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Funding threat to sheltered homes

By Daphne Chamberlain

Barnet's proposal to withdraw funding from providers of sheltered accommodation is seen as a body blow by many local senior citizens. At present, resident wardens are supplied by accommodation providers, but paid for by Barnet. If funding stops, they could be replaced by "floating" wardens. The alarm system may also be changed.

Residents have told us these proposals are "desperately worrying", and feel they are not being given enough information. East Finchley sheltered accommodation includes Drummond House, Prospect Place, Market Place, parts of Thomas More Estate, Annette White Lodge and Paul Byrne House.

Wardens crucial

Some residents at Paul Byrne House have spoken to *THE ARCHER* about their fears if the proposal goes ahead. Mrs Pamela Christopher told us: "It's devastating news. I've been here for nearly 10 years, and about six or seven years ago we experienced what it was like to have a floating warden system. We know it doesn't work. As well as the safety angle, our own warden organises events and keeps up our morale."

Mrs Betty Powles said: "We would be lost without our warden. All of us need wardens and an alarm system. That's why we're here. We moved here to feel safe. Our warden keeps an eye on us, helps us with things like hospital appointments, tests the equipment regularly, and monitors the CCTV in her office."

Their concerns were supported by Mr John Boys, a resident with serious health problems, who is very worried about threats to remove wardens and alarms. "It takes away our sense of security," he told us.

Lifeline substitute

Instead of automatic alarm provision, Barnet wants to put the residents on the same footing as people living elsewhere. So each person or household would come under the "Lifeline" scheme, for which they would either pay themselves or be funded by Social Services.

A Barnet Council spokesperson told *THE ARCHER* that representatives from the council and the accommodation providers were visiting each site, and were talking to relatives and friends. The proposals go to Barnet Cabinet for a decision in early June, and all providers have a six-month termination clause in their contracts.



Just under eight miles to go: walkers set out through Cherry Tree Wood. Photo by John Lawrence

Big walk, big fun

By Linda Dolata

Hundreds of people took part in the annual Big Fun Walk which set off from East Finchley station in bright sunshine on Sunday 8 March, raising thousands of pounds for the North London Hospice.

The walk takes a leisurely three or four hours, although a brisk walker could do it in two. Many people use it as a good opportunity to see friends and have a long chat. En route are Cherry Tree and Highgate Woods, part of the Heath, Primrose Hill, Regents Park (with a break for lunch), a bit of Baker Street, Hyde Park, Green Park and St James's Park.

It finishes with the flourish of a welcoming band, coffee and cakes at the green in front of the Methodist Central Hall in Westminster.

Well organised

All the way there are checkpoints and marshalls to ensure that no-one takes a wrong turn. The route

has been planned so that it carefully shimmies to all the public toilets on the way.

This year's walk took place on a bright but windy day, and most people were pleased to finish before the rain came down at about 2pm.

It is one of the best organised events that I know of, and it is nice

to take part in something which not only benefits so many of the community, but is also so enjoyable.

All the money raised from the event goes to support the work of the North London Hospice in Whetstone, which relies on donations to continue helping terminally-ill people and their families.



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