The Jan Malinowski Centre held a spring party in April to celebrate the brilliant refurbishments that have been done since January. Turn to page 4 to find out more!
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Having been our Service User Development Officer for 10 years, Robert Hill moved on from Merton at the end of June. Rob has worked very hard with Merton's learning disability advocacy groups including the Partnership Board, Speak Out Group, People First and Your Shout. He has also been a regular contributor with the Partnership Newsletter group at High Path Centre, and a regular attendee at various Client Committee groups and residents' meetings.

Rob said: “I’ve enjoyed my time with Merton, it's been a pleasure working with so many amazing people and it's felt like an extended family for me. I’ve particularly enjoyed working with the service users and I've learned so much from them as they are the real experts.”

“Job sharing with Marion Macfarlane was fantastic and we learned a lot from each other. She helped me to have a greater awareness of the issues affecting people with learning disabilities, and I will always remember our work together with great fondness.” Rob will now be working for HFT, a national charity providing services for people with learning disabilities throughout England. He is looking forward to his new role and learning new things.

Members of High Path Centre’s Client Committee really appreciated Rob’s support. Roy said: “I liked working with Rob, because we always got on well.” Merrill said: “He was brilliant at his job”, and Sharon added: “He is a wonderful person to work with. Thank you Rob for all your hard work, kindness and great friendship, we will all miss you very much.”

Heather Begg, Rob’s line manager, said: “I would like to say a massive thank you to Rob for all his hard work and support over the last 10 years. I am so pleased that Rob will be able to continue to use his fantastic advocacy skills in his new role with HFT. We’re going to really miss you.”

Andy Ottaway-Searle, Head of Service, said: “Rob has represented people with a learning disability in Merton really well in his role with the Community Team. Over the years Rob gained in confidence and spoke up to promote the views and interests of people through the different groups he supported. I am sorry that Rob is leaving but wish him well in his new job. Thank you Rob.”
On Friday 8th April the Jan Malinowski Centre held a spring party to celebrate the brilliant refurbishments that have been done since January. Facilities Management had kindly arranged for all the work to be done and the customers at the JMC have been excited to see the transformation over the months.

On the day there were parents, carers, volunteers, colleagues from the Council and from the private sector who came along to celebrate how nice the centre looks. It was great to see so many people and to have the chance to catch up with everyone. Martin Nolan and the Facilities Team were presented by Akua with a thank you card from all JMC’s customers as a token of their appreciation for all the improvements that have been made. The reception area looks bigger and more welcoming with nice sofas and plants. Many of the rooms have had a facelift with fresh colours and new carpet and the corridors look extra colourful with lots of the customers’ art work on the walls. The whole centre looks brighter and more inviting.

Astor and the DJ Team from All Saints Centre also came along and provided some music entertainment to get the party rocking!
Richard Dorris, one of the guests from High Path Centre said: “The JMC looks great now, I enjoyed having a dance and seeing my friends looking so happy.” There was a lovely buffet and a beautiful cake with JMC written on it. All the guests enjoyed the occasion and it was a great way to celebrate the JMC’s new look.

Andy Ottaway Searle, Head of Service said: “It was really good to see so many people enjoying themselves at the party and I am grateful to Zoey and the staff who worked hard to make such a success of the day. I was very pleased that Martin was able to attend and see that we are thankful for the efforts he has made to make the JMC look like new again.”
WAYNE’S WIMBLEDON...

On Thursday 28th April Wayne Lecky faced the challenge of a lifetime as he took on the AFC Wimbledon team in a unique challenge of strength and skill to raise money for Merton Mencap.

Wayne is part of a group which supports AFC Wimbledon by attending home matches with the Community Outreach Team. It has become an annual tradition now for one of the group to take part in a fundraising challenge, and this year it was Wayne’s turn.

Wayne arrived at the team’s training ground in New Malden just after the team had completed their morning training session. The players then had a quick break to prepare themselves for something far more gruelling: a confrontation with Wayne Lecky!

The players took their positions on the field and Wayne’s challenge began! He passed the ball to Lyle 'The Goal Scorer' Taylor, then bravely wrestled his way through Bayo 'The Beast' Akinfenwa & Tom Elliot. He then ran further towards goal with Lyle Taylor and dribbled brilliantly past captain Barry Fuller. Having overcome all those hurdles could Wayne finish the job by scoring past goalkeeper James Shea? You bet he could! A sweet strike down to the keeper’s right and Wayne completed his challenge perfectly!

Thanks to generous donations from Wayne’s friends and family and fellow Dons fans he managed to raise a fantastic £719 for Merton Mencap.
Wayne was presented with signed photo of himself and the players he challenged, by the manager Neal Ardley at a pre-match meal in May. Wayne said: “I scored my goal against my good friends. It was for Mencap, I was the best! Thank you Wimbledon.”

Andy O’Brien of High Path Centre said: “This is now the fifth time the club has allowed us to do an event like this. We really feel part of AFC Wimbledon, it is a real family club. Not only did the five players take part, but the whole first team watched and encouraged Wayne.”

Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health, Councillor Tobin Byers said: “This is an example of how the community in Merton gives great support to people with learning disabilities, alongside the really good services that the Council provides.”

“I am delighted so much money has been raised for such a good cause as a result of this event in partnership with AFC Wimbledon.”

Ivor Heller, Commercial Director and Co-Founder of AFC Wimbledon said: “Wayne is an inspiration to all of us, as are all of the gang. I am so proud of our club’s association with High Path. Long may it continue.”

