



Could pharmacies open for service on Sundays again?

By Lynn Winton

Some readers may remember that pharmacies in East Finchley used to take it in turns to open on Sundays for anyone needing to pick up emergency prescriptions or treatments. This arrangement stopped many years ago, leaving people to travel to a seven-day pharmacy in Golders Green or Boots in Muswell Hill.

Reader John Briggs wrote to us this month (see Letters, pg 11) asking whether a Sunday rota could be re-established in N2. "The elderly and disabled and those without family or friends are going to find it hard to pick up their prescription outside their immediate area," he said. So we went out to canvass

the one at Finchley Memorial. Paresh Shah, owner of C. W. Andrew Pharmacy in the High Road, noted that his business already provides 60 hours of dispensing a week, which is 20 hours more than its NHS contract, and by Sunday staff are exhausted. "We are an independent business with no

extra staff, we all have families, and we all really need one day to switch off for our own health and well-being," he said.

On the other hand, Herman Benjamin, owner of Oakdale Pharmacy in the High Road, confirmed that, as a second-generation pharmacist, he remembers there used to be a Sunday rota in East Finchley and he thought the idea could work again.

"We are here to help the needs of the community, and I'm happy to discuss it in principle, and maybe we could all manage one Sunday in four once we propose a rota to the LPC (Local Pharmacy Committee) and NHS England," he said.

We also contacted Links Pharmacy in East End Road and Cootes Pharmacy in the High Road but did not get a response before we went to press.



In favour: Herman Benjamin

opinion and ask the pharmacists themselves. Sandra, a hospital consultant for 30 years, who lives on Kitchener Road, said: "It's a marvellous idea, and I hope a Sunday rota gets off the ground". Others felt it was "good enough" that we are between Muswell Hill and Golders Green, both with pharmacies open on a Sunday, as well as some supermarkets and

Health screening in the community

By Diana Cormack

To mark World Diabetes Day on Monday 20 November, Age UK teamed up with Barnet Council to run a health screening clinic. Hosted by the Ann Owen Centre in Oak Lane, N2, these free 20-minute sessions were for those over 40. The event was fully booked.

After being weighed then measured for height, participants were asked a number of questions relating to their health and well-being, along with a finger-prick blood sample. Advice was given on Body Mass Index, cholesterol and blood sugar levels as well as for dietary and alcohol consumption.

Blood pressure, cardiovascular conditions and exercise regimes were among other topics covered, not forgetting smoking and mental health

queries.

Sensitive advice was offered throughout, with all the results and comments being subsequently emailed to the patient and their GP, if the patient wished it.

Such screening clinics have been running for a while in Barnet, providing an early warning system for people to act on and so are particularly useful for those who are not registered with a doctor. To find out more, visit barnet.gov.uk/healthscreen.



Team work: Food Bank Aid volunteers appeal for donations to support their crucial service

February is crucial fundraising month for in-demand food bank

By Lynn Winton

Naomi Russell, the driving force behind Finchley-based Food Bank Aid (FBA), will be having a nail-biting time in the run up to their critical fundraising campaign this month.

FBA began in humble beginnings in April 2020 when Naomi started a collection for her local food bank during the pandemic. Today it is a busy charity with 400 volunteers that has sent out almost £5million of goods in four years.

Its distribution hub at the Great North Leisure Park in North Finchley supports 31 food banks across north London, which in turn help more than 20,000 people including 5,000 children per week.

As a result of the cost-of-living crisis in 2023, FBA has recorded a 47% increase year-on-year in the number of food banks they support, along with a 50% increase in the cost of supplying them. It is helping 43% more people every week, but costs continue to rise.

Daunting challenge

I spoke to her about the daunting challenge of fulfilling

their commitment to supply 31 food banks with a minimum of 20% of the goods they need, which is way up on their previous year's pledge to supply 20 food banks.

"We have to raise £1.5 million this year just to stand still, and all that is for food and other necessities, nothing for running costs or salaries," said Naomi. "Food bank clients are being overwhelmed by working people who are struggling to feed their children. Around

23% of households in the UK with children are suffering 'food poverty', which is officially defined as those forced to eat less or go a day without eating because they could not afford food."

The good news is that FBA has found sponsors to double every donation over the fundraising weekend of 24-25 February, so whatever size your donation, you are actually giving double.

So there is an incentive for everyone, whether donating £5 or £5,000 to come together to support the 31 food banks through Food Bank Aid. There will never be a better time.

And the better news for Archer readers is you don't have to wait to donate: FBA have created the unique QR code printed here so that at any time up to Tuesday 27 February, your donation will be matched and doubled. Please scan the code on your phone and give what you can afford. Find out more about the charity at www.foodbankaid.org



No more hole in the wall

East Finchley lost another of its cash machines last month when the ATM outside the tube station entrance was bricked up. The machine was convenient for commuters but had also been the scene of a number of robberies over the years. In a world where cash is harder to come by, the removal leaves East Finchley with just three ATMs all within a few metres of each other on the High Road, at UOE, Sainsbury's and outside Coffee Bank.



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