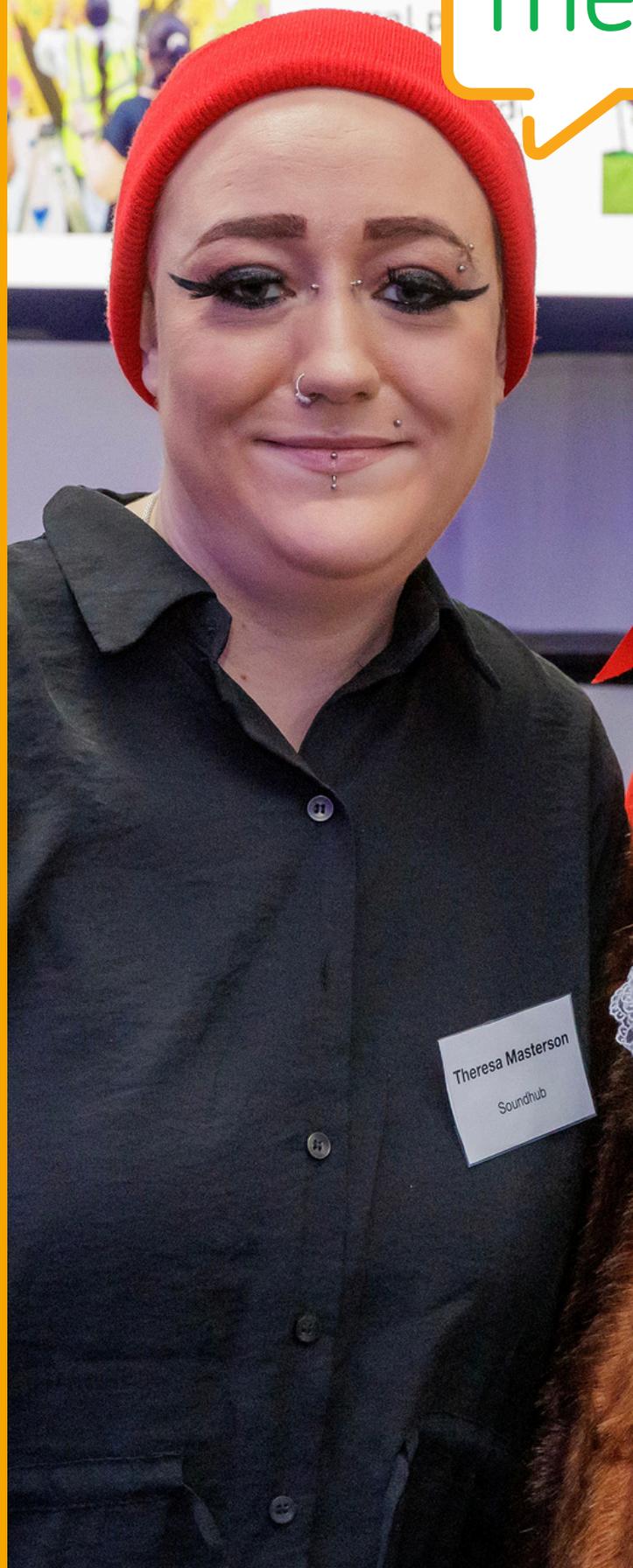


Barnet  
mencap



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## From the Editor

As spring arrives, it brings with it a sense of renewal, growth, and new beginnings. This feels especially fitting as Barnet Mencap reflects on the winter just passed and looks ahead to the months to come with optimism and purpose.

The start of the year was marked with joy and togetherness at our New Year celebration in January. It was a wonderful way to welcome 2026, bringing staff together to share laughter, music, and a strong sense of community, reminding us how important these moments of connection are, particularly during the colder months.

Spring also marks an important period of transition for our organisation as we move through a change in our Chief Executive Officer role. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our outgoing CEO, Ray Booth, for his leadership, dedication, and the impact he has made at Barnet Mencap. Ray will remain in post until June, ensuring continuity and providing a thorough handover to our newly appointed CEO, Lucy Nicholson, following a successful recruitment process. This planned and supported transition reflects our commitment to stability and strong leadership.

As we look ahead, we do so with confidence. Our Board, leadership team, and staff remain focused on continuity, stability, and delivering high-quality, person-centred support. Change brings opportunity, and we are committed to moving forward together—guided by our values, shaped by lived experience, and strengthened by our community.

