



Dear Members,

I am pleased to report that we are getting back to some sort of normality, after a year of applying ourselves to getting the Searchlight Centre up and running.

This is a short newsletter, to get members up to speed, and a full newsletter will be issued in March.

Many of you have already visited our new home at the Searchlight Community Centre: please pop in if you have not had the chance to do so. Michelle Kitch is now our administrator, as well as running Seekers Club and Saturday Drop In with Ben Hodges and Lucy Freud.

We have regular bookings at Searchlight, including Kingston Young Carers and Surbiton Deaf Club, plus our own clubs, at various times during the week. We have also had many bookings by voluntary organisations and public bodies, especially those involved with learning disabilities, plus a few Member's birthday parties. This is all without publicising that we have rooms for hire. The new sign at the entrance to Searchlight advertises that we have space to hire out.

Our Kingston Mencap clubs have settled in well to Searchlight, and we are gaining new members. Now that we have our own home, we are planning to expand activities for our Members. We have already worked in conjunction with the YMCA to put on very successful Life Skills and Fitness sessions, and we propose to run similar sessions throughout the year. Please watch out on our website ([www.kingstonmencap.org.uk](http://www.kingstonmencap.org.uk)) for future events.

It is time to renew your annual membership!

Michelle will be phoning Members to check that we have up to date details and, if you have not yet paid, to remind you that payment is due. Expect her call! Many Members pay by standing order, which is very convenient for both you and us! If you wish to set up a standing order just phone the office (0208 546 2837) and Michelle will give you our bank details. We do rely on subscriptions as a major source of income and we are very grateful for the many additional donations that are

made at the same time: we can claim Gift Aid on these amounts, if we have your consent. We have kept the subscription a £5 per annum.

We are upgrading our website at present. Please use it to find out what is going on, and you will also find a lot of other useful information about Benefits etc. Well worth a look.

Christine Towers has been carrying out some work for us, with a focus on families. We are keen to offer help and advice through our Carers' Group, which meets on the first Wednesday of the month, alternately in the evening and afternoons. Look out on our website for meeting details. All Members are welcome to attend.

We are looking forward to our second year at Searchlight, which should be less hectic than the first year with all the refurbishments going on. With increased lettings, and more use by Kingston Mencap, we aim to meet our income targets to pay the considerable running costs.

We have vacancies for three/four Trustees. We are actively looking for Trustees to help with the running of Kingston Mencap. If it is something that interests you, please contact me and I can let you know what is involved.

We are also looking for volunteers to support with our clubs, we particularly need mini bus drivers to pick up and drop off members to and from Seekers Club on Monday night. Please call or email [michelle@kingstonmencap.org.uk](mailto:michelle@kingstonmencap.org.uk)

Our next newsletter will be much more comprehensive. The Trustees appreciate your continued support of Kingston Mencap: if you need any further information please contact the office (0208 546 2837).

With best wishes for the year ahead,

*Peter Hodges*

