, in front of the famous Cutty Sark



General Information

You can also view this newsletter on your computer! It's on our website in the 'Newsletters' section, or please email ProjectSupport@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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Email:

projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

Website: www.barnetmencap.org.uk



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Follow @barnetmencap on Twitter

Diary Dates

Barnet Mencap's Summer Ball

Friday 5th July 2024

Come along to our fundraising Summer Ball for a live DJ, dance performance, light buffet, raffle and more! This is an event for our service users, supporters and staff. Get in touch to book your place now!

Old Finchleians Club, 12 Southover, Woodside Park N12 7JE

7-10pm

London's Big Half Marathon

Sunday 1st September 2024

See the sights of London as you run a half marathon to raise money for Barnet Mencap! We have 3 places up for grabs, so please don't delay and get in touch today! Contact us through 020 8349 3842 or projectsupport@barnetmencap.org.uk

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

Barnet Mencap Registered Charity No. 1089388 Company Registration No. 04274621