As the days grow lighter, thank you for your continued support, trust, and belief in our work. We look forward to the next chapter and to all that spring will bring.

Warm Wishes

Annette Zippis (COO)

# MEET THE MANAGERS

## JODIE KUDZEWICZ

I've worked my way up from Support Worker to Project Coordinator and now Deputy Manager, and I'm really proud of how quickly my journey in care has developed. Starting on the frontline has shaped how I approach leadership and given me a strong understanding of both practice and people.



I'm someone who likes to stay busy and keep learning. Alongside my management role, I've had the opportunity to speak at the Ministerial Board and at the House of Commons about improving outcomes for care-experienced people. Being able to bring lived experience into national conversations about policy and support systems has been a huge personal achievement for me.

Outside of work, I love exploring new places, going on spontaneous road trips (especially since passing my driving test), visiting wildlife parks, and going to concerts whenever I can. I'm always planning the next adventure.

I'm really proud to be part of the team and excited to keep growing, both professionally and personally.





The Children's Team is excited to introduce Bright Start, a new three-year project at Barnet Mencap delivered in collaboration with Home Start Barnet and generously funded by John Lyon's Charity. Many of you will already know John Lyon's Charity as the funder of our much-loved Open Door project, which brings families of children under 5 together through fun activities and welcoming coffee mornings. We are delighted to be extending this relationship through Bright Start.



Bright Start aims to improve school readiness for children living in the Graham Park area of Barnet, with a particular focus on supporting families of young children with additional needs. As part of the collaboration, Barnet Mencap will provide tailored one-to-one support to help families access the benefits, services, and guidance most relevant to them. We will also be offering E-PAtS, a specialised parenting programme for families with children under five who have extra developmental needs.



JOHN LYON'S  
CHARITY

In addition, Bright Start will include inclusive family activities designed to help children build confidence and skills as they prepare for their transition to primary school. By working closely with local primary schools and delivering support directly in the Graham Park community, we aim to make it easier for families to get the help they need without travelling to our office.

A key part of the project is creating opportunities for families to connect with one another by building peer support networks and a strong sense of community that we hope will continue to grow as children move into school life.

We look forward to seeing how Bright Start will empower families, strengthen local connections, and offer children the best possible beginning to their educational journey.

# FUNDRAISING UPDATE

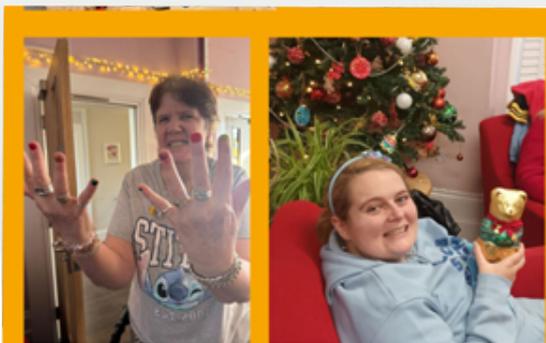


*Thank you  
for your support*

We had a wonderful pamper event where our service users got to enjoy relaxing hand massage and pedicures. Thank you to Tesco in Finchley for allowing us to bag pack and collect donations! Huge thanks to Waitrose in Finchley for accepting our Community Matters Scheme application - customers will be allocating green tokens to Barnet Mencap whilst they shop and we will receive a donation in April!

We are on the lookout for unrestricted funding for core costs. We have some strong partnerships with local businesses including BKL Accountants, Kajaine and Vallectric.

We are strengthening existing relationships with If you are a local business or know any who might be willing to partner with Barnet Mencap please get in touch!



# ULTRA CHALLENGES

Thank you to all our supporters who have taken part in Ultra Challenges over the past few months. There are so many exciting challenges to take part in, from walking to running, across London and the UK!

Check out challenges in the upcoming months in exciting locations, including Bath, Windsor and the Isle of Wight! Beat the winter blues with an individual or group challenge. It's great for team building, getting out in the fresh air, enjoying the sights, and raising money!

