

barnetfirst

issue 54 July 2013



**Meeting the need for new
school places in Barnet**

See page 11

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Contacting your council

Corporate Customer Services

tel: 020 8359 2000

email: first.contact@barnet.gov.uk

Contact us and we will identify the correct service or person you are looking for

Street-based services

tel: 020 8359 4600

Covering refuse collection, holes in the road, abandoned vehicles and graffiti

Parking enquiries

tel: 020 8359 7446

www.barnet.gov.uk/parking

Planning and licensing advice

tel: 020 8359 3000

Social Care Direct

tel: 020 8359 5000

Out of hours emergencies

tel: 020 8359 2000

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Please email us on:

barnet.first@barnet.gov.uk

Or write to us

First Contact, London Borough of Barnet, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP

Leader's column



At the time of writing – mid-June – there is no further information about what happened to the burnt down Somalia Bravanese Community Centre on Coppetts Road, other than we understand from the police it was arson.

Such crimes are of course alien to Barnet. As has been highlighted in previous issues of Barnet First, this is a borough where people of all beliefs feel their views are respected. In context, the fact that amongst the first to offer help to the Muslim Somali community was the Reform Synagogue of East Finchley says a lot more about Barnet than anything else ever could.

On page three of this issue, you will see that Barnet Council plans to build the first new council housing in the borough in over 20 years. In the first instance, the council is to build just three new family homes, coincidentally just a few streets away from the Bravanese Community Centre in Muswell Hill. However, changes to local government finance mean that we can keep more of the money raised by rents and right to buy sales in Barnet and this opens up the opportunity of building more new council homes in the coming years. These will be very different from the large estates of the past but I do feel such new homes will have a role to play in providing homes for some of the borough's residents.

Finally, in the centre pages of this magazine you will see how the council is dealing with the demand for school places in the borough, expanding existing schools and constructing new buildings. All of London faces pressure on school places but I know that our excellent schools are particularly valued by Barnet parents. I am determined that we keep our standards while providing the pupil places needed.

Yours

Richard Cornelius

news in brief



£150k grant is music to Trust's ears

Barnet Education Arts Trust, Barnet's new Music Service, has been awarded a £150,000 grant by the Arts Council.

The funding is as a result of a successful bid on behalf of all North London music hubs (Barnet, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow and Hillingdon).

The new funding will allow the North London hubs to develop their fundraising skills in order to provide musical opportunities for young people.

Barnet Council's music service was granted charitable status last year, allowing it to gain access to additional funding sources not currently available. It was renamed Barnet Education Arts Trust.

These extra funds will improve access to music tuition for all children in Barnet schools, regardless of their ability to pay.

For more information, visit:

www.barneteducationartstrust.org.uk



Council housing

Barnet Council is to build the first council houses in the borough for over 20 years. Three new homes will be built in Alexandra Road in Coppetts ward.

The council's Cabinet Resources Committee agreed to support the building of 38 more council houses in the borough over the coming years.

The next batch to follow Muswell Hill will be at four different locations across Barnet.

Councillor Tom Davey, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, said: "Councils now have greater freedom to spend our housing income as we think is wise so we can create these new family-sized homes along with a number of fully wheelchair-accessible homes."

The properties will be let on new five-year tenancies. This means that residents may move to a smaller property when their family has left home and release the house for another family. The rent charged will also cover the financing cost for the properties.

news in brief



Play your part in marking the Jubilee

Last year's Diamond Jubilee will go down in history as millions across the country, including many thousands of Barnet residents, came out to celebrate 60 years of the Queen's reign.

In Barnet, a project to create a lasting commemoration of this once-in-a-lifetime event, was officially launched last month on the 60th anniversary of the Queen's coronation. The project will see a ceremonial gateway erected between the Hatchcroft and Ricketts Quadrangle of Middlesex University on The Burroughs, Hendon.

Of contemporary and imaginative design, the gateway will comprise 60 wooden poles, representing each year of the Queen's reign, with an interweaving bench. The height of the poles will vary according to the birth rate for that year. A dedicated website will be linked to the physical gateway.

The £250,000 gateway itself is planned to be funded through public donations and corporate sponsorship, with donations recognised online and through engraving onto the wooden poles. The project is being organised independently of the council, although it has the support of members of all party groups.