You can watch Wayne’s challenge on YouTube by searching for ‘mini beast wimbledon’!

A huge thank you to Neal Ardley, Ivor Heller, all the players and everyone at AFC Wimbledon and many congratulations to the club for achieving promotion to League 1 with their amazing Wembley win at the end of May!

“We are going up, say we are going up!”
In June the Merton Arts Therapies Team hosted the third annual Outside Day. All service users from the JMC, High Path and All Saints day centres were invited. Those that attended enjoyed a day of music, art, drama and dance in the sunshine:

There was a great atmosphere, lots of smiles and a buzz of creativity. A huge thank you to everyone who came and helped to make this day a success and a lot of fun.
This year is High Path Centre’s 20th birthday! To mark this very special occasion High Path held a cake and coffee morning at Easter which was a chance to catch up with some old friends and celebrate this great milestone.

High Path Centre was built in the early part of 1996, and officially opened that September by Councillor Slim Flegg. It replaced the day services which had been provided at the old Meadbrook Centre. High Path staff member Carol Andrews was a member of staff at Meadbrook and remembers the move well: “The move from Meadbrook to High Path was exciting but also fast and tiring. We had three days to move in before service users were to see their new centre. To see people’s faces when they went into the new place was worth its weight in gold! People were excited to be here and settled in very quickly especially enjoying the garden and exploring the new surroundings.”

The coffee morning was very well attended with lots of parents and carers coming as well as service users from the other day centres and residential homes - So many people came that the chairs ran out! Everyone enjoyed looking at the slideshow of photos showing High Path Centre over the past 20 years, remembering how young they used to look!

Duncan, the manager of High Path Centre thanked everyone for coming and said a few words about how the centre has been and will continue to be an important part of the learning disabilities community and the wider community too. Here’s to the next 20 years!
Storytelling: A Journey Into the Imagination

Over the past year Sònia Barrachina of the Arts Therapies Team has been running some very popular storytelling sessions at High Path, All Saints, and JMC centres.

The sessions start with a drum and a song, where the group and each individual is greeted and has the chance to greet the group back. Then there is a story song, followed by a warm up and then the trip into the imagination begins with a magic key that opens the access to the story. The group is then transported into the story by waving a big parachute together. Using fabrics, objects, sounds and songs Sònia tells the story and involves the participants in many different ways. When the story has been told and the group has had time to breathe it in, they then journey back to the ‘here and now’ symbolized by waving the parachute again. The key is then used to close the door of imagination and a good-bye song brings the session to an end.

These sessions were started at JMC in the Special Care Service unit in October 2012. They proved to be beneficial and stimulating for the service users and so were extended to the Intensive Support Service unit. Over the years, Sònia has told a kaleidoscope of stories, mainly myths and folk tales, but also stories to celebrate traditions like Christmas, Halloween and Chinese New Year. The storytelling sessions were taken to All Saints and High Path centres in October 2015. Both groups received it with excitement and eagerness and have thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

These sessions have now reached an end, as Sònia together with two of her arts therapies colleagues are saying “good-bye” after more than a decade of service with the Arts Therapies Team. Sònia is sad that her story with Merton Adult Services is coming to an end, but she feels honoured to have shared mutual growth and development with so many service users and community clients in the borough of Merton. She said: “Thank you, you have taught me so much and you will remain in my heart and memory forever.”
Due to financial constraints and the restructuring of adult social services, the Arts Therapies Team based at the JMC has been reduced in size from the end of June.

The therapists who will remain in post this coming year are:

Céline Butté: Dance Movement Psychotherapist
Ami Woods: Art Psychotherapist
Lucy Wasp: Dramatherapist

The therapists who will be leaving the service are:

Diana Whelan: Music Therapist
Sonia Barrachina: Dramatherapist
Geoffery Unkovich: Dance Movement Psychotherapist

Having been part of the team providing therapy to adults with learning disabilities and complex needs for eleven years, the therapists who are leaving would like to say thank you and goodbye. The remaining therapists thank all parents, carers and professionals who continue to support the Arts Therapies Team and look forward to continued collaborations as a smaller service.

If you have any questions regarding this restructure then please contact the team on: 0208 274 5145 or 0208 274 5148
Publisher Books Beyond Words has produced some new fun story books from their project called Picture This.

The ‘Picture This – Story Sharing’ project funded by Arts Council England, enabled people with learning disabilities to create stories that stimulate their imaginations and interest them. Three new books focusing on fun, lighter reads for leisure have now been produced from the project. They were written over a five month period, through workshops where adults with learning disabilities explored the art of storytelling through drawing and drama with the aid of a facilitator and artists.

The three titles are: A Day at the Beach, A Balloon Adventure and A Night in Space. They can be ordered from website: booksbeyondwords.co.uk/picture-this/

Parallel London is the first fully inclusive and accessible push/run for everyone, where people with or without disabilities will unite to run, walk, wheel, push or be pushed at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford on the 4th September 2016.

The event is open to all ages and abilities and there are no cut off times. Mobility aids are welcome on the course and anyone who needs a helping hand can bring a buddy free of charge. There is a distance for everyone: 10k, 5k, 1k and 100m.

Backed by the Mayor of London, Parallel London will bring together thousands of participants and spectators in a national celebration of diversity. The push/run will form the centre piece to a wider family festival showcasing the very best in accessible attractions across technology, health and fitness, food and drink, children’s entertainment and art, culture and literature.

To book your place: Call 020 7034 4846 or email contact@parallellondon.com

If anyone has any comments on the newsletter, or would like to write an article or just has a question, contact:
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