



Barnet: avoiding the riots

by Robin Bishop, resident

Barnet was spared much disturbance and damage in August. However, the council cuts and other policies are bound to increase the risk of trouble in future – perhaps not riots on the streets, but certainly loss of opportunities for young people to develop a stake in Barnet.

Children and young people will be hit particularly hard by reductions in these areas:

Children's centres. These were set up not just to provide education and care for young children, but joined-up social, health and other help to families, especially those in greatest need. They are our best chance of reaching children before potential emotional, social and behavioural difficulties can take root.

Schools and academies. First, cuts mean reduction of extended schools – before and after-school and holiday activities that motivate children and keep them off the streets. Second, Barnet's pride in high academic performance comes at a cost to less able children, who struggle with traditional subjects, and become disaffected

with school – but often respond to more vocational, creative, physical or other less conventional options.

Youth services. Properly funded and run, these can attract young people from difficult home backgrounds who might otherwise be drawn into anti-social or criminal activities.

Further and higher education. University fees might not have direct consequences on society – except more demonstrations! – because most university students are committed to advancing themselves. But loss of the Education Maintenance Allowance is a disincentive for young people to get college qualifications, and will create more "Neets" (young people not in education, employment or training).

Adult learning difficulties and mental health. Up to 20% of the school population have special educational needs or mental ill-health. Reducing social or medical support after they leave school reduces their chances of living and working happily throughout the rest of their lives.

Voluntary organisations. These can be the glue that holds together communities without stable social networks, and can help troubled youngsters distrustful of other agencies. Yet Barnet Council is cutting its funding to voluntary organisations.

Barnet is a good place to live and grow up in. But if we want *all* our children to feel the same way, they must feel that the council has their interests at heart. That's not the impression the current council gives!

Council cuts

For anyone who hasn't heard: our council is cutting £53.4m by 2014. The following services are:

...GOING (BY 2014)

- Youth services – what's left.
- Three libraries – if the current campaign to keep them open fails.
- Barnet Museum – if negotiations for an affordable lease fail.
- Council employees – privatised, more remote, less accountable, and probably no cheaper.

...GOING (SOON)

- Maintained secondary schools – many on their way to becoming academies.
- Development and regulatory services – in the first bundle for privatisation: planners, building and environmental health inspectors, highway engineers, birth, marriage and death registrars, cemetery and

crematorium workers, and others.

...GONE!

- Eight Children's Centres.
- Council-funded school crossing patrols.
- Youth services – the first redundancies.
- Social care packages – elderly and disabled people are being charged more for their care.
- Learning difficulties and mental health – charging at privatised day centres.
- Park rangers – some already made redundant.
- Reasonable parking charges.
- Council funding to the Arts Depot.
- Church Farmhouse Museum – closed despite a local society's offer to run it.

All this comes in addition to central government cuts, rising cost of living, and falling employment – with serious consequences for local employment, traders, environmental quality, social cohesion and order.

One Barnet? Broken Barnet, more like!

WANTED: YOUTH REPORTER

We are looking for someone – probably young – to gather news and opinions from young people in Barnet. Please email for details: barnetalliance4publicservices@gmail.com

The true cost of social care charges

In June Barnet council extended the range of adult social care services for which it levies a charge, the aim being to save around £1.2 million. A two-month transition has passed and, since August, service users have been confronted with their full charges. We look at what Barnet's so-called "fairer contributions" policy means for individuals using adult social services – and for all of us.



by Helen Davies

ices or go without altogether.

Q. If people can manage without these services, what's the problem?

A. A person deciding to manage without services can put themselves at risk. People function better if they have good nutrition, maintain their personal hygiene, and can exercise or mobilise safely with a reduced risk of falling. Others involved in assisting that person rely on the additional support in order not to go to pieces themselves. This is not to mention the need we all have to maintain social contacts with others and participate in wider community life.

If this support is not in place, emotional and physical damage can be done over time to the individual and their families and friends. This can result in higher health care and social costs, and increased hospital admissions.