To find out more about the project and ways in which you can donate to it, visit:

www.barnetdiamondjubilee.mdx.ac.uk



Pocket Parks

In March the council received a £40,000 grant from the Mayor of London to transform the Cricklewood play area into one of the first 'Pocket Parks' in the capital.

Cricklewood will be getting a complete makeover, with new trees, a children's play area, picnic tables and much more, turning it into a relaxing haven for residents to enjoy.

Work to develop the proposals with residents for the Cricklewood Pocket Park will start this summer.





Area forums

Barnet Council is to revamp its Area Forums following comments from residents.

The council questioned residents attending forums last month and has published an online questionnaire asking respondents how they would like forums to work.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Cornelius, said: "I am very keen to keep Area Forums local. I think the relationship with the Area Environment Committee works well with residents able to raise an issue at 6pm to have it voted on at 7pm. I'll be interested in the views of residents."

Over the coming months the council will also consult on the role of the public in a new committee system.

Councillor Cornelius added, "We have made great strides in opening up information about the council and presenting it in a way that is useful to the public.

"Residents can now sign up for alerts about planning and licensing applications in their neighbourhood and the council also publishes Freedom of



Information requests and recent decisions service-by-service on the council website.

"Over the coming couple of years, under our 'open council' programme, we will be looking again at how we can better share the information that the council contains with the greatest possible number of residents."

Dates and times for Area Forums, where residents can currently raise issues about any local environment matter, are published on:

www.barnet.gov.uk

To have your say, select the 'My voice' tab.

Free Wi-Fi coming to Barnet

Barnet Council has signed an agreement with Arqiva Limited to provide outdoor Wi-Fi internet access in the borough.

Arqiva will gain the right to lease the council's street lighting and CCTV columns for Wi-Fi and 4G cells over a period of 10 years. Arqiva will roll out a new outdoor Wi-Fi network over the coming year at various locations across Barnet, with particular focus on the borough's town centres. The new network will be delivered at no cost to the council because it will be leased to mobile phone operators.



Barnet residents and visitors will further benefit from the Wi-Fi network daily allowing 30 minutes of free Wi-Fi access to everyone, as well as 24-hour access to the council's own website and some other key public sources of information.



**From 14 October, we are making
it easier to recycle more**

14 October



recycle for Barnet

Changes to your waste and recycling service



What is changing?

From **14 October**, the council is making it easier to recycle more by collecting your household recycling together. This means you will no longer have to sort your recycling between your black and blue boxes if you live in a house, or between your different bins if you live in a larger block of flats.

The council is also starting a new separate food waste service so you can recycle your food waste. This will reduce the amount of waste Barnet has to dispose of. The new food waste service will start from 14 October for houses, and from early 2014 for larger blocks of flats.

Why are we changing the service?

In the last few years, Barnet residents have been recycling around 33 per cent of their household waste; whereas other London boroughs are recycling as much as 53 per cent. At least 70 per cent of household waste could be recycled, composted or reused; this means we can **more than double what we currently recycle, compost or reuse.**

Feedback from residents tells us that sorting recycling can be difficult and confusing and takes time. By collecting all your recycling together, you'll find it easier and quicker to take part in the recycling service.

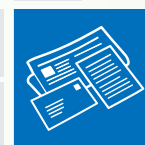
You told us you wanted it to be easier to recycle more household plastic packaging, so the new recycling service will mean that we will be able to collect more recyclable materials, including yoghurt pots, margarine tubs and food trays. This means more of what has gone into your refuse bin can be recycled instead.

We will also be introducing a food waste collection, as more than 30 per cent of the waste in an average household bin is currently food waste. Disposing of food waste in your refuse bin is costly and damaging to the environment as it produces harmful gases, which contribute to climate change. By separating your food waste and not putting it in your refuse bin, we can reduce refuse disposal costs and minimise our impact on the environment.

By making these changes and working together we can recycle more, reducing the financial pressure of managing our waste and reducing Barnet's environmental footprint.

Other arrangements are being made for those who opt into the green waste service. More information will be provided in the next Barnet First.

Events will be taking place soon to provide more information on the changes. For a schedule of events, visit the web page below.



For more information about the new service,

visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/14-october

call: 020 8359 4600 or email: first.contact@barnet.gov.uk



My Barnet



Most parents would be terrified at the thought of letting their children loose in the kitchen with scalding hot pans and razor sharp knives. Not Marilyn Barrett. For her eleven year-old son Terence, known as TJ, is such an accomplished cook she is quite content to leave him knocking up a three-course meal while she gets on with her studies upstairs.

