

barnetfirst

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Dollis Valley Greenwalk

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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

email: parking@barnet.gov.uk

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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Leader's column



The centre pages of this magazine are given over to a supplement showing the state of the borough's health. Councils across the UK are being given responsibility for public health and this is an early illustration of the new challenge we face.

Much of this is good news. Cancers are being spotted earlier thanks to a greater uptake of screening while a reduction in smoking and better treatment means that heart attacks are less common in Barnet than elsewhere. Uptake of the MMR vaccine is getting back to the levels of 20 years ago.

The general lesson from healthcare in the UK over the last few years is the value of identifying problems and acting early. We are moving towards a similar model in other areas of council policy, with services such as our Family Focus project supporting families at the earliest possible stage, dealing with issues before they become problems.

But health also demonstrates how successes generate other issues. The number of people living longer is excellent news, but this will put additional costs on the health service as the incidence of a range of diseases rises, simply because people are living longer.

In Barnet the success of our state schools has seen a growth in the number of applicants and this is another issue on which we will need to act early. You can read about some of our plans on page 8.

Yours

Richard Cornelius

news in brief



New advice and advocacy services for disabled and older people

Do you need information on an issue relating to disability, mental health, learning disability, sensory impairment or conditions relating to older age?

Barnet residents can now contact Barnet Centre for Independent Living (BCIL) for independent advice and to be connected to a range of services – call 020 8359 2444 (9am – 5pm) or email info@barnetcil.org.uk

If you would like to become a member of BCIL or volunteer with the service, email emma@barnetcil.org.uk or find out more at www.barnetcil.org.uk



Adopt-a-Street springs into life

A group of north Finchley residents are the first to see the fruits of their labour under a pioneering initiative with Barnet Council.

Launched last October, 'Adopt-a-Street' encourages volunteers to care for their area by carrying out extra work which will make their neighbourhoods look more attractive, including planting, gardening and litter sweeps.

Ruth Wildish and Lou Kourra, joint co-ordinators of Ravensdale Avenue, Barnet's first 'adopted street', commented: "Residents had great fun last autumn when they worked together to plant the bulbs. Seeing them flower so beautifully over the last few weeks has bonded us even closer as a community. We feel a real pride in what we achieved together, and passers-by and visitors also comment on how much they enjoy the display."

Eight streets in the borough have now registered to take over their street via the council's Pledgebank website, pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk When residents sign up they'll receive training from council officers and will be provided with equipment such as litter pickers, shovels and rubbish sacks.

news in brief



On the tweet with borough police

Barnet Police have launched a dedicated Twitter feed giving residents an insight into the day-to-day life of the force.

Jim Avey from Barnet Police's communications team said: "We want this to be more than the police releasing reams of information. This is about enabling local people to speak to us about crimes or incidents that are of concern to them."

You can follow or message Barnet Police on twitter @MPSBarnet



Pledgebank gritting round-up

During the winter cold snap the council's gritting crews kept the borough's roads moving safely.

A total of 2,522 tons of salt was used, including 260 tons to fill the borough's 465 grit bins. 72 tons of salt was used to help residents walk around the 21 town centres using the new footway spreading machines (pictured above).

The council provided residents with salt, snow shovels and wheelbarrows to enable them to clear snow in their area and arranged insurance cover. In total, 12 streets and 22 schools signed up via the Pledgebank site.

101 for non-emergencies

Residents are reminded there are now two telephone numbers for contacting the police.

999 remains for emergency situations, while 101 is now for all non-emergencies including reporting a crime that has already happened, seeking crime prevention advice or making the police aware of any issues in your local area.

The new 101 number was launched to improve the way residents can contact their local police force.





Have your say on Barnet's Health and Wellbeing strategy

Barnet Council is reviewing how it will support residents to stay healthy and lead active, independent lives over the next three years. We want to hear your views on whether our plans are right for the people of Barnet.

