

BOLTON ADULT AUTISM SUPPORT

Minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2020 at the Thicketford Care and Community Centre, Thicketford Road, Bolton.

Agenda item 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and especially gave a warm welcome to Mr Eddie Gorman who was in attendance in order to present to BAAS a Cheque in the sum of £1000.00 on behalf of the Anchor and Hope Freemason's Lodge No 37 in his capacity as 2019 Master.

Members in attendance were the Chairman Graham Heywood, Roselle Gorman, John Ellis, Barbara Brooks (Secretary), Elaine Birch, Alison Thompson, Gerrie Melling and Rachel Nelmes, (BAAS Befriending Co-ordinator). Apologies were received from Maryam Fatta, Yvonne Poulson, Charlotte Horrocks (Treasurer) and Eira Heywood (Safeguarding Officer). The Chairman reported that our Treasurer, Charlotte had been unwell lately and members requested that their best wishes for a speedy recovery be conveyed to her.

At this juncture, the Chairman had to leave the meeting for a short while to speak to members of a family who had arrived seeking help with a family issue. After agreeing to contact the family to help resolve several issues that were raised the Chairman returned to the meeting.

Agenda item 2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 30th November 2019

The minutes of the annual general meeting held on 30th November 2019 were reviewed and agreed.

Agenda item 3. Presentation of a Cheque to BAAS

As indicated above, Mr Eddie Gorman, 2019 Master of Anchor and Hope Lodge 37 presented a cheque in the sum of £1000.00 to the Chairman from members of the Lodge. The Chairman thanked Mr Gorman for this most generous donation, promising the money would be put to very good use. Prior to the actual presentation, Mr Gorman gave a short speech about the Freemason Movement and in particular informing members that the Freemason movement was the largest donator of grants to charitable causes after the National Lottery. He further stated that membership in Britain was currently in the region of 200,000 and contrary to false understanding the movement was not a secret society but a society with secrets. Photographs were taken of the presentation, one of which was later published on the BAAS website. On behalf of BAAS the Chairman thanked Mr Gorman for the generous donation that *would be put to good use to support BAAS Befriending plus Scheme.*

Agenda item 4. Befriending Plus update

Rachel, BAAS Befriending Coordinator gave a brief update on the Befriending Service to February 2020. However, Rachel's full report is reproduced below.

Volunteers

- Since 2019 we have taken on an extra 4 volunteers who have completed 90% of their training with just some more bits to complete.
- At the end of January, I, Graham and Roselle all spent the day at the job centre disability job fair where we got applications for another 10 volunteers. This may sound impressive but out of those 10 we have 3 interested enough to be currently completing an application form.
- Unfortunately our online autism course has been changed so I am in the process of finding some different (appropriate, free) online training for future volunteers.
- 1:1 supervision with Befriendees is continuing well.
- Volunteers are not claiming expenses although they have been encouraged to do so.

Befriendees

- A new match is in the pipeline with an existing befriender and Befriender
- There are 8 Befriendees on the books with 8 Befrienders (not all trained) this doesn't mean all will match up perfectly, but it's a good start.
- All matched pairs are happy and meeting on a regular basis.
- Once training is completed most are lined up to be matched with someone

Service

- Maryam has agreed to help out where the social media and website are concerned.
- She is helping to spread the word of BAAS around Bolton and marketing us in specific areas.

Social evenings

- Again the social evenings are doing very well.
- The cookery course went brilliant last week and we got some fab feedback.
- Befriending pairs attend the social together often.
- More and more people are interested in attending the socials although some have commented that transport/dark evenings are a barrier so hopefully the lighter nights will be a bonus and increase our numbers.
- I have also been asked if we could arrange a LGBTQ type spin off to the social evenings providing friendship to the autistic, LGBTQ members of the Bolton community. I have contacts in this area and plan to tap into these if it is deemed okay to do so.

Members thanked Rachel for her report, expressing satisfaction with progress of the Befriending service and acknowledged the competition for volunteers amongst Community Service Organisations.

Agenda item 5. Meetings attended by the Chairman since the November AGM

The Chairman reported on the meetings he had attended regarding the Greater Manchester Autism Strategy, referring to the minutes of the following meetings **and which minutes he had already circulated.**

- i) Employment Implementation Group
- ii) Criminal Justice Implementation Group
- iii) Housing Implementation Group
- iv) Reasonable adjustments in Acute Settings Group
- v) 100 Days Challenge recruitment Fayre. The Chairman was accompanied at this event by Roselle Gorman and Rachel Nelmes- Befriending Coordinator. This event is referred to in Rachel's report above.

Agenda item 6. Bolton Autism Partnership Board

The Chairman reported that at the last meeting of this Board, he had provided feedback to the meeting on the various group meetings organised by GMAC (as mentioned above).

Additionally, he reported that Bolton Council were soon to release the updated draft autism strategy for Bolton, after which it was expected the strategy would be submitted to the various committees of the Council for their approval before final publication in April or May 2020. The Chairman stressed that this would be a live document that would be updated from time to time as the report's objectives were achieved and or amended in light of new knowledge and experience.

Agenda Item 7. Any other business

- a. John Ellis mentioned cuts in PIP and help can be sought at CAB, Back Blackhorse Street, Bolton.
- b. Website: Time to Talk at Social Evenings and a time specified.
- c. A lady carer at one of our Social activities evenings had asked Rachel about accommodation at SLS. Rachel to confirm this query has been referred to Alison Thompson
- d. Roselle raised a health & safety issue regarding our Social Activities evenings:
 - i) Those present should be advised of safety issues i.e. fire exits, general rules etc.
 - ii) The number of people in the kitchen was discussed, this should be limited as there have been too many at any one time.
 - iii) Photos for the website can be taken at various stages – to be agreed with whoever is in charge
 - iv) There needs to be someone on the door for at least the first 15 mins (members could take this in turn each month), or a better alert system in place, otherwise people are stood outside trying to catch the attention of anyone inside.

- e. The Chairman advised that Helen Bucke and Lisa Griffiths-Wood were leaving their respective organisations
- f. The Chairman advised of his letter to David Crausby, who had sadly lost his seat at the recent election,.
- g. The Chairman made a request for volunteers to assist on the Bolton University Health Day stall on 5th March 20
- h. The Chairman advised that unspent grant for Carers trips can be carried over to June 2020.

Agenda item 8. Date of next meeting

*The next meeting of the committee was scheduled for Wednesday, 25th March 2020.

***Post script:** The planned meeting scheduled for Wednesday 25th March, 2020 had to be cancelled as did subsequent meetings for April, May, June, July and August together with the monthly Thursday evening activities sessions due to Covid -19. However, following a successful bid for grant to the Bolton Fund via Bolton CVS for an additional computer and Zoom subscription BAAS has been able to maintain contact with members, volunteers and Befriendees and their families via Zoom conferencing and online quizzes.