

# Barnet Depression Alliance: 10<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015: 7.45 pm Trinity Church Centre, Livingstone Room

**Our 18<sup>th</sup> Year 1997-2015**

## Group Report for Oct 2014- Oct 2015

We are pleased to report this year that the group continues to flourish and grow steadily despite the setbacks last year – most significantly the loss of Robert Johnson who helped to facilitate the group. We continue to enjoy a diverse range of meetings and socials and have had very good feedback late last year from our first ever membership survey which addressed the question: How has the group helped you? The answers given by members have been compiled and appear on our website under the section *Membership Survey 2014*. Indeed we are in the happy position of having some difficulty now in accommodating the numbers especially the numbers attending our main Monday meetings.

### Speakers and activities

One of the highlights of this year was meeting **Dr Cathy Wield** medical doctor and author of *Life after darkness: a doctor's journey through severe depression*. Cathy delivered a very moving account of her extraordinary battle with treatment-resistant depression, serious self-harm and suicide attempts. We all found her talk immensely inspiring and encouraging. Her books are available to borrow in our group library.

We also welcomed volunteer Gloria from **Eclipse Barnet** who spoke to us about the variety of day services on offer for people recovering from mental ill health. Eclipse is run by three organisations working in partnership: Mind in Barnet, the Richmond Fellowship and the Barnet Centre for Independent Living.. Gloria spoke of how she came to Eclipse as a service user needing support for her own mental health problems and how, as she recovered, she decided she wanted to give something back by becoming a peer mentor.

Our final speaker this year was **Marina Caroli, mindfulness teacher** (University of Bangor) who delivered an excellent presentation on mindfulness which incorporated a lot of practical exercises including group meditations. Marina helped to broaden our perspective on mindfulness, helping us to better understand how we can incorporate it into our everyday lives as well as the benefits of regular practice. She runs regular classes in Barnet which are free to the mental health community.

### Themed evenings and activities

We also ran many activities ourselves – making full use of the many and diverse talents and interests from within the group. For example, one of our members devised a very entertaining quiz (not your run-of-the-mill questions) to accompany our **Christmas social** last year -- it was so enjoyable we have persuaded her to do it again for us this year! Then, in January another one of our members a trained salsa teacher, taught us the basics of **salsa dancing** as practiced in Colombia.

We also had sessions where we tackled various themes such as **hopes for the future** (January), **facing our fears** (March), sharing our **favourite books and authors** (April), sharing **ways of coping with depression** (September) and **vulnerability** (July). We had a meeting (June) where three members discussed “**coming out**” or telling friends, family and colleagues about their experience of depression. One of our members came out very publicly appearing twice on national TV discussing her experience of depression. Interestingly most but not all members who had decided to speak out found it to be a positive experience.

## **“Check-in” meetings**

Our “check-in” meetings are our second meeting each month in which the whole of the meeting time is devoted to sharing and self-help. The meetings are smaller than the main meetings and are attended normally by 8-10 members. It is therefore a quieter meeting where there is more time to talk and to get to know each other. The meeting used to be run by Robert who sadly is no longer with us. We were unsure whether we could continue to run them as very few of the committee could make Tuesdays.

We are pleased to report that our “check-in” meetings have continued – although they now take place on Thursdays not Tuesdays. We have managed to cover the rota (just) though this is not always easy. This meeting is now the same length as the Monday meetings. We also decided to start them earlier at 7:30 pm and to finish early if possible. We made this change because we realised the extra time would not cost us more! However, the length of the meeting always seems to expand to fit the time available and so far we have not had a single meeting that has finished early! To the contrary, as with Mondays, we struggle to finish on time.

## **Socials**

We have had four socials this year all of which were very successful. Sixteen of us met for our traditional New Year meal in early January choosing the Red Lion pub in High Barnet for the first time. We also met on a Monday which proved to be an excellent choice of day as we virtually had the place to ourselves. In May ten of us visited the Wyllots theatre to see Ruby Wax present *Sane New World* – an entertaining, funny and informative stage show based on her book of the same name. Six of us also had a lovely summer walk in August over Totteridge fields ending up at the Orange Tree pub. We were fortunate to have very good weather that day. Later that month we met at a member’s home for our annual bring and share supper party which as ever was a great success and attended by a record eighteen.

## **Events and publicity – new website**

Many people continue to make contact with us through our new website

[www.barnetdepressionalliance.org](http://www.barnetdepressionalliance.org) – and several have also signed up to “follow” us!

Barnet DA continues to be represented on the Mental Health Network and the Barnet World Mental Health Day planning committee. We would very much like to continue to have a say in what is happening in Barnet’s mental health community especially given the huge changes which are taking place and the cuts which have been made to many budgets. With the loss of Robert Johnson who also worked for the mental health trust, and with our remaining group facilitator having left employment with the same trust – we very much need our members to volunteer to represent us. Please let us know if you would be interested – even if on an ad hoc basis.