Q. I don't use these services, why should I subsidise something that I don't benefit from?

A. It is a myth that only a small number of people use social services. Sooner or later most of us will need assistance with the basics of life as we become ill, disabled or too old to look after ourselves or we are looking after someone else in this situation.

Inevitably some people need more assistance than others and some have very complex needs. Yet Britain is a rich country; we bailed out the banking sector, we can afford to provide good social services for the vulnerable.

• Helen Davies is the chair of Barnet Trades Council (TUC).

Case study: Mrs Jones' respite

Mrs Jones is 92 years old and suffers from dementia. He and his wife had worked all their lives, saved, paid their taxes and their council tax, and thought they could rely on the welfare state and social services in case of illness.

Mr Jones has such faith in the welfare state that he refuses to pay (again) for the care services he is entitled to. If he realised that his attending the day centre cost money to the family he would refuse to go. This would leave Mrs Jones in an impossible situation. Without her three mornings of respite a week she will no longer be able to care for her husband and he may have to go into a nursing home – which costs almost £1,000 a week.

£23,000 would sustain Mr Jones in a nursing home for only 23 weeks...

Names have been changed to protect people's privacy.

• If you are being charged for social services, how are the increased charges affecting you? Please let us know so that we can get a sense of the human cost of these policies. Email barnetalliance4publicservices@gmail.com.

day centre use, if the couple have more than £23,000 in savings. She received a Financial Assessment form to fill in, but found it humiliating and insulting and refused to fill it. She then received a demand to pay £111 per week for her husband's only socialising opportunity and her only respite.

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Social care and the Local Authority Trading Company

by Helen Davies

Is it right that the council should try to raise a surplus of 8% from a service provided to vulnerable people who rely on that service, as do their carers? Is it right that this service which was previously exempt from VAT and corporation tax should now incur these charges? Will these charges be passed down to the service users?

"Fairer Contributions" action group

ATTENTION all disabled people, dementia sufferers and their carers in Barnet.

Join our new action group if you're unhappy with the "Barnet New Fairer Contributions Policy", with the lack of meaningful consultation, with having now to pay for services based on your ability to pay rather than need.

We intend to fight this inhuman policy with gusto; support us and help us to help you.

For details email John Sullivan – john@jjsullivan.wanadoo.co.uk – or Janet Leifer – janetleifer@tiscali.co.uk.

This is what will happen under Barnet Council's plans to move social care into its "Local Authority Trading Company" (LATC).

Currently the council provides a number of day services, a respite unit and supported living-in adult services. With the exception of one day service, those using the services are people with a learning disability.

The UNISON union's report about this LATC said:

"The LATC is, in effect, a cost-cutting mechanism. An arms length trading company, with a proscribed budget, will be the service provider and employer, so the Council can relinquish responsibility for decisions taken by the company."

People with high and complex needs are using these services, which have received good inspection results and are widely recognised for their high quality of work. These services have undergone many changes over the years and there is no reason why more changes cannot be negotiated with the staff group if necessary. In fact the council has not given one good reason to embark on this change, which we consider to be highly risky.

Barnet Council has a poor record when it comes to the terms and conditions of staff working in the private sector. Our ex-council residential staff and now our ex-council home care staff have seen cuts in their pay of around 30%. In addition those members of staff have seen radical cuts to their sick pay and annual leave entitlement. They were never well-paid workers

in the first place.

Does it matter if a care worker gets paid no more than the minimum wage and has no sick pay, and much less annual leave than the average public sector employee?

First, it matters very much to that worker and their family members. And, second, it usually matters to the person receiving the care from the care worker. Anyone who thinks there is no relationship between the quality of care provided and the pay which goes with it is kidding themselves. This logic is not applied to the chief executives of any industry!

The adult social care services described above will be in the LATC as part of a holding company which also contains Barnet Homes. As far as we know there has been no consultation with Barnet Homes' tenants about this proposal.

Barnet Homes does not have a good reputation when it comes to privatisation as the building repair staff have found out. They are now going through their third transfer to a new, private sector employer, and issues about their pensions still need to be resolved.

Bidders to run this service include Capita which proposes that Barnet Homes will be a subcontractor for them on this contract.