You can read more about our plans in the draft Barnet Health and Wellbeing Strategy called 'Keeping Well, Keeping Independent' which is out for public consultation. Please let us know what you think of our ideas for keeping Barnet healthy, visit: engage.barnet.gov.uk



Carbon Footprint Task and Finish Group delivers findings

A cross party group of councillors has made a series of recommendations aimed at reducing carbon emissions and promoting energy efficiency in the borough.

Over nine months, the Carbon Footprint Task and Finish Group examined what action the council had taken to tackle carbon emissions and what more could be done across the borough to respond to climate change.

In its findings delivered in February, the group made seven recommendations. These included working to encourage homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, energy efficiency training for council staff, and for the council to commission a desk study to explore the viability of placing energy saving measures and renewable energy installations in schools. For tips and advice visit: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk



news in brief



London 2012 Olympics

Barnet residents will be able to share in the excitement of the Olympics when the torch is carried through its streets on Wednesday 25 July. Travelling from Brent in the west of the borough and passing by Hendon Town Hall, through a number of town centres and past Victoria and Friary parks, before moving into Enfield in the east, this will be a unique occasion for residents of all ages to celebrate. The exact route and timings can be viewed at www.london2012.com/olympictorchrelaymap

Among the 30 lucky residents picked to carry the Olympic Torch through Barnet is 99 year old Diana Gould (pictured above).

If you and your neighbours want to celebrate the Games with a street party, you will need to register your street on pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk. If three or more of your neighbours pledge to join in, the council will arrange public liability insurance and guidance on road closure. The first ten streets signed up will receive special Olympics bunting packs.

Look out for more information about the London 2012 Olympic Games in the next issue of Barnet First.



Grahame Park regeneration in line for funding boost

A major regeneration scheme in Barnet is among a handful in the country to be earmarked for a financial boost from government.

The project to transform the Grahame Park estate in Colindale is one of 18 schemes to potentially receive funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), and the only one in London.

The scheme, which will see 2,977 homes built, has progressed to the next stage of assessment by the HCA to decide whether it receives a slice of the £420million 'Get Britain Building' programme fund.

Construction is already underway on the first phase of the project.

The HCA funding would help speed up delivery of the scheme and go towards building the next 120 homes.



Council Tax freeze

This coming financial year, 2012/13, will see Barnet Council freeze Council Tax for the fourth year running. This means that a band D Council Taxpayer will pay £1,419.92.

This freeze has been put in place at the same time as the council is facing a further major reduction in its funding from central government. The council has to make reductions in spending of £43million over the three-year period of the current financial plan (2012 – 15).

77 per cent of council spending reductions will come from efficiency savings, 17 per cent from service reductions. 6 per cent will be covered by increases in income from council services.

Changes were made to the initial proposals published in November following public consultation. Residents were concerned about a rise in on-street car parking. The proposed increase to on-street charges have now been dropped for the coming year. There was also concern the council wasn't providing enough support for young people to find work. The council is now reviewing its policies in this area.

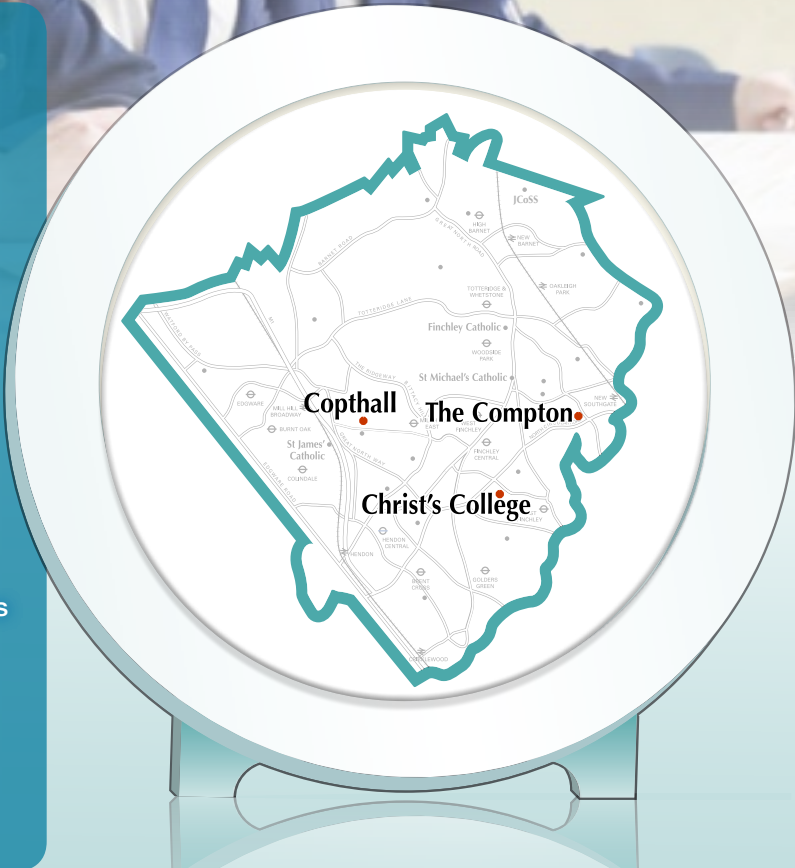
Generally, residents who took part in consultation felt the balance between efficiency savings, service reductions and rising fees was about right.

