



Could this be the end of rough sleeping?

By Janet Maitland

Rough sleepers taken off the street during the pandemic have been promised long-term housing. The government announced at the end of May that it will fund 6,000 'new housing units' with 3,300 available over the next 12 months.

"We could be the generation that ends rough sleeping. We think we are on the cusp of something amazing. But it could go either way," said Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London.

Support for Barnet's homeless

At the start of the Covid-19 lockdown in March, Barnet Council took just a week to move 88 rough sleepers into private sector self-contained studio flats following a government request to house everyone sleeping rough or staying in hostels and night shelters.

Homeless numbers are continuing to rise as people lose their jobs and homes. At the time of writing 141 of Barnet's homeless have been housed, of whom 20 are in hotels. Hotels will want the rooms back when tourists return to London. Flats are let on short term contracts which can be ended at any time by the provider.

More government funding will become available but Barnet Council does not yet know how much it will get. Barnet Homes is using some of the £637,000 government funding for rough sleepers, given to them before the pandemic, to support those they've placed in temporary accommodation and to find them longer-term housing. The funding was ear-

marked for the refurbishment of a hostel in Friern Barnet, but this is now on hold.

Like all London boroughs, Barnet Council has signed up to the 'in-for-good-principle' which means no evictions "unless a support plan has been put in place and the rough sleeper is engaging with services".

Falling through the net

A support plan may be all that is possible for some homeless people. A council spokesperson told us the longer-term housing will be dependent on being eligible for benefits. This will exclude EU citizens who can't access benefits because they haven't been working here for long enough, anyone with limited leave to enter the country or to remain here, and asylum seekers.

"We're working together with Homeless Action in Barnet to support rough sleepers during the pandemic and into the future," said a spokesperson from Barnet Homes.

Self-Isolation Haiku

By Daphne Chamberlain
**Not isolated.
Can't get away from myself.
Discovering me.**



Have you put the cat out, dear?

By John Lawrence

There was a commotion at the end of May, which made the national press, when police helicopters and an armed response unit were called out to a sighting of a big cat, dubbed the 'Beast of Billionaire's Row', prowling through back gardens in East Finchley.

The exotic pet, thought to be a rare Savannah breed that had escaped from its owner, caused some alarm. And these photos of it, above, were sent to us by Archer reader Dana Staden, after it had casually wandered into the conservatory at the back of her home in Aylmer Road, N2, close to the junction with The Bishops Avenue.

Dana said it terrified a visiting friend, who screamed and scared it away but it later appeared again wandering over her lawn.

Dana judged the animal's size as half way between a domestic cat and a leopard, and told *The Archer*: "I had never seen such a strikingly beautiful cat before and suspected it

was a pet belonging to affluent neighbours.

"I was a bit apprehensive, but really more curious, and it didn't seem to be aggressive. When I approached, the cat stopped and just watched me, ignoring my calls to 'come here, puss'. Hopefully it's now safely home."

And so say all of us.

When wandering minstrels paid me a personal call

By Amanda Shribman

The highlight of my 12-week NHS shielding lockdown was when two musicians kindly came to the window of my flat off Oak Lane in East Finchley to play for me.

I had seen a post on social media way back in March from the World Harmony Orchestra offering to arrange to send musicians for free to support and entertain people shielding. At the time, I couldn't find anyone available local to me but then out of the blue he contacted me again and, although not part of the orchestra but from a musicians' network, Benjamin Yellowitz and Sian Herbert cycled over from Tottenham on one of the hottest days in May to sing and play for me and my neighbours.



Through the window: Musicians Sian Herbert and Benjamin Yellowitz play for Amanda Shribman

Watching them from the safety of my window, it really was a lovely treat and great fun when we all joined in with the singing and clapping. If you would like look up their

music, Benjamin and Sian have a band called Of Ghosts And Other Forms. Find them on Instagram @OfGhostsAndOtherForms ; @BenjaminYellowitz ; @SiansMusicBox

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