



Carers And Parents of adults with learning disabilities in Enfield

CAPE NEWS – MAY 2020

Firstly, I must apologise to CAPE members that you have not heard from us for a while. We were just about to notify members about our April meeting, when the world suddenly changed due to Coronavirus and everything has now been put on hold in a dramatic fashion. You will have received a friendly email from Luan Malley, of EDA, and we thank her for linking up with members.

I do hope that you are all coping as well as you can. It is so difficult for carers of people with L.D., and many have now taken over the total caring role, with no respite at all, following the current closure of the day services. Other carers, whose family members are in residential care or supported living, are unable to see their family member at all, due to the current lockdown rules. In spite of this, I do hope that you and your families have been well, and have avoided this terrible virus.

Jane Richards and myself have both had dreadful experiences with the virus. Jane and her son Marc, developed fairly mild symptoms back in March, but Jane's partner became extremely ill, and spent a long time in N. Middx., needing very serious interventions, with confirmed Covid19. I also had 'mild symptoms' in March, but then my husband became very ill, and spent a short time in Barnet General, also with confirmed Covid19. Both of our menfolk are significantly better now, but still not fully recovered after 5 or 6 weeks – it truly is a horrible virus.

We were delighted that so many carers of adults and young people aged 16+ with learning disabilities attended the first CAPE meeting at our new time and location, way back in February. We welcomed over 30 carers to this meeting, and we were delighted to welcome Sarah Carney from Independence and Wellbeing Enfield to speak about their services. Following Sarah's presentation, we were all able to share information on a number of important issues currently facing people with L.D. and their carers. We have now booked the main hall at Park Disability Resource Centre Avenue for our future meetings, so we shall have lots of room to welcome more new members – when eventually we are able to meet up again.

Vicky Main, the head of Enfield's Integrated Learning Disabilities Service will be our first speaker when we do re-start our meetings, and I know there will be lots to discuss. We shall inform members when we are able to meet up again.

Meanwhile, the CAPE committee (Wally Walawalker, Jane Richards, Bernadette Reigar, and myself) have been linking up with Vicky and her staff to make sure that issues for people with L.D. and their carers are being addressed in these very challenging times. A number of meetings are being held 'virtually', and CAPE has been very much involved in these. CAPE is keeping up to date with all the news items concerning the impact of Coronavirus on people with L.D., and we have also been requesting information about the levels of infection locally, and the number of deaths. On top of this, there is a lot of informal linking up between CAPE members, and sharing our interests and concerns has been a source of genuine comfort for many of us. Some of our older members are in the high risk 'shielding' group, so we are keeping a special eye on them (metaphorically!).

The government has now formally recognized that family carers are 'essential workers' and that they are entitled to all the benefits that this involves. This would include preferential treatment in supermarkets, schools, entitlement to PPE, testing etc. If you would like to find out more about these entitlements, please ring the ILDS Duty Social Worker Line on 020 8379 5075/5039. There will be a social worker available to give advice. You should not visit St. Andrews Court in person. There is also some information on Enfield's MyLife website. I found it extremely helpful to have PPE delivered to my home, when my husband became so very ill. Enfield is also operating a scheme where families and service users can be provided with computer tablets to assist them to communicate with each other, where personal contact is not possible. Again, call the Duty Line to find out about this.

There is quite a bit of help available in Enfield, so please make sure that you access this, when you need to. I do hope that we can all emerge from this current crisis as swiftly and safely as possible, and hopefully it will not be too long before we can all meet up again.

Wendy Berry (Vice-Chair, CAPE).

Supported by Enfield Disability Action