Watching TJ as he skilfully moves around the kitchen preparing the dishes for the feast he is creating – including prawn spring rolls, beef bourguignon, chocolate fondant, crème brulee and his signature dish, deep fried ice cream – it's no wonder he was runner-up in the Junior MasterChef finals.

TJ is a natural performer, confidently chatting away as he chops, whizzes and stirs, adding a touch of seasoning here and there until the dishes reach his exacting tastes. And as he presents each mouth-watering dish it is impossible not to be impressed by his drive and determination.

"I love to experiment like Heston Blumenthal and make super-quick dishes like Jamie Oliver," he says. "If you combine them together you get me."

Talking to Marilyn, 42, in the family home in the Barnet side of Southgate which she shares with her daughters Chantel, 20, and six-year-old twins Savina and Serena, her pride in TJ is obvious.

"I was so nervous watching him from the sidelines on Junior MasterChef, but TJ took it in his stride," she says.

Although there's no taking away from TJ's own self-belief, Marilyn believes Barnet has a large part to play in her family's successes.

"TJ has been to two brilliant schools, Brunswick Park Primary and Ashmole Academy. They have

encouraged not only his ambition but mine and my other children's too.

"Before moving here I was living on benefit and didn't know what I wanted to do. The Head at Brunswick Park helped me realise my own goals by getting qualifications I didn't know I was even capable of." Marilyn now works as a carer and has nearly completed her qualifications to become a counsellor.

TJ's enthusiasm is clearly being fostered at Ashmole Academy, where he's been invited to don his chef whites and cook a meal for VIP guests including former Mayor Councillor Lisa Rutter and his former Head at Brunswick Park school.

When TJ does take a breather from the kitchen he can be found hanging out with his family at nearby Arnos Park, bowling with his friends, or shopping for ingredients with his mum.

"It's such a friendly area and people are always dropping by to say hello. There's a real sense of community here."

TJ clearly shares his mum's love for Barnet. "Most of the people are friendly, I go to the best schools and Barnet is the best place in the UK," he says proudly.

Instead of spending his school days dreaming about his next recipe, TJ is determined to complete his education so he can realise his ambition of becoming a professional chef and owning a chain of restaurants.

"Food covers everything," he says wisely. "You need history to learn about the dishes, English so you can write your own recipes, Maths so you can work out the measurements, Science so you can understand how foods react together, Design and Technology so you can make it look good as well as Business Skills so you can run your own restaurant."

And with TJ's charisma and obvious talent there's no doubt this schoolboy will be teaching us a thing or two about cooking in years to come.



Ingredient shopping at the supermarket



Showing his sisters the ropes



TJ's palate was praised on TV



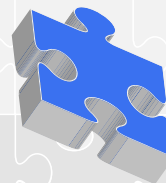
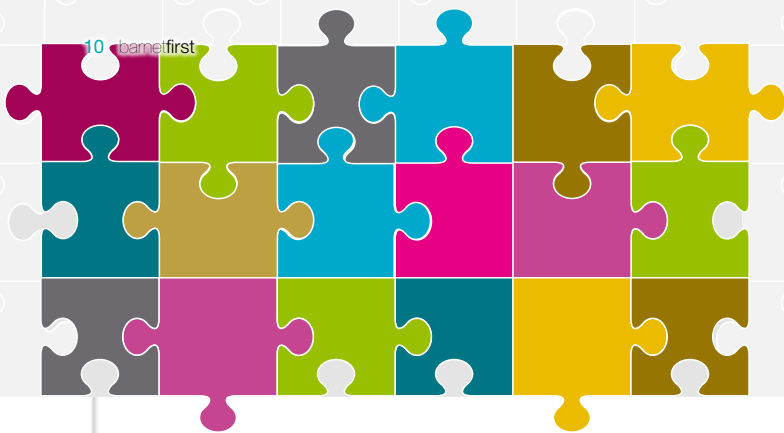
Relaxing with family in the park



Shooting hoops in the garden



TJ's famous spicy chicken wings



A changing council

Plans to move the council's back office services such as human resources and payroll are currently on hold pending a legal challenge against the council's decision to award a contract to run back office services.

