



# Spread a little kindness during the pandemic

By Diana Cormack

**At the end of March the government appealed for volunteers to help in the fight against coronavirus. They were particularly looking for up to 250,000 people to assist the 1.5 million who had been advised to shield themselves because of underlying health conditions. Suggestions for the tasks they could do were: delivering medicines from pharmacies, driving patients to appointments or home from hospital and regularly phoning those isolated at home. Initial cynicism from some about this request was blown out of the water when 750,000 responded.**

Now, nearly six months on, examples of people helping others have become quite commonplace, happening daily all over the country, stimulated no doubt by the growth of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups and social media in general.

## The kindness of strangers

Along with these everyday acts there are also random acts of kindness, one of which was recently highlighted on East Finchley Community Facebook by Guiseppe Sollo.

He wrote: "Thank you to the stranger who paid for my book. This morning I went to the local bookshop on the High Road to find a rare edition of J. Grisham. Unfortunately their card machine was not working and I was running out of cash, so I asked the bookseller if he could put the book aside while I went to the cash machine nearby. On my

return the bookseller told me that the book had already been paid for by the woman behind me in the queue. The world is full of good people."

Another local resident told *The Archer* that, early in lockdown, she was walking along Fortis Green wearing an inadequate mask meant for woodworkers. A young man passing by announced: "You can't wear that! I'll get you a proper mask." He ran to his home nearby and returned with two impressive high-quality masks, saying a large batch had been supplied to his work place. She and her husband have used them gratefully ever since.

*The Archer would like to hear about any acts of kindness which you would like to share with the community. Please send details to [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk) or write to The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE.*

## A study of life in lockdown

By Diana Cormack

**Since the beginning of lockdown, randomly selected people have been regularly answering questions online about how the coronavirus situation is affecting them, with particular reference to isolation and what effect the measures are having on them.**

The survey asks about how they feel things have changed in the preceding week. Their responses help towards understanding what effect social isolation is having on people's mental health and on the advice being offered about this.

My husband is a participant. He isn't sure how he was selected, but thinks it might be because he is a blood donor, particularly recently since monthly samples of blood are being requested for analysis.

Survey results given to government and national organisations support advice and decision-making related to the coronavirus outbreak. More specifically, it aims to identify

what support is needed for people psychologically and socially at this time.

Because of the sensitivity of some questions, the volunteers are assured of the anonymity applied to their answers, with email addresses being removed. Data will be stored for ten years after this research by University College London ends. Then, if deemed to still be of public interest, it will be kept for longer.

Based on the course of the pandemic, the weekly surveys are to be replaced by monthly ones as isolation reduces. Let's hope this comes sooner rather than later as perhaps it could be an indication of progress in the fight against Covid-19.

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## Needle is back on the records at Alan's

By David Gritten

**It's been a trying summer for shop owners on East Finchley's High Road. But at least one of them feels he's weathered the storm and is optimistic about the future.**

Alan Dobrin, owner of the legendary Alan's Records, was forced to close for three months during the lockdown but since re-opening he reports he has been extremely busy.

"In the lockdown, people had a lot of time on their hands," he reflects. "So they had the opportunity to listen to or rediscover a lot of music."

Many other record shops went online to survive. Some prospered. But Alan decided against that option: "Making money out of a pandemic didn't sit well with me." And when he re-opened, his customers flocked back: the first few days after his return were among the busiest in his 26 years running the shop.

He attributes this to people



Browse and buy: Customers in Alan's Records. Photo Mike Coles

appreciating music more when a disaster like the pandemic strikes. "A friend of mine in the music industry told me people bought music during the lockdown more than ever."

## Regulars like a rummage

His customers actively enjoy visiting Alan's Records, and rummaging through his huge second-hand collection of 15,000 albums and 4,000 CDs: "The online thing is fine," he observes, "but there's an appetite for coming into the shop and talking to people."

And they've done just that. Half of them are locals, while

the rest travel from all over the UK, from 12 European countries, the US and even Brazil. "A lot come over here every year, and they'll be back," says Alan. "Foreign customers are the lifeblood of the shop as well."

He adds: "There are 82 record shops in London, at least a quarter of them in the West End. Some are really struggling. Their rates are high and their rents are just ridiculous. This was my first shop, and I've never wanted to leave here. East Finchley's such a friendly place."

## New Local Café team brings new life to old premises

By John Lawrence

**Now might seem to be a brave time to be opening a new business, but that's what Arif Yildirim and the team from the New Local Café are doing with the arrival of their new venture Cup of Joy.**

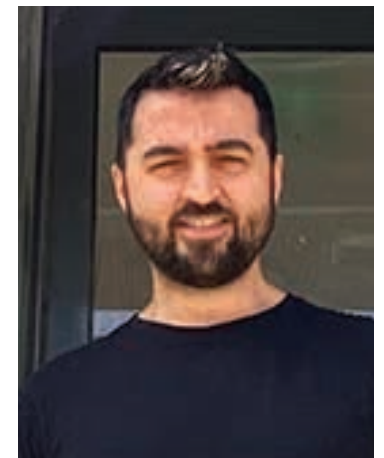
After four months of refurbishment work, their café is ready to open in the High Road premises that used to be the Big Chef. Arif promises good coffee, breakfasts and lunches with plenty of vegan and vegetarian options, as well as cocktail hours from 5pm to 7pm each evening.

Four staff will service the Cup of Joy, which has been

fitted out in a rustic wooden style and has distanced space for 20 inside, including a long bench for families, as well as tables outside.

Arif, the son-in-law of Niyazi, who has owned the New Local Café since 1990, acknowledges the timing for a new opening is tough but is optimistic. "We made the commitment to take over the place right back at the start of the year so we had no choice but to go ahead," he said. "But we know already that East Finchley people like to support local places so if they do the same with us we will be all right."

They are coming up with



Opening soon: Arif Yildirim

fresh ideas to pull in local customers, such as bottomless champagne to match what you might find at a bar in town, and picnic lunch boxes for people to take away and enjoy in their gardens or in Cherry Tree Wood.

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