

# Parliament People

Jeremy Howson (3rd from the left) is Barnet Mencap's MP for the Learning Disability Parliament (more on p.4)



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## *From the Editor*

Barnet Mencap has been in its 'new' premises in Finchley Central for 3 years now...how time flies!

We've seen a few changes with new projects including 'Open Door West' for under fives and their families, the personalised budgets pilot 'Brokers for Change', and 'Fit2gether', the new sport and fitness initiative.

In addition a few colleagues have moved on and in early 2010 Grace Crilly, currently manager of Equality Housing, is leaving for a post in Barnet Social Services. Grace joined Barnet Mencap as a Community Link Worker in 1999 and will be missed not only by colleagues but tenants of the scheme.

The last few months have seen a number of important learning disability conferences including the Valuing People Now Conference (p4) the launch of the learning disability parliament (cover and p4) and the safeguarding conference 'Say No 2009' (p2).

These were all extremely well attended with people with learning disabilities being involved in the planning and delivery of all these major events. Once again they were all excellent examples of partnership working, something the learning disability sector in Barnet continues to excel in.

*Shelley Gibbons*

# Say No to Abuse

Abuse continues to be a major issue for people with learning disabilities.

Since the last learning disability conference in 2004, an enormous amount of work has taken place to ensure that people have more understanding of the issues and information on how to report abuse. An accessible booklet has been produced and widely distributed and a training pack has been developed and used in various settings within the borough. However, it is clear from the statistics that although it has significantly increased, there is still a lack of reporting from people with learning disabilities.

Earlier this year a multi agency group came together to look at this and plan another conference. Having consulted with service users it became clear that the key areas of concern to people were:

- Within relationships (family and or friends)
- From paid staff
- Within health services
- At work or at college
- Within the community

On 20<sup>th</sup> November the Say No 2009 conference took place. Over 60 people with learning disabilities gathered to discuss abuse and the impact it has on their lives.

By the end of the day it had become clear that many people had a better understanding of abuse than at the last conference, but there was still a feeling that they found it hard to speak out against people they trusted, and in some cases found it hard to be taken seriously.

All the feedback from the day is being looked at and there are already plans to develop rolling workshops to give more people the confidence to speak up, speak out and be heard. As one group said at the end of the day: "it's time to be listened to". [shelley.gibbons@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:shelley.gibbons@barnetmencap.org.uk)



**Kameni (centre) from the Exploring London group gets to grips with using information and emergency points, with a little help from the Safer Transport Police. (Full story on page 6)**

## Focus on... Advisory Council

Royal Mencap has led some important national campaigns over the past couple of years. 'Death by Indifference' highlighted some of the appalling treatment experienced by people with learning disabilities and the need to improve health services. The Learning Disability Coalition has opposed cuts to services and funding, and Every Disabled Child Matters has helped to increase short breaks for families.

Barnet Mencap has been busy with these issues too. Would you like to know what Royal Mencap does? Do you want to have a say about how we can improve the links between Royal Mencap and Barnet Mencap to benefit everyone? We discussed these issues recently at an Advisory Council meeting. People with learning disabilities, family carers, staff and members talked about what is important for them.

We want to continue the discussion at a special meeting of the Advisory Council on **Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> January (10:00 – 12:30pm) at the**

### **Trinity Centre, Nether Street N12.**

Mark Goldring, the new Chief Executive of Royal Mencap, will speak at the meeting. Mark will outline his vision that we can do more together to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families.

You will be able to find out more about what Royal Mencap does and how it can help you. There will also be a chance to say how you can contribute to the work of Royal Mencap and Barnet Mencap by taking part in campaigns or giving your views. Tell us what needs to be done locally and nationally if we are to bring about the kind of society where everyone with a learning disability has rights and choices and can fulfil their potential. Do come along on 26<sup>th</sup> January, meet Mark and his colleagues and have your say on what we need to do to build a strong, effective relationship between Royal Mencap and Barnet Mencap, and make a difference for people with learning disabilities and family carers.

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# News & Events

## PARLIAMENT

### Yes Minister!



Jeremy Howson is Barnet Mencap's MP for the LD Parliament

A new Parliament has been created for people with learning disabilities in Barnet to help develop services. Key issues for the group are hate crime, health inequalities and the lack of employment opportunities.

The 'Barnet Learning Disabilities Parliament', which has nine different Barnet-based 'constituencies' from the different learning disability providers in the borough, was launched at Hendon Town Hall by the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Brian Coleman.

