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THE ARCHER




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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

New healthcare centre could threaten existing services

By Janet Maitland

Plans to turn Finchley Memorial Hospital into a major new healthcare centre offering GP services and pharmacy dispensing have raised fears that patients and pharmacists in East Finchley will be badly affected.

Barnet Primary Care Trust (PCT) is planning a shake-up of healthcare provision. Seven primary care centres will be developed, each providing a wide range of healthcare services. One of the main centres will be Finchley Memorial Hospital in Granville Road, N12.

New buildings and services

Finchley Memorial will be rebuilt and expanded to provide GP services, diagnostic services, pharmacy dispensing, urgent (unbooked) care, out-patient clinics, general health advice and specialist clinics *while continuing its function as a community hospital. The PCT will build on Bow Lane Playingfields, adjacent to the hospital, hoping to complete*

the redevelopment by 2012.

Charles Hollwey, PCT chief executive, said the primary care centres would allow some hospital services to be provided in a community setting closer to patients' homes. "Patients won't have to travel to hospital unless they really have to," he said.

Impact on GPs and pharmacists

The PCT stresses that GPs will not be forced to move to Finchley Memorial. However, the Department of Health has said that such new centres should set their practice boundaries "as wide as possible" in order to "stimulate competition".

GPs in East Finchley may therefore lose patients, which will have an impact on their PCT funding. Some GPs may decide to move to Finchley Memorial anyway, particularly if their current premises are cramped.

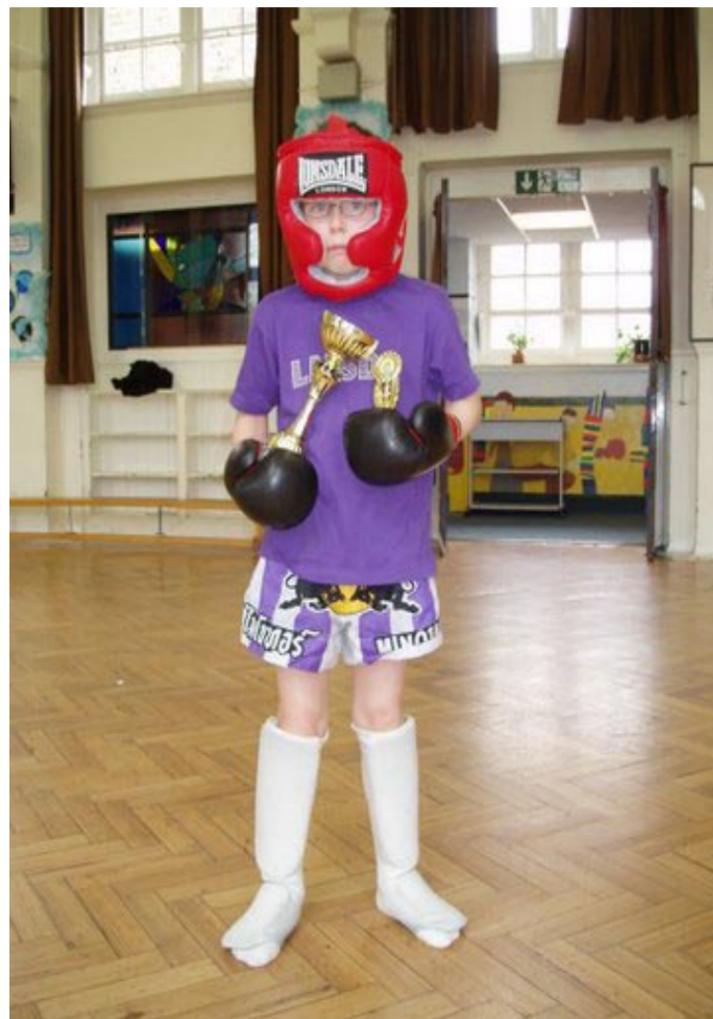
"If any of our GPs move," said a local pharmacist, who preferred not to be named,

"there will be a knock-on effect on pharmacists as well as patients."

Polyclinics next?

The plans reflect the government's intentions for all healthcare, right across the country. NHS London has recently consulted on a plan to set up "polyclinics" across London, which offer an even wider range of services than Barnet's planned centres, including opticians and dentists. Fifty one per cent of the 5,000 people who responded to the consultation were in favour of polyclinics - although a third were against. Barnet PCT may take this as a signal that the scope of the primary care centres could be broadened still further.

Dr Lawrence Buckman, chair of the BMA's GPs Committee, has stated that PCTs should be encouraged to invest in their local GP practices instead of setting up new centres, in order to avoid the risk of "unnecessary duplication or destabilisation".



Anthony Sparks is only eight, but he's got big ambitions. Find out more on page 7. Photo by Helen Drake

Festival preparations in full swing

By Rob Robertson

The East Finchley Festival takes place in Cherry Tree Wood on Sunday 22 June. The festival will run from 12 noon to 6pm and, as always, will be an annual celebration of what is great about living and working in East Finchley.

Top local bands and other artists will be doing their stuff on the two stages. Many of them will have been through the annual rock music competition known as the Battle of the Bands. This year's acts include The Idles, Sound of the Suburbs and, of course, the legendary Applelips Brothers.

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