

New Forest Mencap Newsletter



Welcome to the March 2022 edition of our newsletter. This edition includes an update from the Gateway and Saturday Clubs, news from our Chair, but first, an update from Jackie on the Healthier Me initiative...



Impact Report – “Healthier Me – Healthy Eating” sessions January – March 2022

From early January we offered 8 one hour online sessions focussing on “Healthier Me”. Each session had a different theme including “What is Healthy Eating”, and “Seasonal Food”; in total 17 people attended. Each week participants were encouraged to put into practice their new learning. At the end of each session voluntary pledges were made by the participants about how they might make the upcoming week healthier. These included pledges such as “eating one piece of fruit a day”, “trying sprouts”, and “not buying chocolate in the week”. The following week we shared how easy or difficult it was to stick to a pledge and the consequent healthier lifestyle celebrated. We enjoyed many laughs, especially when hearing how people experienced foods they hadn’t tried before!

Everyone who participated is responsible to some degree for planning and preparing their own food. From observation it was evident that those with more support were able to plan and prepare healthier meals but those with less support found this more difficult. The provision of accessible information for those with lower levels of support is vital in order that they can make healthier choices. In the final session there was a quiz and all those who participated were given a prize of a “healthy eating” plate. The final task was to consider four shopping baskets of foodstuffs and to decide which basket was the healthiest. ALL the participants picked the healthy basket!

In May 2022 New Forest Mencap will be beginning some in-person “Healthier Me” sessions based on this 8 week framework but with the addition of meal preparation – more details will follow shortly but we hope to see you there!

Jackie Lillywhite – Project Co-ordinator for the Healthier Me sessions Jan-Mar 22



New Milton Gateway Club and Saturday Club:

We are very happy to say that numbers are increasing at both clubs and a variety of activities are provided, differing over the 2 days. At both sessions, we offer a cold drink or a snack for 50p with the option of “bring your own”.

Tuesday Social offers more sports and game based activities with an ongoing competition which will end with the presentation of the trophy. Saturday Chill out offers craft and games to begin and then an hour of music and dancing for those who wish to participate. We do hope to start an outside activity with initially a clear up of the fenced area followed by planting and maintaining a sensory garden and planters.



New Forest Mencap Newsletter (continued)

Brockenhurst Gateway Club

We were able to reopen again in February 2022 with our own Covid procedures in place to ensure everyone kept safe. Users have taken part in a huge selection of differentiated activities to suit everyone's choice and ability. In early February, Creature Teachers visited with small animals whilst others made cards. Users also enjoyed a Valentine's disco and unwanted gifts club auction.



In March, users planted spring bulbs in jam jars and also made a selection of wooden items, including a bug hotel. Others preferred to make bobbles out of wool and some tried some basic knitting skills. The pool table, games, jigsaws and colouring books are always available. Last week, users were able to experiment with decoupage techniques and other crafts. Users like trying different activities and meeting their friends.



A Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

As I write, the signs of Spring are all about me. Daffodils have taken over from Snowdrops, the Camellias are flowering and the Magnolias in bud. The birds are nesting and the grass is growing again. The warmth of the sun is welcome after what seems like an interminable winter. I am optimistic about the decline of the Corona Virus but we must remain cautious about its potential to cause harm for those we care most about. Safety first must be our watch words.

That said, I have been encouraged beyond all measure about the re-emergence of our Gateway Clubs in Brockenhurst and New Milton. The numbers attending attest to the urgent wish to meet again and enjoy the company of friends. We can only do this with the willingness of leaders and above all volunteers to come out and help. Thank you everyone for your continuing support.

March 30th will see a first for New Forest Mencap. HRH The Princess Royal will be making a visit, formally opening our new premises at 1, Old Milton Road and then meeting some of our digital champions at the Nedderman Centre. Expect a full report in our next newsletter alongside photos and stories of a special day.

I am delighted to tell you that Jackie Lillywhite has been appointed as our Interim General Manager. In addition to her ongoing work in Information, Advice and Guidance, she will be working with our central staff, Stacey Kirby and Becca Filbey, in developing practical opportunities for our members to help fulfil their potential.

In April we will welcome children with special educational needs as part of our partnership with the John Turnbull First Opportunities Group. We have also been pleased to support the New Forest Basics Bank in making the Nedderman Centre car park available weekly to provide a Food Larder for the local population. Both activities reflect our aim to work in partnership with others in the interests of our local community and especially those we are here to serve.

I know I speak for the Board of Trustees in thanking you and wishing you the very best for Spring and Summer 2022.

Michael Snell CBE

Chair, New Forest Mencap