We are very worried about what this will mean for the financial stability of the proposed model for providing adult social care. We think you should be worried too.

• Helen Davies is the chair of Barnet Trades Council (TUC).

Outsourcing: what it is and why they do it



by Julian Silverman, resident

THEFT – "...It is clear that there will be lower levels of public spending over the next five years and this will result in excellent opportunities for the outsourcing businesses supplying central and local government..." *Catalyst* business magazine

Outsourcers don't do it to solve our problems, but, with plunging stock markets, perhaps in the hope of solving their

own. They have already got hold of £79,000,000,000's worth of public assets in Britain. There's £2,350,000,000,000's worth up for grabs across Eastern Europe. Wherever there's trouble, in they come! Result: worse trouble! The National Audit Office reported that they "universally under-performed" and constituted "poor value for money".

Typically the World Bank or the IMF will offer a ruined country a "restructuring" loan too big ever to be repaid. Now permanently indebted, the country agrees to hand over its assets.

When the Berlin Wall came down out-sourcers destroyed East German industry, sacked 2,500,000 workers and seized \$468,000,000,000's worth of East European state property. They did it to South Africa where water privatisation meant cut pipes and women forced to

spend a third of their lives trekking for fresh water. The World Bank has just granted Veolia €100,000,000 to privatise East European water. (Yes: the same Veolia that wants to dump an incinerator on Pinkham Way.)

They did it to Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan... and now Cuba, Libya... Egypt – the World Bank hailed ex-dictator Mubarak "top reformer" (read *privatiser*). Now he's on trial! They're trying it on Spain, Italy, Ireland, Greece...

It was British Telecom which launched Barnet's complete sell-off. In 2008, they sent an agent, Max Wide, into Barnet's cabinet with the slogan: "Never waste a good crisis".

This scheme is now going awry. Similar plots have been brought down in Suffolk, Hove, Bury and elsewhere. A victory for us would be a tiny step towards the liberation of mankind.

Campaigns

Here we offer a space to Barnet campaigns to tell us about their issues and update us on their campaigns. To submit an article, please email barnetalliance4publicservices@gmail.com.

Taking action on CPZs

by Barnet CPZ Action Group

If you live in a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in Barnet and have not heard about us, then we haven't been doing our job properly.

Barnet CPZ Action is a group of residents taking legal action against Barnet Council to get them to reverse the huge increases imposed on residents parking in the borough. In April, resident parking permits rose from £40 to £100 a year and visitor permits from £1 to £4, well above inflation.

Barnet Council plans to use the extra revenue raised to pay for its Highways Maintenance budget deficit. Though boroughs can put up parking costs to manage demand for parking, it is unlawful for them to do so solely for the purpose of raising revenue. Barnet are also effectively levying a tax on the 10% of Barnet residents who live in CPZs, to pay for the cost of roads across the entire borough.

So what are we doing about it? Well, we're proud to say we aren't doing "nothing"! We have submitted papers to the High Court for a Judicial Review of Barnet Council's policy and expect to get a hearing date soon.

Though, as with most things, this doesn't come cheap. Thankfully, we have a strong case and have obtained the services of an eminent QC and specialist firm of solicitors who have agreed to take the case on a "no win, no fee" basis. So Barnet Council will pay their fees if we win.

However, we have to be realistic and have a backup plan in case we lose. Fundraising has been core to our campaigning to ensure we can cover Barnet's legal costs if this happens.

Our campaign has been featured on BBC London, ITV's "London Tonight" and local and national newspapers. Setting up stalls and leafleting around the borough has helped us raise awareness and more than £20,000, the bulk of which we hope to return if we win. People have been amazingly generous with their time and money.

There is still much to do. We need to continue getting our message out, make sure everyone in the borough has heard of Barnet CPZ Action Group, and keep the funds coming in.

If you want to find out more, get involved or support the legal action by making a donation just give us a shout.

- Website: www.barnetcpz.blogspot.com
- Email: barnetcpz@gmail.com
- Twitter: [@barnetcpzaction](https://twitter.com/barnetcpzaction)
- Facebook: Barnet CPZ Action