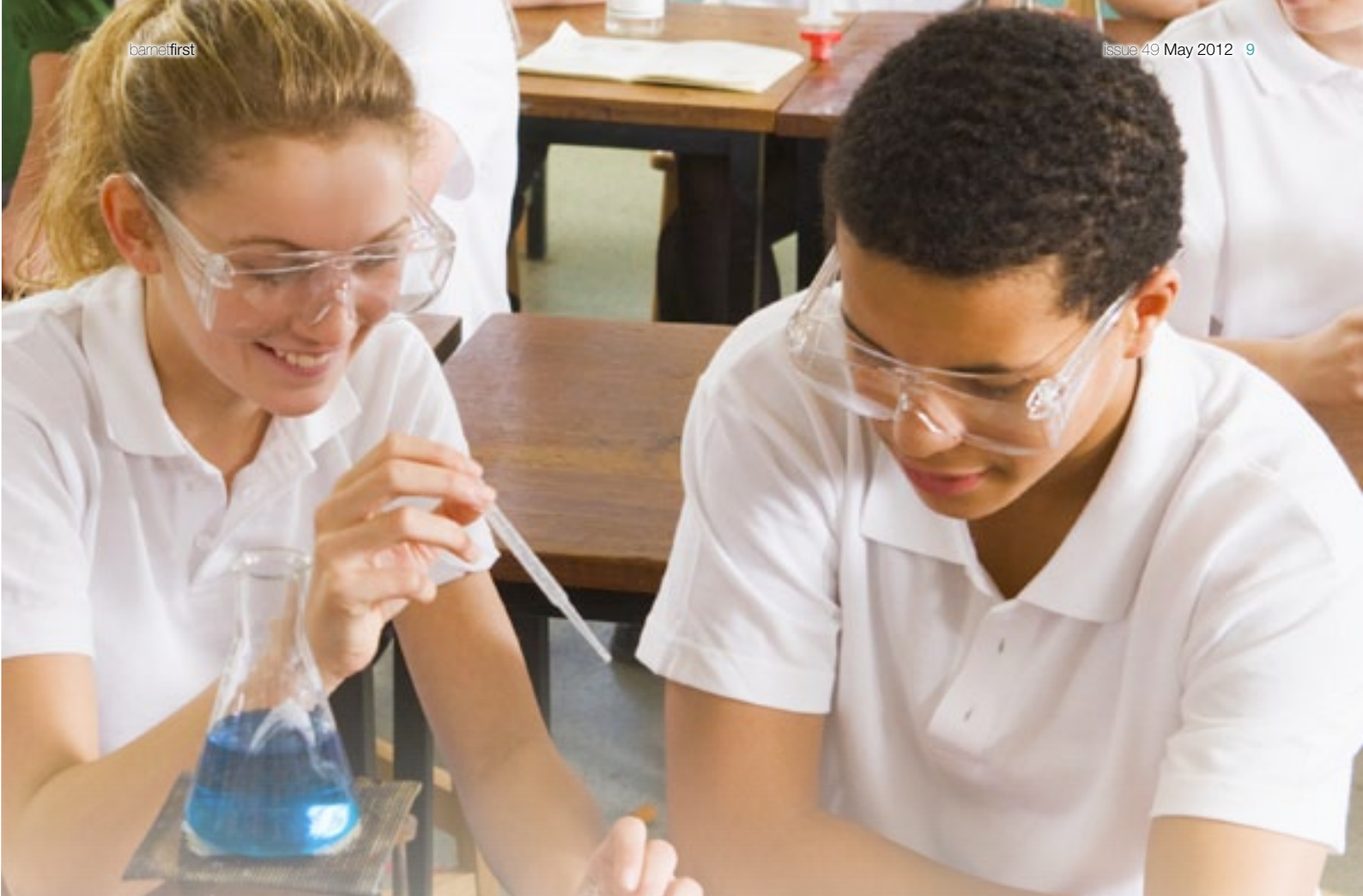


Council unveils ambitious plans to increase secondary school places

Barnet Council has revealed ambitious plans to increase secondary school places across the borough.

The plans will see the expansion of three of Barnet's successful secondary schools as well as a proposed reshaping of Church of England school places in the west of the borough.





Following public consultation and a review of secondary school places, the council plans to commission the first phase of permanent expansion at The Compton, Christ's College and Copthall schools from 2013/14. The expansion will provide an extra 90 permanent school places per year.

The council has also been working closely with the London Diocesan Board for Schools to reshape Church of England provision in Hendon.

Under the proposals, St Mary's High School would close. Although St Mary's High School has good teaching and many students achieve very well, the school has not been popular and is undersubscribed.

All St Mary's students will be able to remain at the school while they finish their education and the school will not close until this has happened.

Both the council and the Board will continue to work closely with St Mary's High School and support its students during this period.

The Board is working with St Mary's and St John's CE Primary School on expansion proposals that would see it develop an 'all-through' offer to provide education from Reception through to 18, eventually expanding onto the former St Mary's sites, which will be remodelled.

Consultation on the two proposals (the closure of St Mary's High School and the expansion of St Mary's and St John's School into an all-through school) began, following the announcement in February.

The council will continue to work with groups who have proposals for Free Schools where there is a proven demand, a robust business case and available property.