A hearing date has been set by the Court of Appeal for 15 and 16 July 2013.

The appeal follows a judge's decision in favour of the council following an application for a Judicial Review earlier this year.

The contract with Capita will save the council £125 million over 10 years and see an up-front £8 million investment in improved customer service if given the go-ahead.

The legal challenge also puts on hold other proposals for the council's Development and Regulatory Services (the back office function of planning and environmental health) to be run by a joint venture between the council and a commercial partner.

These proposals saves the council at least £39 million over the next 10 years.

Go for a ride this summer

All through the summer, Barnet Council and British Cycling will be hosting local Sky Bike Rides at various locations throughout the borough.

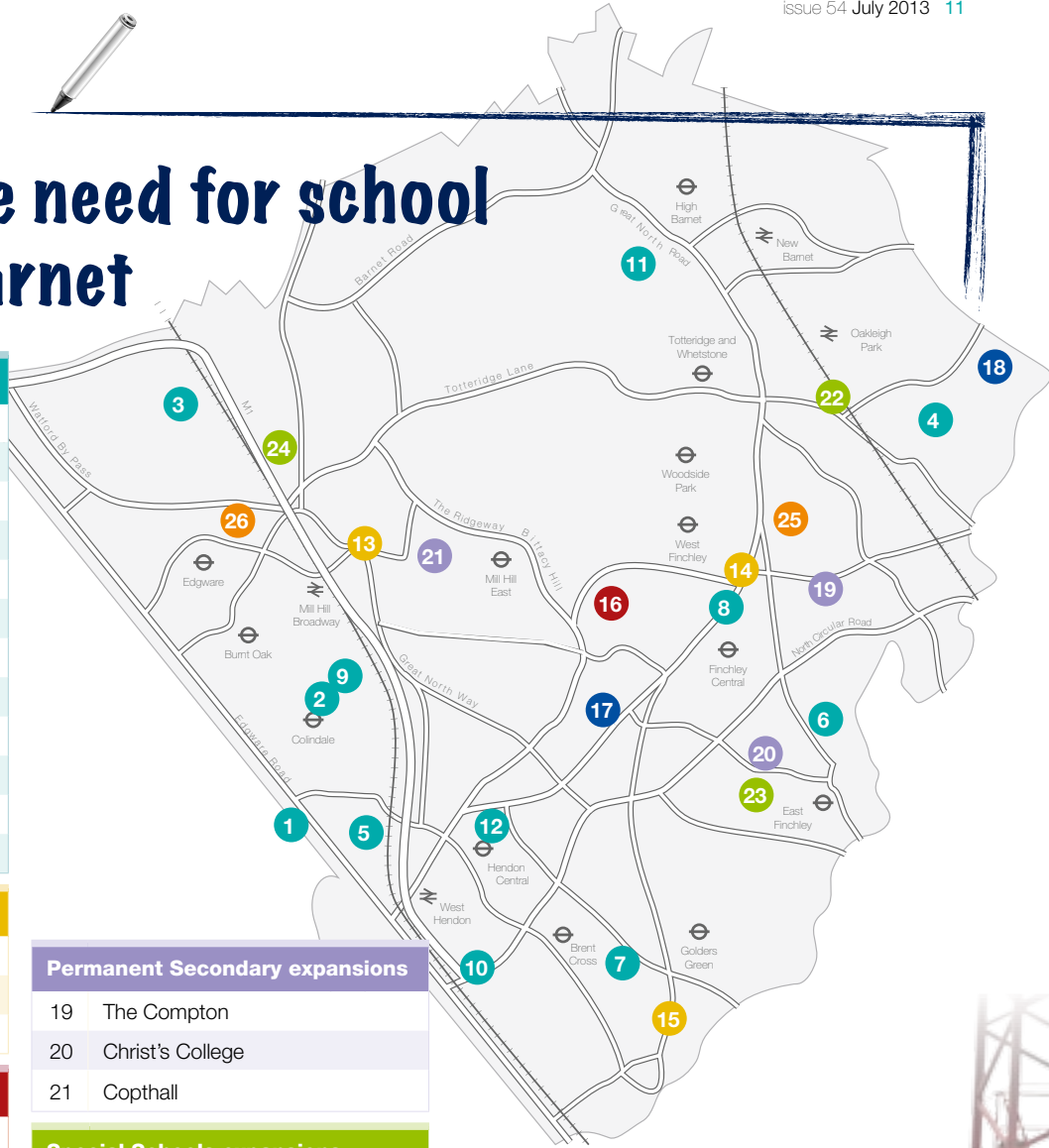
If you are an enthusiast or you are new to cycling, why not come along and ride in a traffic-free and friendly environment.

