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THE ARCHER




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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.



Art for all at the EFO Artist's Open Houses. Photo Adam Justice-Mills

Artists lay wares on the table

Fifty artists exhibited their work in 14 houses opened to visitors on two weekend in July in East Finchley. The annual East Finchley Open weekends gave people the chance to get up close to photos, jewellery, glassware, ceramics, textiles and paintings.



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Could you foster a cat?

By Diana Cormack
The Animal Aid and Advice shop is appealing for people to be foster carers to their rescued cats. This local charity goes out to rescue sick and injured stray cats, which few animal charities do, and it is funded solely by the East Finchley charity shop, a bookshop in Highgate and donations. They receive no other funding for their work or for their volunteers.

Many of the rescued strays need temporary homes for a few weeks or months until they are permanently rehomed. The charity, which is often their last resort, says it can be very rewarding to help a neglected or abandoned animal on its way to a new life. They will provide support. If you can help with this, please pop into the shop at 48 High Road or call 07533 268 649 or 07859 880 221.

'Unsafe' day nursery closed down by Ofsted

By Janet Maitland
Mini Me's nursery, based in Tarling Road, has been closed down by Ofsted after 18 months of providing unsafe childcare. Complaints about the nursery started soon after it opened in December 2012.

"This was a nursery set up by individuals with little experience in running a business, let alone a business in childcare," said the judge at a tribunal which met in June to hear the nursery's appeal against the cancellation of its registration last September.

Appeal dismissed

The judge said that Sandip Basi, the nursery owner, and Caroline Casey, the facilities manager, "did not accept responsibility for the management issues, even those directly in their control". She dismissed their appeal.

Although Mini Me's is an independent company, it was subject to the governance of the trustees of the Old Barn Community Centre in Tarling Road where the nursery hired rooms. The trustees of the Old Barn are themselves under investigation by the Charity Commission.

Other classes close

The Saturday morning dance and martial arts classes at the Old Barn have had to end, even although they have no connection with Mini Me's nursery. "I felt sorry for the teacher," said Yasmin N'Jai, whose children attended the dance classes. "She felt she was letting the parents down. Now there's nothing at all for children."

The teachers told *THE ARCHER* that nursery staff had informed them that the Old Barn was closing down and they

had 24 hours notice to cancel all their classes. The teachers also said that they had not been informed by anyone that Ofsted was investigating the nursery or that the Charity Commission was investigating the trustees.

Campaigners ask questions

Until the current trustees took over the Old Barn in 2010, it had been running pioneering services for children and young people for over 25 years. These services were discontinued under the new management.

Local campaigners have been trying ever since the takeover to restore the community centre to local people, working alongside Barnet Council, Community Barnet, the Charity Commission and MP Mike Freer. The commission informed *THE ARCHER* in April that in their view the 'trustees' were not validly appointed in the first place.

Campaigners are asking why it is taking so long for the commission to act. "The failure of the commission to get to grips with its regulatory responsibilities soon enough in this case has clearly put children at risk," said Helen Drake. "I think questions should be asked at the highest levels."

The Charity Commission told *THE ARCHER* that it expects the Old Barn's trustees to have a policy for safeguarding children and that if concerns are raised they expect trustees to 'respond appropriately to protect beneficiaries'.

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