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**Barnet Voice Forum minutes – 17/02/21**

**Present**

Caroline Collier – CEO, Inclusion Barnet

Elsie Lyons – Co-chair, Inclusion Barnet

Eve Byers – User Voice Project Lead, Inclusion Barnet

Hannah Chamberlain - Project Lead – Trust Wide Enablement Partnership, Inclusion Barnet

11 Barnet Voice members and friends attended, but names will be kept confidential

**Introductions:**

Eve Byers introduced herself as the User Voice Project Lead. Caroline Collier, CEO of IB (Inclusion Barnet), said that her role this evening was as minute taker. Elsie Lyons, Founder of BVMH (Barnet Voice for Mental Health) mentioned that she is now Co-Chair of Inclusion Barnet and that this new project was very dear to her heart. Hannah Chamberlain from IB helps run the BVMH support group with Iqbal, and Hannah will be talking about co-production for this project.

Members were the asked to introduce themselves. Several had been involved as active members of BVMH prior to its incorporation into IB or had used its services. One member had been encouraged to come by the Network. Some expressed their hopes for this Forum e.g.

* The user voice needs to be heard in a more meaningful way;
* Money within services needs to be used wisely and I want to give my experiences about what works;
* Concern that there has been no monitoring of the Mental Health Trust in the last few years.

A member raised concern about the difficulty of visually impaired people accessing this Zoom meeting due to issues with password characters, which Eve said she would address. For future meetings, any slides will be sent out in advance and we will check that passwords do not contain any capital ‘I’s or exclamation marks.

**Ground Rules**

Eve displayed the ground rules which would inform the conduct of the meeting.

**Introduction to the new User Voice Project within Inclusion Barnet**

Eve said that user involvement is to make sure that the user voice is heard. People are experts on how they should be treated and should be involved in every aspect of their care. Members from the Mental Health Trust could be invited to these meetings.

Inclusion Barnet will be having members’ meetings every three months and will be responding to both local and national consultations that might affect members - it’s about making a structural difference by ensuring that that the user voice is listened to. She mentioned having attended a Barnet Mencap meeting called ‘Have Your Say’ which she thought could inform our development.

**Members’ Response**

1. One member spoke of feeling a bit nostalgic about what happened before in BVMH. The Mental Health Trust would phone up and ask for user representation on Committees and Interviewing Panels etc. There is very little user involvement now. They are developing a Service User register.

To be involved a person needs to have used their mental health services within the last year. Now they are saying they have not got enough people on the register! Eve asked the meeting if we would like someone from the Trust to come and talk about it, but the general feeling was that this would not be useful in the context of the current register.

1. In response to the disappointment expressed by a member regarding the fact that there had not been and IB Forum for some time and his wish that IB interacted in the same way as Inclusion London, Caroline responded by saying that this is the beginning of a journey -it’s about rebuilding the user voice capacity and that they have all sorts of things coming along down the track including a quarterly meeting of this group and the intention to start a Disability Rights Group- in beginning this part of the journey we don’t know where we will be in six months’ time.
2. Another member felt that we needed to give a chance for things to be implemented but also to be pragmatic with our time so that it’s not wasted. With regard to services they felt that we need to lobby the Government to cut out all the paperwork and deliver services adding that everyone’s needs are different and the need to spread money fairly. It was, however, pointed out that the admin burden is unfortunately necessary for performance management and to avoid critical failures in care.
3. The point was raised that mental health is not just those two words. Psychiatrists spoken to didn’t seem to understand that physical issues affect mental health and mental affects physical. One psychiatrist was reported to have commented along the lines that ‘if you need that specific issue addressed, see a specialist in that field’.Eve agreed that it seems to be a common experience that medical professionals treat conditions separately and not the whole person.
4. A member spoke of the problem of people getting used to a service and depending on it and then it closes down after a couple of years. They spoke of their frustration - services need to last a long time. The services mentioned which had disappeared were Richmond Fellowship - Mind in Barnet - Eclipse. The need for stability needs to be recognised.

It was agreed by another that in an ideal world there would be a service that supported mental health and that there is a considerable amount of funding available that we can apply for. Caroline responded by saying IB have been part of the development of a Voluntary Sector Manifesto about fair contracting and what the voluntary sector can do. She said that Barnet Voice could put forward a position paper stating their views. Funding does seem to be short term - a constant life cycle of services - we need to make our voices heard about this cyclical reinvention services.

One member pointed out that involvement is a tool to facilitate individual choices and freedom. It is a democratic approach which allows people who were once powerless to design and influence care.