## **Committee update**

After losing Robert last year, we have had no one come forward who is able to help co facilitate the group so we continue run by one facilitator with the valued help of a committee totalling 8 members, now reduced to 7 as one committee member has recently stepped down. We are also now an all-women committee and we would very much welcome some male input! We are very grateful however to all our committee members for their hard work and dedication over many years. Indeed four members have been on the committee for over 14 years! Special thanks to one of our members who handles the group phone – not the most popular job – and who has been doing this for well over 2 years now.

## **Membership**

The figures given in the table below are for 2014 as the figures for this year are not yet complete. Our membership has remained steady but more people are attending meetings especially the Monday meetings which are attended by up to 20 people. We continue to find that many referrals do not ever attend a meeting. We are not sure why this is but are very aware that people who are feeling depressed or anxious may find attending a meeting very daunting. We continue to offer to meet people half an hour before the

meeting begins to help them feel more at ease. We do not actively publicise our group as we are near to capacity at the moment. The Livingstone room cannot easily accommodate more than 20 people and in order to run our check in groups we actually adjourn to another room. The mailing list is “weeded” three times a year with people being removed if they have not attended a meeting in the last 6 months. Hence the numbers listed are very much active members.

We are also aware that there are now many more women in the group than men – which is a reversal of how the group was when it started when there were more men than women! While this may to some extent be a reflection on the differing ways men and women cope with depression, we do hope to attract more men for the future. Any ideas on how to do this welcomed! We are also aware that most of our members are older, most being 30 years old and upwards. We are very aware that people in their late teens and twenties are not well represented in the group.

## Financial report

We were turned down for further funding by Barnet Centre for Independent Living and the Council funding has been renewed for just one year (2015-2016) but the future is still uncertain. We have kept in contact with commissioners and we are also hoping to raise some funds ourselves, although so far without success. One encouraging point to note from the accounts is the increase in the contribution from members. We have always asked members for a voluntary contribution of £1 per meeting and realised we had not raised this since 1997! The contribution continues to remain voluntary but we have asked people to put in a bit more – and thanks to the generosity of many we have almost doubled the amount we now receive from members. This is not just accounted for by the increase in numbers attending meetings either. We are close to raising half of what we need to keep running each year – previously members contributed about a quarter of this. The report itself should be self-explanatory – as can be seen our biggest expense is our room rental which increases most years – followed by postage, stationary, group mobile and website. It is not possible to reduce either of these figures so we do need to seek out additional funding. Any offers of help here much appreciated. As ever we are very grateful to our treasurer who manages all the monies received and does all the accounting.

## Appendix I: Membership and meeting statistics

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total referrals	79	64	73	42	59
Website referrals	69	28	43	29	45
Answerphone referrals	10	34	29	13	13
Other referrals	0	2	1	0	1
Total membership (Dec each year)	47	75	90	93	60
New attendees (first meeting)	14	31	24	15	16
Meeting attendance max and (min)	17 (9)	19 (8)	27 (5)	21 (7)	21 (7)
Meeting attendance total excl socials	107	190	246	235	253
Meeting attendance total incl socials	132	216	280	268	287
Meeting attendance average (exc socials)	12	14	15	12	13
Socials attendance average	0	15	17	17	11
Meeting attendance average Monday meetings	0	15	17	15	16
Meeting attendance average Tuesday meetings	0	9	9	8	9
Meeting number	11	14	18	20	20
Socials number	2	2	2	2	3
Committee meetings	3	3	3	3	3
Total events exc committee meetings	13	16	20	22	23
Total events	16	19	23	25	26

## Appendix 2: Annual accounts 2014-2015

**DEPRESSION ALLIANCE SELF HELP GROUP**  
**Income and Expenditure Accounts**  
**Year Ended 31st March 2015**

<u>Income</u>	2014/2015	2013/2014
Subscriptions from members	£ 422.95	£ 281.74
Grant from London Borough of Barnet	£ 454.26	£ 454.26
Grant from Barnet Centre for Independent Living	.....	.....
Other donations	.....	£33.60
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£ 877.21</b>	<b>£769.60</b>

<u>Expenditure</u>		
Hire of room for meetings	Part out standing 13/14	£ 806.50
Refreshments for meetings		£ 51.71
Contribution to social events	.....	.....
Library / training expenditure /Speakers	.....	£46.56
Expenses paid to speakers		£ 25.00
Postage, stationary, telephone & website		£ 88.82
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>£ 972.03</b>

Cash flow statement	2014/2015	2013/2014
Cash balance at start of year	£1,559.97	£1,368.76
Surplus for the year	-£ 165.53	£191.21
Cash balance at end of year	£1,394.44	£1,559.97

**Balance sheet as at 31st March 2015**

	2015	2014
Library books	£ 50.00	£50.00
Cash at bank	1328.08	£1,505.32
Cash in hand	82.42	£54.65
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>£ 1,460.50</b>	<b>£1,609.97</b>
<b>Represented by</b>		
<b>Accumulated fund</b>		
Balance at beginning of year	£1,559.97	£1,368.76
Movement in year	-£ 165.53	£191.21
Balance at end of year	£1,394.44	£1,559.97