

Her Majesty, The Queen opens new Centre for Norwood

12 December 2008

Yesterday, Her Majesty The Queen, Norwood's Patron, opened Norwood's Pamela Barnett Centre, a new home for 16 adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities at Ravenswood in Berkshire. Ravenswood is home to 150 residents and is run by Norwood, the leading UK charity providing support to children, families and adults coping with disadvantage or learning disabilities from the Jewish community, and beyond. Residents, families, staff and volunteers lined the bunting-decked roads and welcomed the Queen by waving Union Jack flags.



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Local dignitaries greeted The Queen and introduced her to Sir Evelyn de Rothschild, Norwood's Honorary Life President and Norwood President, Richard Desmond who said, "The Queen's visit gives the Royal seal of approval and is a fantastic accolade for Norwood. It's hugely uplifting for staff, residents and for the Charity. Every time I come to Ravenswood I realise just how important Norwood is to our Community."

The Queen was vibrant and warm and was taken on a tour of the services, starting with music therapy, during which she spent time talking to the adults with learning disabilities and the staff who support them.

She admired medals and trophy's won by members of Norwood's Special Olympics team and the International Challenges tandem riders. Jackie Andresier, Laurence Black, Stephen Treisman and Peter Girvin were presented to The Queen and talked to her about how they had won their medals and cycled around the world on tandems. The Queen commented on the hard work of their training and afterwards Peter Girvin, who lives at Ravenswood said, "It was quite an experience."



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The Queen continued her tour, visiting pottery and art therapy workshops, enjoying the work of resplendent crowns which the residents had made to decorate the walls, including a carriage and crown drawn by James Lambourn. She also admired glassware and masks made by residents. The Queen was presented with a decorated glass plate by Marilyn Watson, who helped make the gift.

Children from Unity, Norwood's recreational youth service and from Buckets & Spades, the respite care service for children with disabilities, entertained her with "Consider Yourself!" from the musical "Oliver".



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The Queen also met adults supported by Norwood's Employment Service, including Naomi Mushin, who works in an office in Watford, Julian Primhak, who works in the Coffee Shop at Ravenswood and Linda Looney, Head of Norwood's Employment Services in London. Julian Primhak said, "It is the best day of my life. I'm going to write a song about it."



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The Queen then opened The Pamela Barnett Centre unveiling a plaque and meeting the generous benefactors who have contributed to the new Centre. She was also given a tour of the state-of-the-art facilities including the multi-sensory room and a resident's bedroom.

Norma Brier, Norwood's Chief Executive said, "It was a wonderful visit and a real tribute to our services. We are privileged to have The Queen as our Royal Patron and absolutely delighted that she chose to visit Ravenswood, meet our residents and open the new Pamela Barnett Centre."

"Most importantly, The Queen engaged with and spent time talking to the adults who use our services and their support staff, which was really the aim of the visit, highlighting the high quality of individualised care and support that we provide to children and adults with learning disabilities."

The new Centre is one of two new state-of-the-art homes built with funds generously donated to Norwood. It provides four small homes for 16 people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. Each person is supported with a tailored programme of lifestyle and leisure opportunities utilising Ravenswood and community based resources, together with therapies which enhance their independence rather than restrict their quality of life. Adjacent to the Pamela Barnett Centre, The Tager Centre will provide purpose-built, self contained accommodation for people on the autistic spectrum with high levels of need, requiring specialist care and support.

On her visit, the first to Norwood's services, The Queen saw a display of memorabilia commemorating the Royal Patronage which the Charity has enjoyed for nearly 200 years. In 1815 the Duke of Sussex, Queen Victoria's uncle, became Patron of Norwood's precursor, the Jew's Hospital. Royal Patronage has continued since that time. In 1985 The Queen attended a reception held by the Charity at The Guildhall to celebrate Norwood's 190th anniversary. In 1985 Diana Princess of Wales visited Ravenswood and opened a Rose Garden. In 1987 Princess Alexandra visited Ravenswood and opened five new homes.

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