



Newsletter

September 2024

Summer Ball Shines Bright!



We had a wonderful time at our first ever Summer Ball!

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From the Editor

As we look back on the past few months, it's impossible not to feel a deep sense of pride in the remarkable achievements and the community spirit that has flourished at Barnet Mencap. From the excitement of Zeeshan's Royal Garden Party nomination to the incredible success of our Summer Ball, we have much to celebrate!

The employment program has reached new heights, with participants like Mansi and Sacha securing meaningful roles at prestigious institutions such as the BBC and The Shard.

Equally inspiring is the Autism Hub, a space where people feel truly seen and supported, as beautifully shared by Eli in this edition. Eli's journey reminds us why we exist, to be a safe haven for those navigating complex life challenges.

We are also thrilled to announce the recent grants we've secured, ensuring the continuation of vital services like our Safe Places project, Autism Hub, and job clubs. These funds are essential to enabling us to support our community.

Finally, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to our fundraising efforts, including the unforgettable Summer Ball and the garden yoga session. It's these events that bring us together as a community

Annette Zippis

Celebrating Excellence at the Royal Garden Party: A Highlight for Barnet Mencap

We are honoured to share that Zeeshan was recently nominated for the prestigious Royal Garden Party awards, which acknowledges individuals who have made exemplary achievements and a positive impact within their communities. The selection criteria for the Royal Garden Party emphasize diversity in all its forms, and recognizes front-line contributions, highlighting those who have shown exceptional commitment and service to the public.

Through our Employment Program, we have provided employment support and representation, helping hundreds of individuals over the years. This year alone, we have supported over 19 people in securing paid employment!

One of our most notable successes is the nomination of our job clubs for the Barnet Community Awards' Charity of the Year award. This nomination is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team and volunteers, who strive to make a difference in the lives of those we support. Our job clubs offer a safe and supportive environment where individuals can develop their skills, build confidence, and find meaningful employment.

We are proud of the achievements of our participants, including Mansi and Sacha, who have recently secured notable positions. Mansi, one of our dedicated volunteers, has landed a role at the BBC, working directly under the Head of Finance. Her success story is a source of inspiration for many, showcasing the potential and talent within our community. Similarly, Sacha, another volunteer, has secured a paid position as a cleaner at The Shard. These successes highlight the effectiveness of our support and the significant impact it has on the lives of neurodiverse individuals.

The Royal Garden Party nomination underscores the importance of our work and the positive change we have in the community. We remain committed to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



COPs members on a trip to Windsor Castle

Focus on...

Autism - by Eli

My life growing up was difficult, I was given multiple diagnoses over the years, but none of them fit properly. Various referrals and multiple waiting lists, where I was told to be patient and wait whilst receiving little to no support. That was until my experience with Barnet Mencap.

In 2022 I was referred to Barnet Mencap for an autism screening. The staff member was friendly rather than clinical and instead of simply assessing me really took the time to get to know me, and me her. I was free to ask her questions without feeling they inappropriate such as when I asked, to my mother's horror, 'do you also have autism'. Speaking to other neurotypical staff made a real difference for me. The screening showed a high likelihood of being autistic and I was told I would now need to wait for an official diagnosis, and this would take a few years due to the waiting list. My mood

dropped and I thought to myself what now while I wait.

To my surprise I was told there were social groups to attend and help into employment offered by Barnet Mencap whilst I wait for the official diagnosis. This was the turning point for me as I finally felt "Someone has my back".

I started attending socials and meeting other neurodivergent people. Making friends and learning more about how autism affects each person differently, but also how similar some things were. I now had a place of safety where I could be myself, where having my train of thought was not considered "weird", but having others join in and likewise follow their conversations. Feeling my need to just stop and step out wasn't going to be judged as "rude" or "strange". It is a place I can truly be myself.

Now in 2024 I finally received my official diagnosis and want to see the support of this incredible charity continue for other people who are in the same boat I was in two years ago.

News & Events

The new Autism Hub is truly a breath of fresh air. There are coffee meets and workshops, but its also a place for people to just chill out and get to know each other. A place that if you need to step out or have a break or chat with staff, caters to each individual. It also encourages supporting each other and for the members to design the service that they themselves want and need. Barnet Mencap wants to shape itself around the clients and what they have learned they themselves need.

The staff are kind and go above and beyond what other organisations have offered me. They don't leave you in the dark whilst awaiting a diagnosis but are there for you while you wait so you don't feel alone.

In my opinion Barnet Mencap isn't just a hub its YOUR HUB. I can go there and relax and just take a break from life and it feels in a way like a home away from home. There are

The Hope Centre

Barnet Mencap has joined together with all the GP surgeries in the high Barnet area in a new and exciting project.

Patients who have a learning disability, are invited to their GP surgery for an annual health check each year.

An annual health check is a bit like a car MOT but for the body. A nurse would check various things such as your weight, blood pressure, medication, general health etc and do a blood test which can tell you if there are any health problems. This is really helpful as sometimes people won't recognise a health problem or know how, or when, to ask for help.



One of our Holidays trips to Bournemouth enjoying the lovely weather



COPs members jammin' out at a karaoke session

This new project aims to not only carry out an annual health check, but give the patients and their carers an opportunity to speak to other people, like the advisors from Barnet Mencap, a dietician or the carers centre staff to see if there are any other things that are going on in their lives that they would like to be supported with.

