



One of the anti-scaming workshops under way.

How to spot a scam

At-home care provider Home Instead Senior Care has partnered with national scam awareness charity Think Jessica and the Met Police to launch a public education programme about scams.

The aim is to provide tips and advice on how people, particularly the elderly, can protect themselves from falling victim to fraudsters and con artists.

As part of the campaign, there will be a series of fraud awareness workshops over the coming months, attended by Detective Chief Inspector Helen Williams of Barnet Police. The workshops will share information with attendees on the scale of the problem and the most common scams targeting the elderly, as well as

what to do if they have fallen victim to scammers.

Home Instead has also put together a 'Senior Fraud Protection Kit' which contains information on the most common scams, tools to help assess the risk of an elderly loved one, plus checklists to help seniors take practical action to lower the risk of becoming a scam victim.

DCI Williams said: "These types of scams defraud individuals in the UK of an estimated £3.5 billion each year. They have very serious consequences

for the elderly who can suffer devastating emotional distress affecting their confidence and trust which can lead to a loss of independence. With better awareness and education, however, I hope that we can alert the community to prevent them becoming victims."

For more information regarding the workshops or the 'Senior Fraud Protection Kit', please call 020 8446 7044 or visit www.homeinstead.co.uk/barnet. You can also get information on scams from <http://content.met.police.uk/Site/scamconstricksandfraud>

Burglars force open front door

By Janet Maitland

Burglars broke into a house through the front door in broad daylight on 21 February. The house on Trinity Road was unoccupied at the time.

The residents went out at about eight o'clock in the morning and when they returned at about 11.30am they found the front door wide open. But although burglars had got into the property, nothing had been stolen.

This burglary follows three other burglaries during a single night on the same

street last November, when front doors were also forced open. The residents of two of these houses were asleep in bed.

If you have any information about this crime, please call 101 quoting reference number 2404053/14; to remain anonymous, contact Crimestoppers 0800 555 111.

Talk shop

A new project is being launched to inspire young people about careers in retail, based partly at the new Retail Skills Academy at Hospitality House, next to East Finchley tube station.

Participants will be able to get careers advice and taster sessions from local employers and colleges, backed by £155,000 from Barnet Council. For further information, email platforms@barnet.gov.uk

Old Barn: Charity Commission 'not fit for purpose'

By Janet Maitland

Campaigners are becoming increasingly frustrated by the Charity Commission's slowness in investigating the Old Barn community centre in Tarling Road. Their frustration is mirrored by Margaret Hodge, chair of the Public Accounts Committee, who recently described the commission as 'not fit for purpose'.

The Old Barn was taken over in 2010 by a new group of trustees led by Geoffrey Muhoro. Shortly afterwards, services such as the Monday Club Youth group found themselves homeless. For the last four years local people have been campaigning to open up the centre again, working alongside Barnet Council, who own the property, local councillors, and Community Barnet, an umbrella group for local charities. MP Mike Freer joined the campaign last year.

Months of delay

It looked as if some progress was made last October when the Charity Commission finally used its regulatory powers to demand key records from the trustees. But campaigner and local resident Helen Drake was informed by the commission at the end of February that they were still chasing Mr Muhoro for a full response 'on many issues'.

Evidence to Public Accounts Committee

A highly critical report by the National Audit Office published

at the end of last year warned that the Charity Commission's failure to investigate fraud and abuse was undermining public faith in good causes.

In the light of this report, Helen Drake contacted Margaret Hodge. "She urged me to provide evidence to a consultation about strengthening the Commission's powers to act," says Helen.

The report about the Old Barn that Helen submitted expressed campaigners' frustration at being unable to engage effectively with, and get the support of, the Charity Commission. "We feel that they took the trustees at their word, with no corroborating evidence, at the initial stages of the problem," adds Helen.

Following this consultation, the Public Accounts Committee published a report in February which said that the commission is 'too willing to accept what charities tell it' and recommending a 'robust change management plan.' The commission will be reviewed again in a year's time to see if any improvements have been made.

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