Set up by Barnet People's Choice, the Parliament involves people with learning disabilities from The Space, Flower Lane, Norwood, Tamarisk, Harold Court Community Residential Team, Rosa Morrison, Barnet Mencap and the Community Support Team.

Following the launch, the Parliament will have regular meetings on key services and issues and take forward ideas and suggestions to the relevant public bodies.

Topics of conversation at the meetings are expected to focus on how aspects of the local health system could be improved for people with learning disabilities, and what barriers they have faced while searching for employment.

Councillor Richard Cornelius, Cabinet Member for Community Services, said: "As a council we are constantly looking to promote independence among our users of social care services. Setting

up this Parliament will give users a platform to air their views and discuss with their peers ways in which they feel their needs can be better met. As a listening council, we will take on board all their comments and do what we can, along with our partners, to resolve any problems that do emerge."

## VALUING PEOPLE NOW

### What's the Big Idea?

Groups who work with people with learning disabilities and their family carers in Barnet have launched a 'manifesto' of seven big ideas at a conference at North London Business Park.

The 'Valuing People Now - Making it happen in Barnet' conference, attended by 200 people, was the platform to launch the Barnet Learning Disability Partnership Board's three-year work plan dubbed 'A small plan to make an even bigger difference'. The seven 'big ideas' or strands to the plan are: '*Speaking up*', '*Supporting Carers*', '*Day and Employment opportunities*', '*Housing and Support*', '*Improving Health*', '*People as citizens*' and '*Personalisation*'.

Each big idea has a set of targets and an action plan to ensure those targets are met and the whole plan is underpinned by the board's overarching aim of giving people with learning disabilities more choice and independence on the type of support they receive and the opportunity to make their voices heard.

The launch of the plan comes shortly after the first meeting of the borough's Learning Disabilities Parliament, to give a voice to people with learning disabilities on issues like health and employment opportunities. The plan is part of Barnet Council's continuing work to give users of social services a greater say in designing the support they each receive.

More people with a learning disability are being supported to live independently in their own homes and move into employment. There is a real movement underway to increase the say that people with learning disabilities have in the support they receive and the way they live their lives.

# News & Events

## ACTIVE VOLUNTEERING

### Get Involved



Seema (standing on the right) and her team on the Active Volunteering stall at the Healthy Happy Fun Day

Seema Chopra started as the Development Manager for 'Active Volunteering by Disabled People' earlier this year. The project works in partnership with DabB (Disability action in the Borough of Barnet).

Prior experience has shown that disabled people can often feel as though they're perceived to make no positive contribution to society and therefore are of little worth. Generally, individuals in society do not realise just how much those with disabilities are able to offer and volunteering is a great way to be able to prove your potential.

Active Volunteering aims to work with disabled people and provide them with the opportunity to do voluntary work that they are going to benefit from and enjoy, whilst receiving social and practical support along the way. Potential volunteers meet Seema for an informal talk to discuss what interests them, and the project then works around people's support needs to find the most appropriate placement available.

There are many reasons why people choose to volunteer. In addition to making a difference, they may want to make new friends, meet new people, and keep busy. They may have an interest that they want to pursue or even use it to gain the skills and experience necessary as a stepping stone into employment.

Examples of what current members of Active Volunteering have been up to include: gardening projects, cooking for homeless people, befriending, mentoring, working in shops, museums and animal welfare shelters, working with older people and office admin work.

**For more information on the project please contact: Seema Chopra, 020 8445 2780, 07763 034 768 or email [schopra@csv.org.uk](mailto:schopra@csv.org.uk)**

## OPEN DOOR

### It's On the Move!

Open Door East is 18 years old in 2010! And January will see us move from the Old Barn, after many years, to the brand new, architect designed premises of Newsteads Children's Centre just next door! The Drop-In will continue as usual with Lorraine and all our play workers and volunteers.

An exciting new development, funded as part of our Big Lottery grant, is the Early Years Group for babies with Down's Syndrome and their parents. They started with a communication skills group, run by a former Open Door parent who is highly trained. This led on to a baby Makaton course led by Lesley, one of the Preschool Teaching Team, and now the parents are continuing to run their own programme.

Open Door is constantly evolving but the reasons why we started the project in 1992 are as valid today as they were then – parents of children with special needs felt isolated in the early years and wanted to meet others; they wanted information, advice and support and a place to come and feel welcome. And this is still the case.

