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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Lifeline voluntary services face uncertain future

By Linda Sansom

East Finchley Advice Service is busier than ever, helping up to a dozen people a day with housing, welfare benefits, consumer rights and general advice at its base in Church Lane, but there are concerns it is facing possible cuts to its budget next year.

Ralph Palache, Chair of EFAS, explained that the service receives some money from the City Parochial Charity, and is funded until next March by Barnet Council. "After that Barnet has an overall plan for centralising everything and cutting expenditure, and they no longer want to deal with the little advice centres that exist in Barnet," he said.

"Their plan is to put everything out to tender for the whole area, and the Citizens Advice Bureau will probably be the only people who have the facility for this work, so organisations like ours will disappear."

The funding changes could also affect the work of two other voluntary groups who receive council funding and share the same building: East Finchley Neighbourhood Contact and the African Catholic Refugee Community.

EFAS was set up in 1982 by Barnet Social Services in response to increasing demand in the area for benefit and

housing advice. Under threat of closure when funding was withdrawn in 1994, it successfully applied to Barnet Council for a grant. It now has a dedicated core team of around 20 volunteers, including lawyers, outreach workers and a dentist. An employment training programme offers young people the chance to learn the basics of interview techniques, CV writing and IT skills.

Manager Ruby Joseph said: "EFAS enhances lives, and it empowers people, which ultimately helps them and their families."

A spokesman for Barnet Council said there would be no change to the East Finchley Neighbourhood Centre itself as this is a building leased by the council for community use but acknowledged that a funding review was under way.

He said: "The council is currently going through a tendering process to commission a variety of services from the voluntary sector in the borough. This includes

advice services. The council is obviously speaking to these three groups. We will continue with our current funding arrangements pending completion of that process but we obviously cannot prejudge this process."

Rudi Vis says farewell
Rudi Vis, who stood down as MP for Finchley and Golders Green this month, has written to *THE ARCHER* to say farewell to the constituency he has served since 1997.

In his letter, he reveals that he is suffering from inoperable cancer. He pays tribute to his political colleagues and opponents, and movingly expresses his love for his wife and family. You can read Rudi's letter on page 11.



Mums and children campaign for a safer crossing at Creighton Avenue. Photo by Michelle Imber.

Mothers and children walk on the safe side

By Emily Burnham

With Walk to School Week coming up from 17-21 May, mums and children are highlighting the low priority they say is given to the safety of vulnerable pedestrians. They are particularly worried about getting to school safely along Creighton Avenue and Church Lane.

A mum of three, the eldest attending Martin Primary School, spoke of her daily concern at the lack of a pedestrian crossing on Creighton Avenue. "Cars turning left off the High Road can't see children waiting to cross just around the corner. My son was in the road when a

car turned without indicating. I had to pull him back. How many near misses do there have to be?"

A mum of two who lives nearby has witnessed several accidents in two years. Her child attends Coldfall Primary School and she is relieved that Haringey Council has made Creighton Avenue safer further down the road.

Another mum of three, with two children at Martin Primary School, wrote to Barnet Council some years ago. She received a reply saying that "traffic flow" was the council's priority.

Church Lane is another problem with cars travelling so fast that the narrow pavements are a hazard and there is only one pedestrian crossing. It's dangerous for children to use scooters and bikes and some three-year-olds travel in pushchairs because we fear they may venture near traffic.

The mums say they and other carers work hard to make children safe, healthy and develop good habits such as being used to walking. To make Walk to School Week work all year, they are calling on Barnet to put children's lives first.



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