



Yasmin Batliwala and Mike Freer MP. Photo by Michael Farenden

## Dynamic drug charity

By Diana Cormack

To celebrate National Volunteers' Week at the beginning of June, the Westminster Drug Project (WDP) held events at the Phoenix Cinema and Finchley Youth Theatre. WDP is a charity committed to helping those affected by drug and alcohol problems. Volunteers set up the charity 21 years ago and today volunteers make up one in four of the work force.

This fact was emphasised by founder member Yasmin Batliwala, now chair of WDP, who described how the charity has grown from a small group into one that now covers 18 London boroughs and several surrounding counties. Over half of the volunteers have recovered from drug and alcohol dependency themselves. The volunteering programme provides them with an opportunity to "give back", be a role model to others and a route to paid employment. It also encourages members of the community to get involved.

### MP backs project

The Big Lottery-funded "Giving Something Back" project was highlighted and one 26-year-old spoke movingly about his journey of recovery, which has led him to paid employment within WDP. He is now a successful drug and alcohol practitioner. This project has recently been launched in

Barnet, coordinated by Khaz Khan and Katie Noorian. They have the support of local MP Mike Freer, no stranger to volunteering himself, who pledged to be of help to them with their work in the borough.

Members of the public seeking information, advice or treatment for drugs and alcohol should contact Restart, 6-8 Alexandra Grove, North Finchley, London, N12 8NU, tel: 020 8492 2525. Use these contact details too if you wish to volunteer or visit [www.wdp-drugs.org.uk](http://www.wdp-drugs.org.uk) for full information and an application form.

## How to cut your water bill

By Daphne Chamberlain  
Do you live alone, but in a property with several bedrooms? If so, you probably already know that you can reduce your water bills by having a meter installed. However, that's not always possible for technical reasons. For example, you may live in a block of flats where some of the water comes from a communal tank.

For many people, that was the end of the road; now it appears this is not the case. If you have asked for a meter, water companies are required to adjust your bill.

One East Finchley resident told *THE ARCHER*: "I couldn't believe it. My home has three bedrooms, but only one occupant: me. When I asked the water supplier for a meter, they took my details and arranged for an engineer to visit. He made his report, explaining why a meter could not be installed, and I received written confirmation from Veolia that my bill was being reduced immediately by about £200. It was all done within three or four weeks, but first you have to apply."

So, if you're in the same boat, go on, stop up that cash outflow!



A pep talk from Bubble after a grueling training session. Photo by Zack Rubens

## Cat has training work cut out

Bubble (the tabby) has an uphill struggle trying to whip this unexercised, unfit blob into shape to cycle 60 miles to raise money for charity.

Mike Rubens, local graphic designer (and *ARCHER* photo editor) plans to cycle to Cambridge on 26th July to raise money for Action Duchenne.

A most debilitating form of muscular dystrophy, Duchenne restricts the sufferer to a wheelchair by their early teens and shortens their lifespan to their early twenties.

Mike, whose close relative has just discovered that her four-year-old son has Duchenne's, told the *ARCHER*: "Amazing strides are being made all the time in the fight against this illness so I hope that developments in research, funded by donations, will give some measure of help in the not too distant future."

Newly recovering from his own fight with cancer, Mike is determined to make the full 60 miles and, with Bubbles' relentless training advice and your support at [www.justgiving.com/Mike-Rubens](http://www.justgiving.com/Mike-Rubens), he hopes to help fight this terrible disease.

## KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

### The moral elephants are coming

Hark, listen! Above the noise of the traffic you will hear the sound of the moral elephants as they thunder down the road, their battle cry of 'something must be done' echoing through the night. And yes, something is being done as the combined forces of Mummy Knows Best.com and the Morning Mule drag childhood back to the 1950s.

Forget all this stuff about voluntary codes of decency, the moral elephants have bigger and better ideas for us all. Remember, these are the people behind the My Wife and I are Trying to Get Some Sleep Act and they are ready to do it again.

Let's start with clothes. Under the new You're Not Going Out Dressed Like That Act, children will only be allowed to wear clothes from the elephant-approved sensible sackcloth range. Miniskirts will be banned along with anything else that might upset the new children's commissioner, a post the elephants believe is perfect for a 63-year-old, highly religious spinster like Ann Widdecombe.

Next will be the problem of the watershed. The solution is simple: a new National Bedtime Ordinance that makes it illegal for any child not to be in bed by nine o'clock. The new rules will ban any pre-watershed mention of how babies are made, why mummy and daddy sleep in the same bed and what Ryan Giggs has been up to. Music will be affected and anything that might have upset an Edwardian lady of a sensitive disposition will be banned. So that's the problem of Rihanna solved.

The thorny issue of electronic media will be just as easily solved by the new Mule Lock on computers which will only allow children to access sites approved by the Morning Mule, and these won't include Facebook or YouTube. Worried about mobile phones? There will be the all-new Camerfone. Personally approved by Sam'n'Dave (not the 1960s soul act), the Camerfone will only allow children to make or receive calls from parentally approved numbers and comes with satellite tracking so that parents can know exactly which bikeshed their child is smoking behind.

Yes, as the net curtains twitch across London and the police arrest your neighbour for allowing their 16-year-old to watch *Twilight*, the moral elephants will be able to sleep easily until something else comes along for them to trample under foot, like free speech. Shame they are blissfully unconcerned about the Playboy Club reopening...

## Warning over bogus meter reader

By Janet Maitland  
Barnet Borough Watch has issued a warning about a bogus meter reader who has been operating in the Temple Fortune area.

The man, who wears a high visibility jacket, knocks on doors claiming to be from the National Grid and asks to come inside to read the gas meter. When refused entry, he threatens to cut off the gas supply.

"A householder who was highly suspicious contacted the National Grid to check," said Paul Hammond, the coordinator of borough watch. "They said they had not sent anyone to that address and that he was definitely a conman."

If you see this man, please contact the police who are asking for help in identifying him. "Take his ID number and his van registration number if possible," said Mr Hammond.

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Michael Stanway is happy to answer any enquiries:

Tel: 020 8346 8591