For more information, call: 0161 274 2000
or visit: www.GoSkyRide.com/Barnet



School places

Meeting the need for school places in Barnet



Permanent Primary expansions

1	Beis Yaakov
2	Blessed Dominic
3	Broadfields
4	Brunswick Park
5	Colindale
6	Martin
7	Menorah Foundation
8	Moss Hall
9	The Orion
10	Parkfield
11	St Catherine's
12	St Mary's and St John's

Primary - New 'Free Schools'

13	Etz Chaim
14	Alma (New Jewish)
15	Rimon

Primary - New School

16	Mill Hill East
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Secondary - New 'Free Schools'

17	Archer Academy
18	St Andrew the Apostle

Permanent Secondary expansions

19	The Compton
20	Christ's College
21	Copthall

Special Schools expansions

22	Oakleigh
23	Oak Lodge
24	Northway

New voluntary-aided

25	Sacks Morasha
26	Beit Shvidler

Preparing for the future

Barnet Council has been working with the whole school community to find solutions to the growing number of children in need of school places.

Between 2009 and 2013, more than 70 additional primary classes have been created. This includes a mix of temporary and permanent classrooms across community, voluntary-aided, academy and free schools (see above).

The council has spent £88 million on permanently expanding or rebuilding schools and is committed to spending a further £49 million as it prepares for future expansions across the borough.

Work is already underway to provide additional places for children as they reach secondary school age. See overleaf for more details.

School places

On the way up

The council has been continuing its successful policy of expanding popular schools to meet growing demand from its 'baby boomers'.

Seven primary schools and one special school are set to permanently expand from September 2013 onwards. 1,500 new permanent primary school places are being provided through investment in Martin, Moss Hall, Brunswick Park, Menorah Foundation, Oakleigh Special School, The Orion, St Mary's and St John's and Blessed Dominic schools.

As the borough continues to grow, the council is also making sure there are sufficient school places to support regeneration schemes, ensuring there are new schools to match new homes.

Mill Hill East

Planning permission has been granted for a brand new primary school on the site of the former Inglis Barracks in Mill Hill.

This new £12.3 million three-form entry school will offer enhanced sports facilities including a full size all weather football pitch for community use. It is being mainly funded by the wider development in the area and will open its doors to its first intake of pupils in 2014.

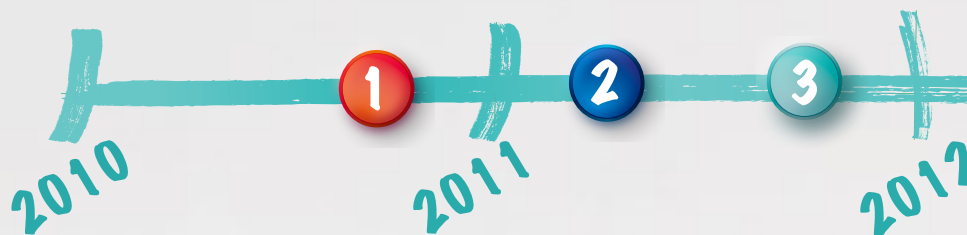


Broadfields: opened in autumn 2010



Northway Special School and Fairway Primary School: opened in autumn 2011

Timeline of Barnet school expansions



A broader mix

Barnet's school community is as varied as its population. Among the new schools entering the 'mix' are: Sacks Morasha Primary, a Jewish school entering the voluntary-aided sector in April 2013, Alma Primary, a new Jewish free school, St Mary's and St John's, Barnet's first all-through school spanning nursery to sixth-form, Archer Academy, the borough's first non-denominational, co-educational secondary free school, and St Andrew the Apostle Greek Orthodox Free School, Britain's first Greek Orthodox secondary school.



Colindale, the borough's newest primary school building: opened in spring 2012



Mill Hill East Primary school: will open in 2014, supporting new homes in the area

Secondary expansions

As the baby boomers work their way through the school system, so the demand for secondary school places will increase. Plans have been submitted to expand the Compton School, Copthall School and Christ's College to create 450 extra secondary places. The cost of the permanent expansions is expected to be £12 million across the three sites. The Archer Academy and St Andrew the Apostle Greek Orthodox Free School will provide an additional 1,500 secondary places between them with 600 school places for St Mary's and St John's.