## [Ultra Challenge](#)

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO VICKNES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE LONDON WINTER WALK!**

[Donate to His Fundraiser](#) | [Check Out His Experience](#)



# Christmas Cheer

The festive season was filled with warmth, togetherness, and memorable experiences at Barnet Mencap. During the festive period, both our COPs and Equality Housing enjoyed a trip to Cambridge, offering a wonderful opportunity to get out, explore, and spend time together. COPs also arranged a festive Christmas lunch, bringing people together to celebrate the season. On Christmas Day, Equality Housing hosted a special lunch for people who don't have families to spend the day with, ensuring no one felt alone at Christmas. These activities captured the true spirit of the season — inclusion, kindness, and community.





# RESEARCH WITH UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

Over the past 18 months, COPS have been involved in the Creative Learning Abilities Partnerships project with the University of Hertfordshire — a nationally funded initiative, focused on inclusive and creative partnership working with people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

The project used creative, accessible approaches including art, music and group activities to explore what matters most to people in relation to health and wellbeing. By taking time to build trust and work alongside community partners, the team successfully engaged people who are rarely involved in research and supported them to shape future priorities in a meaningful way.

This work highlights the impact of strong partnership working and reflects our shared commitment to inclusion, co-production and innovation. It's a great example of how creative approaches can lead to more accessible and effective research.

We are hoping to secure more such collaboration which enable us to create impact for our community in the academic space.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the full research.



# AWARD SEASON

Due to the generous support of our community, our charity and its staff received multiple nominations for awards recognising our work.



## Nominated for 'Charity Of The Year' by The Barnet Community Award

Thank you to all the community members and staff for making this happen.



We are incredibly proud of our Employment Manager, Zeeshan Sharif, who has been named a finalist at the Elysian Awards in two categories: No One Left Behind and Outstanding Contribution in Education.

This recognition reflects his dedication and the positive impact of his work across our organisation.



Another proud achievement by our Communication Officer, Bhumika Singh, who was nominated for 'Inspiring Communicator' by CharityComms for her work here in Barnet Mencap and transforming our communication channels.



# BEING... AAMIR



I joined COPS last year in October. I was pretty nervous at first, but I have really enjoyed a lot of the activities I have been to.

I did the Halloween Walk last October in central London, and that was nice, getting to meet different people and go to new places with them.

I was really excited to go on the day trip to Cambridge and visit the Christmas market. Quite exciting to go on a day trip without my parents, but it was great. The market wasn't great, to be honest, but spending the day with others and making new friends was brilliant. We made a great day of it. Everyone looked out for each other, and I had some good photos to show my family when I came back home.

The highlight was the Christmas lunch, though. I was nervous when I walked in, as there were so many people there and I didn't know many of them. I don't like crowded places, but it turned into a great afternoon and one of the best Xmas lunches ever.

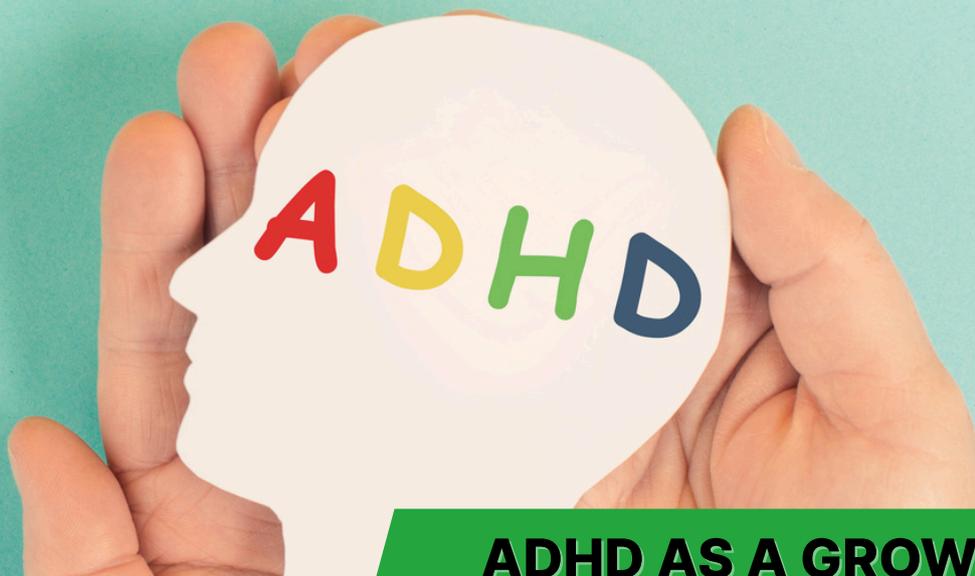
Everyone made a big effort to be nice to me and chat with me. I can't wait for the next one!