Talking to a parent at Open Door last week, she said to me, "It's brilliant here. I get support emotionally from other parents, the kids have fun with the play workers – we never want to leave!"  
**From Thursday January 7<sup>th</sup> Open Door is at Newsteads Children's Centre, Fallows Close, off Tarling Road N2 8LB. Open Door West re-opens on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January at Childs Hill Children's Centre, Gillingham Road NW2 1RT**

[jackie.silverman@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:jackie.silverman@barnetmencap.org.uk)

# News & Events

## EXPLORING LONDON

### London Calling



Standing outside the gates of the Neasden Temple

A new project for Asian adults with learning disabilities has been launched by Barnet Mencap. The group meet every Thursday at Barnet Mencap's office in Finchley Central before they go and explore London.

Planning the day's activity is discussed by the group the week before. The project is designed to give the group the opportunity to visit places of cultural interest that they may not have experienced before.

One of the first trips was a visit to Kenwood House in Hampstead. Whilst there, the group used a viewing point where they were able to look across London and see various landmarks including the London Eye, St Paul's Cathedral, the Post Office Tower, Canary Wharf etc.

Some of the other places that the group has already enjoyed visiting are Brick Lane, the Neasden Temple, Covent Garden and Camden Town.

The group were also visited by the Safer Transport Team. The team spent a day with the group, which started off with a very informative presentation. This included information about how to keep yourself and your belongings safe when travelling on London Transport and how to report a crime.

The presentation was then followed by the team escorting the group out on London Transport, on both buses and trains. Some of the

group were also given the opportunity to try out the help points at an underground station and were given information about what they should do in an emergency on trains and buses.

As well as learning about and developing their knowledge of London, the group are becoming familiar with London Transport and as a consequence are developing confidence around travel. When out on a trip, each member of the group is also given the chance to lead at some point during the trip. As a result of the course, all members of the group are developing their social and money skills. They are also learning to plan for outings as a group and have become used to discussing before and after the various trips what they enjoy/have enjoyed.

roberto.dgama@barnetmencap.org.uk

## CARING WITH CONFIDENCE

### An Update

A full-time coordinator has been appointed to continue to roll out this successful new project, aimed at supporting family carers, in the borough of Barnet.

Following an introductory session '**Finding your way**', people caring for friends or relatives are able to access up to 6 free sessions including '**Caring and resources**', which looks at maximizing your income and accessing other resources to save you money as a carer, and '**Caring Day to Day**' which looks at some of the essentials of caring for someone day to day, from medication to emergencies at home.

The sessions take place in various venues all over the borough and lunch and refreshments are provided.

In addition there is help with transport and alternative care costs to enable carers to attend.

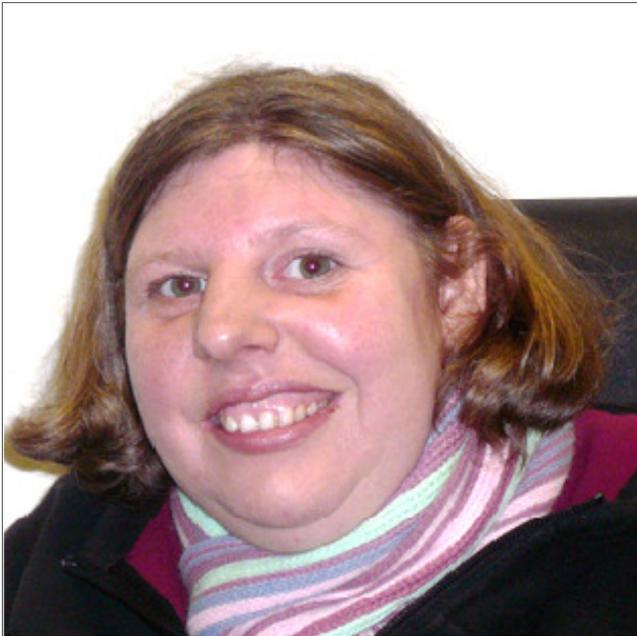
To find out more and to sign up contact:

[Caringwithconfidence@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:Caringwithconfidence@barnet.gov.uk)

Telephone: 020 8359 7863

# Being...

*Ruth Carter*



Ruth works for Barnet People's Choice and is supported by Equality Housing

**H**i my name is Ruth Carter and I am a Self Advocacy Worker. I work ten hours a week and go to meetings around Barnet. I have been in the job for almost nine years. The role is busier than ever at the moment but I do feel that in my job things have changed for the better. The organisation is called Barnet People's Choice and we have a coordinator called Jacky Harvey, as well as the new post for a Chief Executive with a Learning Disability. It is good to have a person with a Learning Disability in a higher job.

