



Beware cashpoint con artist

A reader has contacted *THE ARCHER* to warn about a woman trying to con people out of their cash and personal banking details at cashpoints in East Finchley.

Our reader was withdrawing money from the NatWest cashpoint in the High Road at 9.30am when a woman approached him, pretending to be a worker at the bank. She asked him to reveal his PIN number. He challenged her to go into the bank, at which point she disappeared rapidly with a male accomplice.

The woman is described as tall, white and slim, with short black bobbed hair and sharp features. She was carrying a black cotton or canvas bag with embroidery on it, and wore a black jacket and trousers.

Readers are reminded never to disclose their personal banking details to anyone.

Polyclinic to be built on playing fields

By Janet Maitland

Plans to build a new health centre serving Finchley are gathering momentum with the award of a £10 million grant to buy playing fields in Bow Lane, N12.

Barnet Primary Care Trust (PCT) intends to create a polyclinic where patients can access both primary care, such as GPs and pharmacies, and secondary care, such as diagnostic services. Once the new centre opens in 2012, the adjacent Finchley Memorial Hospital will be decommissioned.

The PCT has been awarded £10 million by the Department of Health to help fund purchase of the playing fields. By making 'outdoor pursuits' one of the polyclinic's services, in order to 'promote a positive wellness agenda', it hopes the loss of an open space will be felt less keenly by local people.

THE ARCHER's front page story last month recorded that the Department of Health wants polyclinics, which will mainly be run by private companies, to set their boundaries as wide as possible in order to stimulate competition. Concerns have been raised that losing patients will affect GPs' funding and therefore their viability.

'Poaching' queried

At a public meeting of the PCT Board on 22 May, *THE ARCHER* raised the issue of the new centre 'poaching' patients from local GPs in East Finchley and elsewhere.

In response, the Board stressed that local GP practices were vital to the success of the new centre, which will be one of the main hubs of the PCT's hub-and-spoke model of health care. Local GPs are expected to act as the spokes in this model, referring patients to the new centre for tests or treatment when appropriate. However, a number of GP practices will "have to be upgraded" in order to meet the required standard.

The PCT thinks that this model is better than those planned for other large London boroughs, where there is indeed a risk that people will lose their local GP and have to travel further to see a doctor.

Surgeries petition

The British Medical Association (BMA) has delivered a Save Our Surgery petition of tens of thousands of names to Downing Street. "We believe that the only people to benefit from the reforms will be commercial companies," said Dr Laurence Buckman, chair of the BMA's GP Committee.

A spokesperson from the Department of Health has said that the government has "no desire to see successful, high-quality GP practices close".

Saying a big thank-you

By Linda Sansom

East Finchley based charity Home-Start Barnet celebrated the long awaited introduction of their Recognition Awards on Friday 6 June.

Some 35 volunteers were recognised for the support, skill and time they give to families in Barnet who are going through a difficult or stressful time.

With the kind help of Pizza Express in Whetstone, who provided the meal and drinks free of charge, they were able to enjoy an upbeat and emotional lunch.

In particular, many were touched by the individual 'Thank you' cards presented to each volunteer. These contained a personal message from a family to whom they had given valuable support, which caused a few tearful eyes.

Particular thanks were given to Natalie Bowman and Judith Usiskin, both of whom have given at least five years of service to Home-Start Barnet, and to Barbara Smith, who has been a volunteer since the scheme began 11 years ago. A big thankyou



At an emotional lunch, Home Start volunteers were given awards for helping local families. Photo by John Lawrence

to all the families and volunteers who helped and to Pizza Express in Whetstone for their hospitality.

The previous day some of the Home-Start volunteers had

attended a ceremony where they were presented with a special Barnet Community Volunteer award for 100 hours service by the Mayor, Councillor John Marshall.

Mayor hosts the annual Civic Service

Distinguished guests and fellow councillors joined the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor John Marshall, on Sunday 8 June for his first major civic event as the borough's first citizen.

Every year the borough's new Mayor holds the Civic Service at their chosen place of worship. The Parish Church of St Jude-on-the-Hill in Hampstead Garden Suburb, where the mayor is a ward councillor, was

this year's venue.

Guests included Barnet councillors in addition to past Mayors, Freeman of the borough, MPs, magistrates and representatives from the council's partner organisations including the police and Fire Brigade.

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