1. Someone spoke of the work they had done in training psychiatrists about the reality of suicide and another of the work they had done (with the Mental Health Trust, Social Services, and voluntary organisations) on what was called Reimaging Mental Health Services. It was pointed out that we used to get money from them for our involvement and for expenses. More money is being put into mental health services and there should be more stable funding for user involvement.

**Hannah’s presentationon Co-Production**

Hannah said that she is involved with the delivery of the Enablement programme with the Mental Health Trust, and has had conversations with them about the Patient Involvement Register, so we do have a relationship with them.

With regard to co-production - it’s about talking with members about the future of Barnet Voice and what we want to bid for money for. **There is a short survey at** <https://forms.gle/L6Ct7N1cAF5qfvYP8>, **and we would be very grateful if you could fill this in.**

In bidding for more funding it about really digging down to find what people want. She said that if you are producing something that is continually available, you need to show it’s making a difference. She said that a Research Group would be set up, and there would be a co-production workshop taking place on **Wednesday 24th February from 3-4.30pm**, to which you can sign up at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/barnet-voice-for-mental-health-have-your-say-in-future-services-tickets-141999409055>. She spoke of establishing a common language and goals to make a service and then apply for funding which wasn’t something we needed to worry about.

1. In response someone said that maybe we can go to local businesses who are ever mindful of the effect of mental wellbeing. They then asked how we are going to help our mental health when we are struggling for funding. Weekly and monthly interventions were mentioned.

This point continued with the comment that if we don’t have funding we don’t have anything. If Hannah doesn’t get the funding there is nothing for us. It’s a critical part of the Charity sector.

Hannah responded by saying if we can design a service around people and people’s livesand to leave the funding to Inclusion Barnet. One member pointed out that BV users are more than capable of thinking about funding. Caroline agreed with this, but clarified that the point was that people didn’t need to worry about the funding aspect if they found that stressful.

1. The point was made that every person was an individual. Everyone needs to feel supported. There are some complex issues that need addressing. People find talking a healing process. Someone else said what about people who find talking difficult.
2. Someone commented that they felt that we are a tip of an iceberg. We have become a digitally divided society and we risk forgetting about those who can’t access meetings like this. Eve said that she had gone along to the Barnet Voice support group and this point was also raised by them. Consequently, Inclusion Barnet approached the Service Manager of Social Prescribing for Barnet with information about Touchpoint, the User Voice project and other services that Inclusion Barnet offers. This is an important way of getting information to people who can’t access information online, such as those who might have picked up a leaflet in a GP surgery prior to the pandemic.
3. Someone thought there had been an implication that members weren’t capable of understanding funding and that they didn’t want to come up with a wish list (as had happened with the Mental Health Trust) just to be told that there wasn’t the funding. They would prefer to be told the budget so that we can be realistic. Hannah responded that she had run a business in mental health and that she had always tried to have an ‘abundant mentality’. Elsiepointed out that the Space 2 B had grown out of ideas shared at a Forum meeting such as this, when people were asked what they would like us to provide following the loss of funding for the Crisis House. People spoke of things they would like to do e.g. music, art and someone had summed it up by saying doing normal things in a supportive setting. The ideas took shape when funding was being made available by the Borough for innovative ideas.
4. Someone thought we should decide the frequency of meetings. Eve noted that at the moment the plan was for them to be quarterly, but that several meeting strands would be running under the User Voice project and that this would ultimately mean that there were meetings of one or more groups approximately monthly. The next Barnet Voice Forum meeting has been provisionally planned for **Wednesday 12th May**, but a poll will be sent out with these notes to gauge the best days and times for people who would like to attend.
5. Someone asked what was happening about the Café that was being planned by the Wellbeing Hub (similar to the Space 2B). In addition to the café people could receive one-to-one support from a peer worker. Caroline responded in that she believed that the Wellbeing Hub were running a virtual café. The Crisis Café went out to tender and the outcome will be announced in the next few months.

There was a final comment from someone who questioned whether the statement would be about just what we think or whether it was about the art of the possible and what people might be able to sign up to. Caroline said that depending on how this piece of work developed it could be either the voice of the group or an official position statement, but she didn’t want to constrain people’s input.

The meeting ended with thanks to everyone for giving up their time to attend.

**Summing up Future Actions.**

* The next meeting has been provisionally scheduled for 12th May, but we will be asking members about best days/times of day.
* At the next meeting, we will work on creating a position statement for commissioning / decommissioning and designing services.
* There is an IB Members’ Meeting planned for Wednesday 10th March. Members should already have received invitations, but please let Eve know at [uservoice@inclusionbarnet.org.uk](mailto:uservoice@inclusionbarnet.org.uk) if you a) are a member and have not received anything or b) are not a member but would like to become one.