- 2** Spring 2011 saw the official opening of Childs Hill School, Children's Centre and an Autism Spectrum Centre brought together under one roof.
- 5** Martin, Moss Hall, Brunswick Park, Oakleigh Special School, and Menorah Foundation providing more school primary places in September 2013 through an investment in new classrooms and other facilities.
- 7** Investment in new buildings at Christ's College, Compton and Copthall secondary schools to provide more secondary school places by September 2014.
- 8** Blessed Dominic expanding to become a three-form entry school by September 2014. The Orion School opens in new building.
- 9** St Mary's and St John's first new secondary pupils join the all-through school – September 2014.

For more information, visit:
www.barnet.gov.uk/schooladmissions



School places

The Orion - a shining star

For any head teacher to be given the chance to design their own school from scratch could be seen as either a massive headache or a golden opportunity.

As Chris Flathers tours the site of the new Orion School, it's clear he sees it as the latter.

"If you're a passionate head teacher and want to make the difference to children's lives this is like a dream come true," he says.

The newly relocated school building on Grahame Park Way will be home to 1,100 pupils when it opens its doors in 2014. Its facilities will be shared with nearby Goldbeaters School, which together with The Orion make up The Gold Star Federation. The new £15 million school will also include a 21-place Autism Spectrum Condition Unit.

Chris' vision is integral to the school's design, from the Gold Star Centre at the heart of the school which will house a professional theatre, dance and recording studio, to the building's W-shaped design where children will be taught along two identical two-form wings.

"All the lessons will be taught in parallel so it won't feel overwhelming for the children," he explains.

After a few setbacks due to the cold weather, building work is well underway and Chris is now finalising colour schemes, carpets and working on a large star design which will tie the schools together.

A major feature of the Gold Star Centre will be to attract the local community to use its theatre, dance and recording studio as well as the multi-surface sports pitches.

"Our vision is that our children will leave here with ambition and a vision of their futures, with the skills and qualities they need to reach their dreams," says Chris. "Our aim is that the Gold Star Centre will become a focal point, providing courses for children once they leave here as well as local residents."



Drop-in service for deaf people in Barnet

A weekly drop-in service providing information, advice and advocacy is being offered to British Sign Language users in Barnet.

BSL Tuesdays in Barnet helps people with day-to-day tasks such as help filling in forms, writing letters, making calls about a bill or appointment or offering advice about benefits.

The scheme, which is provided by the Jewish Deaf Association, is open to deaf people of all faiths.

It runs each Tuesday from 10am to 5pm (closed for lunch between 1pm to 2pm) at Julius Newman House, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8RP.

No appointment necessary.

People can also attend a coffee morning on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at Julius Newman House, from 10.30am to 1pm.

For more information,
email: idssbarnet@jdeaf.org.uk
textphone: 020 8446 4037
or call: 020 8446 0502



Annual Local Account published

The council has published its second annual round-up of the successes and challenges experienced in adult social care during the last year.

The 'Local Account' includes information on what the council has been doing over the last 12 months, how well services are performing and what we will be doing in 2013/14 to develop and improve services.

Based in part on feedback from residents, the document is an important way for the public to hold the council to account.

The 2012 Local Account covers developments such as ongoing work to put people in control of their

own care through Right to Control, a scheme to give carers short breaks and the distribution of more than £160,000 to local projects through the Supporting Independence Fund.

It also sets out how the council will be looking to improve the way information is presented and a continued focus on technology which helps people continue to live in their own home.

For more information,
visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/local-account or
call: 020 8359 4579 to request a printed copy



MMR catch-up

Following a measles outbreak in Wales at the start of the year, and increasing numbers of cases in parts of England, a catch-up programme has been launched.

NHS England, working with Public Health England and the Department of Health, is encouraging those who are partially or completely unvaccinated to get their two doses of the MMR vaccine.

To prevent an outbreak in the rest of the country, the catch-up programme is targeting ten to 16-year-olds.

This group is at the biggest risk because many of them missed out on their MMR vaccinations in the late 1990s when a scare mistakenly linked it to autism.

