



Our independent pharmacies are 'threatened by government cuts'

By Neil McNaughton

East Finchley currently boasts four independent pharmacies, but as government cuts begin to bite they may not all survive. In December 2015 the government announced a cut of 6% in the funding paid to pharmacies for the services they provide to the community. This may not seem much but, on top of rising rates and rents, it could be enough to tip some over the edge.

Personal service

Paresh Shah, who runs Andrew's opposite the tube station, told THE ARCHER that smaller independents like his are less able to absorb the extra cost, while the chains, with their economies of scale, may survive. The independents, he added, are important because they provide a very personal service which supermarkets and chains do not.

Pharmacists can offer advice on the treatment of minor conditions and the use of medicines, not to mention the range of cosmetics and beauty products they stock. With additional pressure on general practitioners – East Finchley lost one GP practice in the High Road last year – the work of small pharmacies has become even more important.

Mr Shah said that practices like his are vital for those people who find it difficult to obtain doctors' appointments.

A good pharmacist, he said, can make judgments as to whether a patient can be treated quickly and simply or whether their condition requires further investigation.

Campaign against cuts

Alastair Burt, the minister in charge of pharmacy services, has admitted that up to 3,000 pharmacies may close nationally as a result of the funding reductions. What is more, the pharmacy industry now expects more cuts in the immediate future.

A campaign has now been launched to put pressure on the government to stop the cuts and so save independent pharmacies. Residents are encouraged to visit their local pharmacy to hear details and to join the campaign, which includes an e-petition, letters to MPs and lobbying of ministers. Information can also be found on www.supportyourlocalpharmacy.org.



Grand design: How the new centre will look

Fresh start for new community centre

By Janet Maitland

A new community centre on Tarling Road will open next year. Barnet Council's planning committee took a unanimous decision on 31 March after many months of often heated consultation. The centre will replace the Old Barn, which is scheduled for demolition in late summer or early autumn.

The Old Barn was a thriving centre for children and young people for more than 25 years until it was taken over in 2010 by a group of "trustees" who closed down all the services. The Old Barn Action Group campaigned for years to get the centre restored to the community. The building was finally wrestled back in 2014, with the lease reverting to the council.

Local needs

"We'll be working with the council to ensure the centre meets the needs of local residents, particularly children and young people," said Julia Hines, board member at the Grange Big Local, which is steering community projects in the area.

"We're keen that nursery hours are restricted to school hours so that after-school clubs and holiday schemes can still take place. It's vital the building is let at a peppercorn rent to allow groups working with the most vulnerable kids in the area to use it."

Return to N2

The new centre will also be home to members of the Somali Bravanese Welfare Association (SBWA), who lost their centre in Coppetts Road, N10, in an arson attack in 2013. This group, for people who fled war-torn Somalia in 1992, started life in Church Lane, N2, before moving to Muswell Hill in 1996.

Chairman Abubakar Ali told the *Hendon and Finchley Times*: "It's been very tough. People kept asking day in and day out when we were going to get our centre back. Everything was up in the air. It was so nice to be able to finally tell people what's coming."

Available space

The council decided in January to lease half of the ground

floor to a nursery, thereby reducing the amount of space available to local residents who are not nursery users or SBWA members to a quarter of the building.

We asked the council if they had considered making the sharing of allocated space, when not in use, an enforceable requirement for each lessee, to increase the space available for the wider community.

"We are looking to appoint a management organisation this summer, with any lease-drafting taking place in autumn/winter 2016," replied a council spokesperson. "Final decisions on space arrangements will be made following this appointment and decided after engagement with residents and groups."



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Murder charge after stabbing incident

A man has been charged with murder after the death of Fikret Ahmed, 46, in a flat off the North Circular in the early hours of 5 April.

Police were called to a flat at Kinloss Court N3 at approximately 2.15am. When they arrived they found Mr Ahmed collapsed with stab wounds. A team from the Air Ambulance made extensive efforts to resuscitate him but he was pronounced dead at 3am.

Radek Sindler, 22, of Kinloss Court, was arrested at the scene. He was remanded in custody and charged with murder at Hendon Magistrates' Court on 6 April.

Anyone with any information is asked to call police on 020 8358 0300 or 101. Alternatively, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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