I run a Self Advocacy group run on two Thursday evenings each month at the Barnet Mencap office. I help people to talk about different issues that they would like to share with everyone in the group. The group is for anyone that wishes to come.

I also run a drop-in group at New Barnet Community Centre which has people with more communication difficulties which I find challenging and gives me new experience with different disabilities.

I also go to the Health Sub-group where I contribute my issues on health which I also take back to the Self Advocacy group. My team all help out with events that Barnet People's Choice

have taken part in.

I really like my job because it is fun going out to lots of places, and I feel proud to have this job because it shows that young women with a learning disability like me can achieve a lot and help others to make important changes.

I have given lots of presentations to all different organisations and the Barnet Partnership Board as well as going to the sports forums in central London. I enjoy the fact that the project is growing all the time and really look forward to the future. The work has also given me more confidence in my personal life.

I also go to the gym in Finchley Lido and I have had a sports trainer who gave me advice on how to lose the weight as well. I also have made lots of friends in the gym and I like to encourage other people with a learning disability to also get active. I also have had experience at other gyms where I got involved and was just like any other ordinary person in the gym. I don't think about my learning disability.

I like to go running with my parents on a Sunday and Monday evening. I find it really good because I find that there aren't many people with a learning disability who go running with a running group. Doing the running regularly makes me feel accepted by other people and it keeps my weight down! I also go on health walks with Equality Housing and that was good because it gave me more confidence.

Recently I have moved from the flat that I had in Woodside Avenue because there were so many problems with the neighbours which made me find it difficult to live in a community with other people at the time.

Because of this I had no choice but to move back to my parents' for over a year and that was making me frustrated and caused a lot of stress for me not having the independence that I used to have. I tried to find different flats in the area that I bid for, and now I recently just found a flat of my own which I am happy about.

I am happy in myself because I don't have to bid for a flat anymore and I will be in my new place any time now.

# Back Chat

Got something to say? Contact:  
The Editor, Barnet Mencap Newsletter,  
35 Hendon Lane, London N3 1RT

**Safeguarding:**  
Why is it so difficult for  
people with learning  
disabilities to report  
abuse?

“People with a learning disability find it hard to report abuse because more often than not, the person that has abused them is someone they know or care about. They don't want to get that person into trouble and they feel there is no one that can help them”.

*Community Link Worker*

“People are often not sure who they can tell, as well as being afraid they won't be listened to, won't be believed, and worried that they will get friends, staff or family 'into trouble'. The saddest part is that many adults with a learning disability may not even realise in the first place that the way they are being treated is wrong”.

*Voluntary Sector Manager*

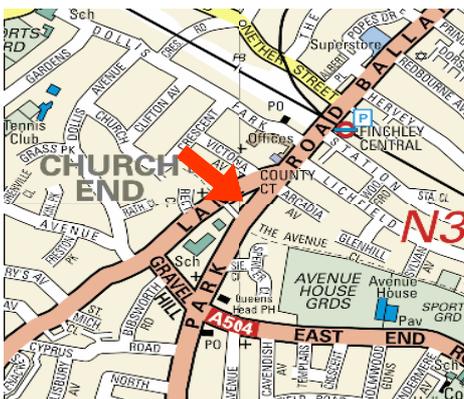
“People are frightened that they report it and it's not believed.....they just won't be believed.”

*Service User*



## General Information

Our newsletter is available in email form. If you would like to help us save money on paper and postage please contact Andy Dawkins - [andy.dawkins@barnetmencap.org.uk](mailto:andy.dawkins@barnetmencap.org.uk) - to be added to the mailing list.



## How to find us

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The next newsletter, with all the latest news and features, will appear in March 2010

## Diary Dates

**Advisory Council** - The next Barnet Mencap Advisory Council Meeting will take place on 26th January 2010, 10:30am - 12:30pm at the Trinity Centre, Nether Street, North Finchley N12. Mark Goldring, Chief Executive of Royal Mencap, will be speaking at the meeting.



**Next Stop Workshops** - Pamper Morning for female carers of children with special needs, on Monday 15th March 2010, 10:00am - 12:00pm noon, at Avenue House, 17 East End Road, Finchley N3 3QE.

Short Breaks and Barnet Support for parents of children with additional needs, on Thursday 11th February 2010, 10:00am - 12:00pm noon, at Avenue House, 17 East End Road, Finchley N3 3QE.

Please contact Barnet Mencap for more information about these workshops on 020 8349 3842