Across the country it is estimated that up to a million children and young teenagers have not been vaccinated with the full two doses.

In Barnet, that is nearly 9,000 children aged ten to 16 who are not completely vaccinated.

GPs across Barnet will be writing to parents of all ten to 16-year-olds inviting them to have the MMR vaccination. Look out for your letter.

Here are a few commonly asked questions to help you identify the signs and symptoms of measles, and what you can do to prevent your child contracting the virus.

The general advice though is, if in doubt, book an appointment to see your GP.

What is measles and who catches it?

Measles is a serious disease caused by a virus. In some rare cases, measles can lead to complications such as diarrhoea and vomiting, pneumonia, meningitis and eye disorders. It can even be potentially fatal.

It is most common in children aged between one and four who have not been immunised.



How do you catch measles?

Measles is very easy to catch. It is transmitted through direct contact or through the air by coughs and sneezes. You can catch measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been or from an infected person, even before they show any signs of having a rash.

If you or your child have not been immunised or had measles before, there is a 90 per cent chance of catching it if you come into contact with someone who has it.

What are the symptoms?

Measles usually starts with a fever which can get very high. Soon after, it causes a cough, runny nose and red eyes. About four days after infection a rash of tiny red or brown spots appear. It starts at the head and spreads to the rest of the body.

The rash can last for a week, and coughing for up to ten days.

The government has produced a leaflet, which gives further advice on measles and what you can do to prevent it. The web page below gives more information.

For more information, visit:

www.barnet.gov.uk/news-measles



Be sun aware

Despite the damp spring, we are heading for summer and that means it's sun awareness time. Nobody wants you to spend the summer indoors. We know that some sunshine, below sunburn level, can be good for us by helping the body to create vitamin D. The better weather also makes many of us feel good and gives a chance to take a bit more exercise.

You can still enjoy the sun but there are some things that can help reduce the risk of developing skin cancer.

Slap on the sunscreen – choose one with a high protection factor and apply it generously and often

Unveil that sunshade – or find some other shade to avoid the glare of the strong sun

Never leave a baby in the sun – their skin is delicate and burns easily

Apply sunscreen if you have been swimming – or even paddling, you don't want burnt feet

Wear sun-protective clothes – a hat and sunglasses with a UV filter when you go out

Avoid the sun between 11am and 3pm

Routinely check your moles – and report any changes to your doctor

Educate yourself, your family and your friends about sun awareness.



Contact your councillors



Brunswick Park

Conservative

Cllr Lisa Rutter

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Cllr Andreas Tambourides

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Labour

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Burnt Oak

Labour

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Cllr Daniel Thomas

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Cllr Daniel Seal

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Golders Green

Conservative

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Cllr Melvin Cohen

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Cllr Reuben Thompstone

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Hale

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Cllr Hugh Rayner

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Cllr Anthony Finn

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Cllr Mark Shooter

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High Barnet

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what's on



The Hampstead and Highgate Literary Festival 2013



15 – 17 September

Ivy House, 94-96 North End Road, NW11 7SX

Authors appearing at this established annual fixture on London's literary calendar include Tracy Chevalier, Baroness Gillian Shephard, Mark Billingham, Maggie O'Farrell, Nick Ross, Kate Figes, Sathnam Sanghera, Miles Jupp, Gill Hornby, Donald Rumbelow, Deborah and Lottie Moggach, Peter Stanford, Daisy Waugh, Ruby Wax and Marcus Berkmann among others. With more events being added all the time and a number of creative writing workshops, this three-day event is a must for all bookworms and writers.

For junior readers there are a host of 'Kid for a Quid' events and activities, on Sunday 15 September, with special guests including Judith Kerr, Lauren Child, Horrible Histories and workshops. And, for the first time, in partnership with the City of London Corporation, enjoy free Poetry in the Park on the bandstand in Golders Hill Park.

For more information and to book tickets, visit:
www.hamhighlitfest.com or call: 020 8511 7900



Summer Reading Challenge 2013

Date: 13 July – 9 September

The Summer Reading Challenge is designed for children of all ages and reading abilities.

Register for free at your local library and receive your poster starter pack. You can read any books you like. After every two books you read, you'll get stickers and brilliant prizes. If you finish six books, you'll get a medal and a certificate and you will be entered into a prize draw.

