



# Children's centre faces hours cut

By Linda Sansom

Parents facing proposed budget cuts in their local children's centre will see the childcare hours slashed by over 20%, if proposed changes are agreed by Barnet Council.

An information document circulated by the council shows that Newstead Children's Centre, in Fallows Close, would open for only 38 weeks per year, instead of the current 48 weeks, although the centre would open slightly earlier and have capacity for additional sessions.

If agreed, the changes, which the council say reflect the demand for flexible childcare in line with the free early years provision for three- and four-year-olds, would come into effect in September. They would provide an additional 20 childcare sessions over the morning and afternoon, and an additional four childcare places in both the extended day and tea club services.

### Year-round needs

But Cheryl Connell, a nurse and centre user who is a member of the campaign group that has

been fighting to keep the centre open since it was first threatened with closure, is unhappy with the proposals.

"People access childcare all year round and obviously working mothers will have a big problem if they can only have childcare during the term time," she said. "I don't just speak for myself when I say that this nursery is considered to be a fantastic community resource. It has just been rated outstanding yet again in all 17 areas by Ofsted, and we rely on it."

The council document follows proposed changes to the way it funds children's centres, which will no longer receive money to deliver childcare. Barnet has agreed to explore with partner agencies the possibility of childcare provision in the school holidays to minimise the impact on parents and carers.

# Mark Healey, Olympic torchbearer

By Daphne Chamberlain

Mark Healey, manager of the Green Man Centre until last month, will carry the Olympic torch through Lewisham on 23 July. He was nominated four times for voluntary work with families and friends of victims of the nail bomb attacks on Brixton, Brick Lane and Soho. 17-24-30, set up by Mark, arranges April acts of remembrance and October vigils against hate crime.

Mark, who has been featured on the BBC World Service, told THE ARCHER, "At the moment you carry the flame you are the only person in the world doing so. That's how enormous the honour is, but in my case I am carrying it for people who should be alongside us to enjoy the Olympics, but are not because they have been victims of hate crime. In particular I am remembering Nick Moore, Andrea Dykes and John Light from the Soho bombing, David Morely ("Cinders"), killed by a gang of "happy slapping" teenagers on the South Bank, and Ian Baynham, homophobically abused and beaten in Trafalgar Square."

### Inspiration

His "fantastic day", when both his parents will be cheering

him on, is the eve of his mother's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. She lost her father during World War 2, when she was two years old, but Mark says that the thought of his late grandfather inspires him to do his best to help others.

Torchbearers are given a white/gold Adidas tracksuit, but supply their own trainers. Mark has paid £199 to keep his torch. He told us, "I'm not sure about people selling their torches, but then again if I could raise £100,000 that would cover the costs of the next ten 17-24-30 vigils!" Follow the run live on the BBC website. Discover more about 17-24-30 at <http://172430notohatecrime.wordpress.com/2012/03/19/mark-is-an-olympic-torchbearer/>

# Academy seeks local links

By Helen Drake

The team behind The Archer Academy, the proposed free school in East Finchley, is continuing to seek out local organisations, charities and businesses which could help it ensure the school is at the heart of the local community. And it's also keen to hear from anyone who might consider joining the school's governing body.

Avis Johns, spokesperson, said: "We're reaching out to local groups to see how we can help each other. If you run an organisation, business or charity in the area and would be interested in working with us, please get in touch. Similarly, it would be brilliant if

our governing body could be truly representative of our community, composed of local people with a wide range of experience."

See [www.thearcheracademy.org.uk](http://www.thearcheracademy.org.uk) for more information or email at [info@thearcheracademy.org.uk](mailto:info@thearcheracademy.org.uk).

# Slip into something speedy

By Nick Young

Fancy going skiing this summer? That might not be such a crazy idea thanks to a new invention from East Finchley-based company Feetrac UK Ltd.

The idea? Their own patented grass skates, which can be fastened on to regular shoes, thus enabling the user to 'ski' on grass – and any other terrain apart from snow.

"I got the idea from the technology used on certain off-road vehicles," explains company founder Yaragi Abdul. "The prototype was developed two years ago, and since then I have worked hard to improve it."

Yaragi was able to establish his business thanks to a bank loan and investments from friends. Following some trial and error at the development stage, his skates have recently gone on the market, retailing at £135 a pair (plus VAT).

When he applied for the patent, Yaragi discovered that no-one had thought of this particular idea before. "I was very surprised," he said. Yaragi has the patent for his grass skates in the US and Europe, as well as the UK. However, he hopes to establish his product in this country before turning his attention abroad. Assuming the weather improves, that is.

You can find out more about Feetrac grass skates by visiting the company's website at [www.feetrac.co.uk](http://www.feetrac.co.uk)



Yaragi Abdul with the skates

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