Since then, I have taken part in the Weigh-Less club; gardening and arts and crafts club, and Pilates and yoga at Finchley Lido. I really enjoyed the yoga and Pilates. I even tried the Choir one afternoon.

I am hoping to try the cycling activity in Harrow soon, especially as the weather is getting better. There is also a visit to Kew Gardens I am looking forward to.

I've only been a member for a few months, but I can't wait to see the calendar for each month so I can choose what activities I can take part in. Always seems to be something new for me to try.

I have made some new friends, and I love having new people to chat to. I love trying new things and taking part with my new friends. I hope to meet more people and make more friends this year with COPS.



## **ADHD AS A GROWING NATIONAL ISSUE**

**Across the UK, ADHD is increasingly recognised as a significant national issue. Long waiting lists for assessment, limited access to support, and a lack of neuro-affirming services mean that many adults are left struggling without the help they need, sometimes for years. These challenges can have a serious impact on emotional well-being, confidence, employment, and daily life.**

**In response to this growing need, we're proud to highlight the significant work led by our Information and Advice Team at Barnet Mencap. The team has developed and submitted a bid for the North Central London (NCL) ADHD Peer Support Service tender—an important step toward addressing gaps in support at a system level.**

**The proposed service is rooted in neuro-affirming, needs-led peer support for adults who are awaiting an ADHD assessment. Its focus includes emotional well-being, preparation for assessment, reducing isolation, and supporting people to develop effective self-management strategies. Central to the model is co-production, lived experience, and strong partnership working, with clear outcomes at individual, service, and system levels.**

**If successful, this tender would enable Barnet Mencap to expand our peer support offer for adults with ADHD, reach people earlier while they are waiting for assessment, and strengthen our role as a trusted, neuro-affirming provider within the NCL system. It would also represent an important opportunity to increase our reach, influence service design, and secure sustainable funding to support people who are currently underserved.**

**The tender process has now concluded, and we are awaiting the outcome. We're hopeful and proud of the work that's gone into this important bid.**

# Staff Wellbeing At Barnet Mencap

Working in the voluntary sector can be incredibly rewarding, but it also comes with real challenges. Staff at Barnet Mencap support people with complex needs, often navigating demanding situations that require patience, skill, and emotional resilience. Balancing high expectations with limited resources can add further pressure, making wellbeing support more important than ever.

Despite these challenges, our staff continue to show professionalism, compassion, and a strong commitment to the people we support. Recognising the emotional demands of this work, we have focused on creating opportunities for staff to rest, reflect, and support one another.



One initiative has been the introduction of a Staff Space, designed as a calm and welcoming area where colleagues can talk about the problems they are facing and suggest changes that can help in staff wellbeing. Alongside this, we have run staff relaxation sessions, giving colleagues time and practical tools to release stress, slow down, and look after their mental wellbeing, while acknowledging the emotional demands of the work. Taking time to relax together has also been key, with a potluck lunch, a team social at a local Indian restaurant, and a New Year's party all providing opportunities for staff to switch off from work pressures, enjoy good food, strengthen relationships, and celebrate achievements. Together, these activities help create space for staff to decompress, recharge, and feel supported as part of a connected team.





**COPS' Bowling Session**

# PHOTO RECAP

*Barnet Mencap*

December 2025 - February 2026



**Equality Housing Sunday Outdoor**



**Weigh-less Club**



# BECOME A MEMBER

Barnet Mencap campaigns on behalf of individuals with a learning disability, autistic people and their families to secure high quality services and support in the borough.

Support Barnet Mencap as a member. For just £15 per year, (or £5 if you are not in work).



## WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

- ♥ Support Barnet Mencap's work and community.
- ♥ Get access to exclusive events and the Barnet Mencap's newsletter.
- ♥ Get a chance to vote at our AGM.

AND MUCH MORE!



SCAN TO JOIN

**Barnet**  
mencap

# Diary Dates



## How to find us



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Next edition will be in Summer 2026

