

Meet Lara Goldbart, Norwood's new Member of Parliament

16 September 2009

Lara Goldbart has vowed to speak up for people who use Norwood's services, after being chosen as the Charity's representative on the Barnet Learning Disability Parliament. She was officially sworn in alongside eight other MPs at a ceremony which was attended by over 150 people at Hendon Town Hall on Thursday, 10 September.



The Parliament is an innovative new project which gives people with learning disabilities who live in the borough of Barnet the opportunity to have their say on public services in the area. The nine MPs represent the users of learning disability organisations operating in the area, including Norwood and Barnet Mencap.

They will be responsible for finding out the views of other service users on issues such as health and employment and feeding them back to the Parliament, which will decide how to address these issues. MPs will then be able to influence the improvement of public services through their direct involvement on the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board and its sub-groups.

Lara, 41, who lives in a Norwood supported living service in Finchley, said: "It's a big step forward, and will give people a voice. It will be my job to go around talking to people about important issues or concerns, and answering any questions they have. These might be about Norwood itself, or changes they want to see in the Barnet area. I'm really looking forward to it, and it will be a really good experience."

Lara will be joined on the Parliament by Nicola Faichney, 25, who will represent the Rosa Morrison Day Centre but is also a member of Norwood's Links recreational service for adults with learning disabilities. Nicola is also supported by the Charity's Employment Service and currently works part-time for Links as an office administrator.

The Parliament has been set up by Barnet People's Choice, a self advocacy service for people with learning disabilities, and has been funded by the London Borough of Barnet and the Barnet Learning Disabilities Partnership Board.



Norwood already has a strong involvement with the Barnet Learning Disabilities Partnership Board through Richard Harris, who has been its Co-chair for nearly five years. He is also supported by Norwood to live independently in Finchley. Other members of the Partnership Board include service users, carers, senior representatives from health, education and social services, housing, leisure, employment and independent providers.

The Barnet Learning Disability Partnership Board is part of a national pilot project and was set up to ensure that the objectives in the Government's Valuing People White Paper are met. These objectives include planning and commissioning of integrated and inclusive services which offer real choice, and ensuring that people with learning disability are not denied a service due to lack of competence or capacity among service providers. The Barnet Learning Disability Partnership Board reports to the London Forum, which in turn feeds back to the Department of Health.

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