My Barnet



A year is a long time in anyone's book, but never more so than in the fortunes of Avenue House.

In March 2011 the future of the Avenue House Estate in East End Road, Finchley Church End looked in jeopardy after the charity running it recorded losses of more than £30,000. Dwindling bookings, and the loss of two charitable tenants, meant the Trust did not have enough money to run the house and gardens.

One year on, the Estate is on track to break even and bookings have steadily increased. A key player in this turnaround in the historic estate's fate is the newly appointed Trust Chairman Andy Savage.

Avenue House was owned and extended by Henry Charles Stephens, son of the inventor of Stephens' ink. On his death in 1918, Mr Stephens bequeathed the house and its ten acres of grounds to the people of Finchley. Today the grounds are open to the public and offer an oasis of calm with an excellent café and children's play area, while the house is popular for weddings, conferences and wakes.

In 2002 a charity (now the Avenue House Estate Trust) took over the estate from Barnet Council, and this trust still runs the business.

Andy's day job is running the Railway Heritage Trust, which gives grants for restoring listed buildings on the railway system. He became interested in Avenue House after moving into the area 20 years ago. "We bought our home not realising the estate was nearby", he says. "After the Trust took over I made a donation to the playground and was involved on the fringes before becoming a Trustee last April."

When the House first began running into financial difficulty Andy offered his advice and support, building on his extensive fundraising experience as a former director and deputy chairman of the Ffestiniog Railway.

It seemed like a natural next step for Andy to be co-opted onto the Trust and elected chairman when the former Chair, Bill Tyler, stepped down.