For more details, contact your local library or visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/summerreadingchallenge

An Olympic Torchbearer's Experience

Date: 16 July, 6.30 – 7.30pm

Venue: Osidge Library

Hear about the experience of Olympic Torchbearer Steve Harris. Steve is a dedicated coach who has inspired many athletes of all ages and abilities to achieve their potential in the sport of athletics. For more information, call 020 8359 3920

Pete Firman: Edinburgh Preview

Date: 19 July, 7.30pm

Venue: artsdepot, £8,
for ages 14 and over

The UK's top comedic conjuror previews his brand new Edinburgh Festival show for 2013.

Box Office: 020 8369 5454

Working hours

Kate Solomon, the council's Emergency Planning Manager, joined the council in 1987 as an Occupational Therapist and has taken on a variety of roles including manager of Hendon Cemetery and Crematorium.

What does your job involve?

Essentially, the Emergency Planning Team assess the risks of a range of civil emergencies or incidents likely to occur within Barnet and we try to reduce the impact they may have on our residents.

We're talking about emergencies such as widespread power outages, fires, floods, severe weather, fuel strikes, telecoms failure, pandemic outbreaks, explosions or even terrorist threats.

What's a typical day for your team?

A typical day doesn't really exist for us. We are constantly reviewing and refreshing our plans, identifying possible weaknesses and working to improve them. Our team has to be prepared to respond to emergencies whenever they happen and often this means working out of normal office hours.

For instance, I was called at 4am the night of the fire under the M1 in 2011. Together with the fire service, we agreed that a rest centre was needed straight away to provide the 40 residents who were evacuated from their homes a safe and dry place to go. We also agreed that a Local Authority Liaison Officer was needed on-site to ensure council services were directed where they were needed most. Incredibly, the centre was set up in a nearby school and fully staffed in just

two hours, which is amazing considering the traffic chaos the incident caused.

Do you work with other organisations?

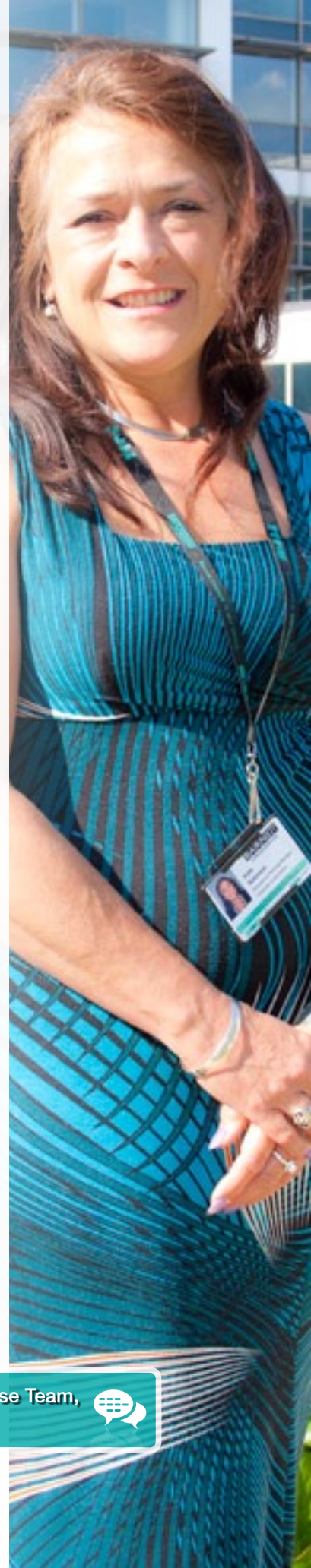
We work very closely and carry out exercises with the other London boroughs, the Police, London Fire Brigade, Public Health, NHS England and the utility companies to organise and manage our response.

We also recruit, train and co-ordinate our team of 70 emergency response volunteers.

What's the most challenging thing about your job?

Anything can happen and you have to be prepared to think on your feet.

I remember the East Barnet gas incident in 2009; there was six inches of snow on the ground and hundreds of properties were without gas, electricity and water. It was a huge incident which tested our flexibility, stamina and teamwork for 12 very long days. Our amazing emergency response volunteers gave up their time over Christmas to reduce the impact on local residents. We all learned a lot from that incident and it will prepare us for anything similar in the future.



To volunteer for the Emergency Response Team,
email: kate.solomon@barnet.gov.uk