The sessions are held at the Hope Centre on Mayes Lane rather than at the GP surgery and take about an hour.

Our staff are able to talk to people about how their day to day life is going and if there is anything that they feel would improve it.

We have been able to find out that some people have felt bored or lonely. For these people we are able to tell them about the local places and activities that they can take part in or help them to join the COPs

project where they can try out new activities and make friends.

Some have told us how they would like to find work or do volunteering. For these patients we referral to our wonderful colleague Zeeshan, from our Employment Project, who can book an appointment and help them with their search for a job or placement.

Others told us that they needed help with things like finding support or with benefits in which case the WFY staff will book an appointment so that they get the help that they need to address the problem

After meeting all the different staff there is a quick survey to see how people found the day.

The response from patients has been overwhelmingly positive and people have been really happy with the help and advice they have received. Even those that haven't needed any further help have enjoyed the chats they have had with all the staff they met on the day.



Haberdashers' Boys' School held their annual Mencap Funday, raising money for Barnet Mencap and providing activities for 80 children

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising Update

Wow what a busy and successful month in the world of fundraising!

We had an amazing Summer Ball in July. It was truly wonderful to see the joy on our service users' faces! We all had such an incredible time – dancing, socialising and having fun! Massive thank you to the following:

- **Kevin Goodman** our amazing DJ on the night who played fantastic music!
- **Ansu Matabudul** - our superb belly dancing teacher who got us all having a boogie!
- **Wenzel's the Bakers** (Radlett) for the delicious sausage rolls, donuts and cupcakes
- **Waitrose & Partners** (Finchley Central) for the generous and tasty food donations
- **Tesco** (Finchley Central) for the food vouchers
- Everyone who donated prizes for our epic raffle

Last but not least, thank you to all our lovely service users, staff and volunteers who came along / helped on the night! We raised a total of £1,363.29!

Huge thank you to **Thippi Rashleigh** who organised a wonderful garden yoga session and sensational breakfast to raise money for our services! It was a lovely, relaxing morning!

We have been successful with the following grants. Thank you to the **Clothworkers Foundation** awarded us with £3600 and the money has gone towards our Autism Hub. Thank you to the **Clifford Chance Foundation** for awarding us with £3000 towards continuing the excellent work of our Safe Places project. Thanks also to **Waitrose and John Lewis** who awarded us with £1000 towards our successful job club. We have been supporting clients with CV writing and interview preparation.

We were thrilled to host a successful sponsored walk around Victoria Park on Wednesday, 11th September for our Service Users. It was a wonderful day spent outdoors, and we were lucky to have beautiful sunshine! Thank you to everyone who took part.



Some of our clients designs for supporting those fundraising for us at the Big Half Marathon



The Garden Yoga Fundraiser

Childrens Service

Open Door Funding and Expanding Services

We are delighted in the Children's Service that we have been awarded funding for two separate projects.

The Open Door Project which supports families of children under five with additional needs has been awarded funding for the next three years from John Lyon's Charity.

Funding will enable us to run activities for families with children 5 and under during school holidays and occasional weekend activities.

Previous activities have included sensory drama sessions with Fixation Academy of Performing Arts, Ice Cream Parties, and visits to Aldenham Country Park where we got to meet the animals and play in the adventure playground.

It will also enable us to run our own Stay and Play Groups and attend other groups across the borough to meet directly with families who attend the groups.

We have also been awarded funding from NHS England to support children who are on the waiting list for an autism diagnosis. This will enable us to offer families advice and signposting as well as providing funding for children to attend activities.

We are very excited about both projects which will run alongside our Information, Advice and Guidance and Parenting Projects.

Being... Alicia



I started Barnet Mencap in 2007 as a volunteer for Open Door before becoming a sessional worker.

There was Open Door East and Open Door West which was twice a week, parents would come and stay with their child. The parents would get advice or help to fill out a form, they also have a chat with the other parents while they had a coffee or tea.

We also had different activities during half term which was for siblings too even though they don't have any additional needs, allowing children to play together.

I was also doing TAB weekends with someone every other Saturday for just over a year beginning of 2013 to mid 2014, supporting two girls who are siblings.

We helped them with their homework, did some cooking, and took them out and about. Open Door West came to an end in 2016 and Open Door East a few years later in 2019.

In 2021 I started working on the Take A Break (TAB) sessions during the Summer and every half term from then.

This was very different to Open Door work as the parents would drop off their child for the day rather than stay around for the duration of the session.

There were a few children who I knew from Open Door, it was nice being able to see them all grown up, the eldest child was 14 when I saw her again. I had known her from when she was in a push chair.

I started doing TAB weekends again in March 2022, every other Saturday supporting two siblings, we took them out the house every time.

Sadly, TAB all came to an end in May 2024 but I really enjoyed my time working with the kids and being there for such a long time.

Photo Finish



One of our COPs groups, on a trip to The Imperial War Museum



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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Diary Dates

Down Syndrome Awareness Month

October 2024

Down Syndrome Awareness Month aims to highlight people with Down Syndrome and their experiences, look out for our social media post around this time for more information.

Barnet Mencap AGM

Monday 17th - Sunday 23rd November 2024

Members and stakeholders can join us for our Annual General Meeting where we will go over everything that we did last year, where we are now, and our plans going forwards.

The next newsletter, with all the latest news and features, will appear in Spring 2022

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

