



A briefing on epilepsy

Fit for Life

The first recorded incidence of epilepsy was found on a stone tablet in Babylon dating from around 2080BC. Yet 4,000 years on, epilepsy is still surrounded by misconception, ignorance and stigma.

So let's look at some facts:

- ♦Epilepsy is the commonest neurological condition. There are more people with epilepsy than people with Parkinson's and Multiple Sclerosis put together.
- ♦Epilepsy is a physical condition, not a mental one.
- ♦Around one in every 120 people has some form of epilepsy.
- ♦There are at least 40 different types of epilepsy.
- ♦78% have their seizures controlled by medication: there is now brain surgery for some conditions.

There are many professional people with epilepsy but, sadly, those in the public eye are afraid to "come out".

Random harvest

Anyone at any time can develop epilepsy regardless of age, race, intellectual ability or social standing. Causes of epilepsy include diseases such as meningitis and encephalitis or it may result from a stroke or birth trauma or any head injury. However, for many people there is no known cause; it just happens. Most people with epilepsy can and do work, but many find difficulty in getting employment due to the ignorance and prejudice of employers.

The British Epilepsy Association has a freephone help line on 0808 800 5050. For local contacts ring Irene on 020 8444 4453 or Ginny on 020 8445 8724.

Cowboy Builders

Dodgy builders in the borough may soon be forced to hang up their tools for good. Barnet Council has introduced a special response team to attend on site to protect consumers from rip-off services and repairs.

Hundreds of customers a year complain to Barnet's Trading Standards about cowboy builders. There are particular problems with rogue traders knocking on the doors of the elderly and vulnerable and persuading them to have work done for cash. In some cases, cowboy builders have taken cash on deposit for a building job and never returned.

The Cavalry

Now the council is fighting back with a special response team of Trading Standards

Officers who will check out the credentials of builders who turn up at the door offering to do work. A new hotline has been launched for residents to report unscrupulous builders. The number is 020 8359 4300.

Call the hotline for advice on hiring a builder or to access the council's free register of trustworthy builders and home improvement firms in Barnet. A list of reputable builders can also be found by clicking on www.barnet.gov.uk/trading_standards.



"Muck be no good 'less it be spread." Mulching the plants in Cherry Tree Wood. Photo by Martin Earl

As mulch as it takes

You plant the shrubs and then apparently you have to give them tender loving care. So on Sunday 13 May the Friends of Cherry Tree Woods were out in strength mulching the 600 saplings planted in the new picnic area in February. The idea is that the mulch should stop the grass choking the plants and help retain moisture.

Younger volunteers also took part in a competition and produced some lovely drawings as well as answering 24 questions about the Wood.

The Friends will be holding a stall at the Community Festival on 24 June where they will be displaying ideas for their new logo that have been kindly designed by pupils of Martin Junior School.

Mother's Little Helper

By Diana Cormack

Seventeen years ago I needed help. Despite living in East Finchley for a couple of years, I knew few people because my work and my social life took place elsewhere and my family lived hundreds of miles away. I had just given birth, but didn't know much about babies and being responsible for a little human being can be really scary.

Luckily, my neighbour was a member of the National Childbirth Trust and she threw me a lifeline. Through the NCT I met other local mums, getting advice, support and making long lasting friendships.

Today the East Finchley Branch of the NCT is still carrying on the good work of bringing together mothers and mothers-to-be, who meet at members' homes for tea and chats. But there is a lot more than that going on. Helen Drake compiles the regular newsletter along with Claire Richardson and Azra Nath, and it is a mine of information. Childcare, party venues

and entertainers, holiday information and helpful hints from local parents are just some of the topics in the latest issue. As well as the list of members and their activities during the day, there are also evening events, national campaigns - and fathers are not forgotten either!

For more information you can phone 020 8444 9576 or e-mail NCT@east-finchley.fsnet.co.uk

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GARDENING

Hanging Out

By Zena Robson

At last - that bright light in the sky has switched itself on and we are drying out enough to start wondering if we have to go out in the evenings to water! Actually, mornings are better as the plants will appreciate it more during the day and you are less likely to encourage slugs and snails to feast overnight on your precious plants.

Picnic Baskets

I'm into hanging basket mode at the moment. Go for the biggest size you can handle - it will dry out less quickly. Line with moss or pre-made liners, or use an old sweater - the best liner I ever used was recycled wool that you used like moss but for some reason it does not seem to be available anymore - typical!! Use an inner lining of plastic to help conserve moisture and some really good hanging basket compost. It should already have slow-release fertiliser and water-retaining crystals in it if it is any good. Approach your planting like making a sandwich - half the liner, half the plastic, half the compost and then thread trailers like lobelia and fuchsias through the sides, (that's the first slice of bread and the filling!) Now complete with moss up to the brim, a strip of plastic inside it, more compost and finish off by planting uprights in the middle and some more trailers around the edges. That's the top slice!

Light and Shade

Water well and leave in a semi-shaded place to settle down before facing the realities of life on a hook. Choose plants that are suitable for the aspect - a sunny wall will be great for pelargoniums and tomatoes but not good for busy lizzies which will thrive much better in shade. Be prepared to water at least once a day - it will probably rain, but, believe me, it doesn't get to the roots. Wind is as drying as sun, so be sure to check. Feeding with Tomato Feed once they start to look tired will give them a good second burst; regular deadheading is essential. Enjoy the sun!

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