Andy and the Trustees appointed a new general manager, while the re-formed Friends of Avenue House recruited a core group of volunteers to help with a range of jobs from litter picking to grounds maintenance.

The estate needs to raise £80,000 a year to cover its grounds maintenance costs. Some of this has come from residents making monthly donations towards the upkeep costs. The Friends have also hosted a number of successful fundraising events and are planning a summer carnival and 'Finchley Olympics' in July.

"Although we're a charity, we need to be a business that washes its own face. I'm not going to go to the council and ask for money to support it", says Andy. "Only this way can we be certain we can meet Stephens' wishes and keep the house and grounds available for present and future generations to enjoy."

When Andy's not busy helping out at Avenue House he can be found at the Phoenix Cinema in East Finchley or eating out at Daruma San, the Two Brothers or Izgara restaurants in Finchley Central.

He says: "I've made so many new friends since volunteering here, I can't walk down Ballards Lane now without bumping into someone I know."

Visit: www.avenuehouse.org.uk

Tell us your story. If you would like to be featured in future issues of My Barnet, please email barnet.first@barnet.gov.uk with no more than 100 words describing your life in Barnet.

Avenue House Estate



Phoenix Cinema

Andy by the café





Before



After

Celebration marks successful completion of Dollis Valley Greenwalk project

The Mayor of Barnet, councillors, residents and local school children joined together to celebrate the success of the Dollis Valley Greenwalk project and to open Riverside Walk, which, along with Windsor Open Space, has been transformed into a fantastic new play area.

Over half of the 10-mile walk that stretches from Moat Mount to the Hampstead Heath Extension in the south and Brent Park saw extensive improvement works.

Dollis Valley Greenwalk was voted by the public to receive one of the ten grants of up to £400,000 as part of the Mayor of London's 'Help a London Park' scheme. An additional £250,000 was secured from Transport for London for cycle and footpath improvements and £30,000 from Walk London to improve signs in the area.

After consultation with residents and user groups it was decided money would be spent on:

Improving access and use to:

- over 2 miles of new footpaths and cycle routes
- 10 entrances, 5 with new hard landscaping and fencing or bollards

- directional and way marking signage throughout
- 7 new map information boards along the walk
- refurbishment and replacement of 14 bridges
- stabilising river banks.

Improving bio-diversity through:

- vegetation clearance and tree works
- a new seasonal pond in Windsor Open Space
- planting 12 new lime and birch trees
- treatment of invasive species
- complete refurbishment of Brent Park decoy pond including the creation of new habitats, improvements to water quality and a viewing platform.

Improving facilities through:

- 21 new seats and refurbishment of 15 existing seats
- 52 new litter and dog bins
- 2 new play areas.

The project is now complete but works will continue to build upon enhancements throughout the walk.



Housing prioritised for community heroes

In recent months the council has begun making a number of important changes to how it allocates and targets its housing supply.

Last April the council improved the way it allocates housing by making the system simpler and quicker for people in housing need.

The new Housing Allocations Policy also now includes a 'community contribution award' which gives extra priority to people in housing need who are working, volunteering, foster carers or ex-service personnel.

Latest proposals for the policy include adding formally registered carers to this list.

In December, 50-year-old Andrew Cheshire became the first ex-serviceman to qualify for a community contribution award allowing him to move from a rented room to a specially adapted flat.

Mr Cheshire left the army in 1989 after more than ten years with the Royal Hampshire Regiment, but a knee injury he suffered while serving now prevents him working.

He said: "Disability Action in Barnet, who have helped me out greatly, suggested I go on the housing list. Then last year I was watching Sky News and I saw the leader of the council on saying ex-servicemen would get extra priority.

"When I heard that, I thought it's about time, anyone who does things for others by volunteering should get that recognition. Now I'm able to make this place home. It's improved my quality of life and really taken a weight off my mind."

Last November, consultation also began on a new Tenancy Strategy, with proposals due to be considered by Cabinet later this year.

This could see some new council tenants offered shorter fixed-term tenancies, typically five years, before being reassessed to see if the property is still appropriate. Some others would be offered tenancies of two years, although secure lifetime tenancies would still be granted to those of pensionable age, people with long-term disabilities and ex-service personnel.

For more information on housing
visit www.barnet.gov.uk/housing



contact your councillors

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For details of surgeries, call 020 8359 2000
or email first.contact@barnet.gov.uk

Diamond Jubilee celebrations

Following a successful Civic Service and tree planting programme, the council is continuing to mark The Queen's 60 years on the throne with a Diamond Jubilee Festival at Golders Hill Park, on Monday 4 June, from 3 to 10pm. There will be music, children's entertainment, food and drink plus a firework display and beacon lighting.



We are looking for residents or small businesses who want to sell their wares (for example, arts and crafts, homemade food) or publicise their community group at the festival. There will be a charge per stall; to apply email diamondjubilee@barnet.gov.uk

Plans are also underway to recognise the achievements of some of the borough's longest-serving volunteers. To nominate someone who is aged over 60 and has been involved in voluntary work in the borough for a long time, let us know why they deserve to be recognised for their work, and email diamondjubilee@barnet.gov.uk

To have a street party over the extended Diamond Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend of 2 to 5 June 2012, please visit pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk to register your street. If three of your neighbours sign up, the council will provide public liability insurance and give advice on road closures.



What's on in Barnet? May-June

Open Evening at Local Studies

Date: Thursday 17 May, 6pm – 8pm

Venue: Hendon Library

Find out what historical records are held to enable research of people and places within your borough. You will be surprised at the range of archives such as photos, maps, old documents, publications and family history resources held, a selection of which will be on display.

Just turn up and join us for the evening.

For more information

call 020 8359 3960.

Tiaras and Tea Towels:

A Royal Celebration

Date: 4 June – 27 June

Venue: Hendon Library

Over 50 years, the London Borough of Barnet collected many ordinary artefacts associated with Coronations, Royal Weddings, and Jubilees from the reign of Queen Victoria to Queen Elizabeth. To mark the Diamond Jubilee, Hendon Library will be displaying this nostalgic collection of popular culture.

For more information

call 020 8359 2628.

Binal Trivedy's Indian Classical Dance Workshop

Date: Thursday 21 June, 6pm – 7pm

Venue: Edgware Library

Edgware Library welcomes the return of Binal's Dance Academy for an Indian classical (Bharatanatyam) and freestyle Bollywood fusion dance workshop. All ages welcome. Registration is required.

Contact Edgware Library

on 020 8359 2626 to book your place.

Working hours

Clair Green has worked with Barnet Council for 12 years and is currently the head of the authority's Corporate Anti-Fraud Team (CAFT).

What does your work and that of the team involve?

Effectively CAFT is there to protect the public purse, one of the ways we do this is by investigating suspected fraud. Our investigations work can range from Council Tax and housing benefit fraud to any internal fraud. Part of my role is to oversee all the investigations we have underway and once they're complete, to ultimately decide, based on the evidence, if a fraud has been committed and what further action we should take.

How do most investigations typically begin?

It could be a referral from another council service, someone tipping us off by calling our fraud hotline or us spotting something which sets alarm bells ringing like a person claiming benefit in two different places at the same time.

How did you become a fraud investigator?

I was working at Camden Council when an opportunity with their anti-fraud team came up and I jumped at it. I love the fact that the work is really varied and demanding. You could be in the office looking at documentary evidence, and then out interviewing someone under caution or with police seizing evidence from someone's home.

What's the most challenging part of the job?

Probably the complexity of the investigations. It can take a lot of painstaking work and all sorts of investigative techniques to unravel a fraud when someone has been careful to cover their tracks.

What's the longest investigation the team has undertaken?

Last year we concluded a five-year investigation code named 'Operation Avalanche' into a £112,000 benefit fraud. This ended with the four people responsible being convicted.

What's been the most rewarding aspect of your role?

I think it's when the team's time and effort pays off, we're able to prove a fraud has been committed and you're able to recover taxpayers' money.

Anyone wishing to report a suspected fraud can call the fraud hotline on 020 8359 2007.

