

LOVE
WHERE YOU
LIVE

OPENHOUSE

The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders

WINTER 2021

ON THE FRONT LINE MEET THE TEAMS DELIVERING EVERY DAY



NEW ONLINE FORMAT WITH EVEN MORE PAGES

Delivering for Croydon

CROYDON
www.croydon.gov.uk

a message from **Jane Avis**

CABI

Dear resident,

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the council's new Cabinet Member for Housing and Gateway Services. I am very much looking forward to working with residents and staff over the coming months.

England is under national lockdown to try to prevent the NHS from becoming overwhelmed by a surge in coronavirus cases.

Approximately 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and could be spreading it without realising it so the single most important action we can all take is to stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives. Remember: 'Hands, face, space and replace.'

- Hands: wash your hands often, for at least 20 seconds
- Face: avoid enclosed spaces with others (but if you must be in one, wear a face covering)
- Space: stay at least 2 metres from others indoors and outside
- Replace: open windows and internal doors regularly throughout the day, especially when you share a space with others, to remove any infected particles lingering in the room.

The national lockdown means we must not leave our homes except for essential reasons

which include to:

- shop for basic necessities, for you or a vulnerable person
 - go to work, or provide voluntary or charitable services, if you cannot reasonably do so from home
 - exercise with your household (or support bubble) or one other person, this should be limited to once per day, and you should not travel outside your local area.
 - meet your support bubble or childcare bubble where necessary, but only if you are legally permitted to form one
 - seek medical assistance or avoid injury, illness or risk of harm (including domestic abuse)
 - attend education or childcare - for those eligible
- For full guidance about what you can and cannot do during the lockdown visit www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home.

There's not one of us who hasn't been affected by the pandemic and news of the Covid-19 vaccine comes as a huge relief, especially those who are vulnerable and who work on the frontline, supporting and protecting them. Croydon, like other councils up and down the country, is working closely with our colleagues in the NHS, preparing to ensure the vaccine is received by those who need it



most as soon as possible.

If you are contacted by your GP or other healthcare professional and are invited to receive the vaccine, I ask you to do so to help protect your local community, family, friends and neighbours. The new vaccine – along with test and trace – will help us to contain any outbreaks of Covid-19. Doctors or other health professionals will be in touch with priority groups as and when it's their time – there is no need to come forward for the vaccination until then.

Visit www.croydon.gov.uk/coronavirus for the latest news and service updates.

Please look after yourselves and each other – and most importantly, stay home, and stay safe.

Yours faithfully,

Clr Jane Avis

YOUR REPAIRS SERVICE DURING NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

At the end of 2020, Croydon Council issued a Section 114 notice. This means that the council legally has to stop all but essential spending across all council services.

The running of our housing estates is funded from a ring fenced account funded by you the tenants and leaseholders and therefore the S114 notice will have little impact. There may be a slight delay to non essential works being undertaken as the council needs to prioritise responding to the Covid19 pandemic and focus on its financial recovery.

The current Covid 19 pandemic will however continue to have an impact on the delivery of our repairs service as we need to ensure the safety of all our staff, tenants and leaseholders.

The national lockdown government guidance sets out that repairs and construction work are able to continue to operate 'business as usual' whilst following government guidelines.

Emergency repairs will continue in the usual way, although this will in most cases be to just make the property safe in the first instance, with additional work carried out at a later date.

Individual non emergency repairs inside resident's homes will also still be carried out. This will be subject to some restrictions but you will be advised of these, if relevant, at the time of reporting.

When repairs are carried out in your home, we would ask that you follow social distancing guidelines, and where possible move to another room to give our operatives space to safely carry out the repair.

You can continue to report repairs 24 hours a day 7 days a week as you would normally via the repairs line 020 8726 6101 or email croydonrepairs@axiseurope.com.

HAVING YOUR SAY AND GETTING INVOLVED

You can get involved or have your say about our housing services by getting in touch with the council's resident involvement team. To find out more or register your interest, visit:

- www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/residents
- www.facebook.com/croydonresidentinvolvement
- You can also contact the team by emailing: residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk.

EVERY DAY HEROES

HOW THE CARETAKING TEAM ARE HELPING RESIDENTS THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the past few months we've had some lovely feedback from residents thanking our caretaking team for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The coronavirus has highlighted the importance of so many public servants to our everyday lives, often people who receive little recognition or reward.

The council's caretaking team serve a vital role for residents throughout the borough and this has become even more important during the pandemic.

Each caretaker has a number of blocks to look after and it is their responsibility to check that the facilities in these are up to scratch. This can include a wide variety of duties, including cleaning the blocks, checking the lifts are working and making sure any repairs that need to take place are reported.

The team takes great pride in delivering the council's caretaking service and have gone 'above and beyond' in not only doing their usual duties but also supporting fellow caretakers who've been shielding or self-isolating.

It's also been an especially difficult time for those residents living alone or unable to connect with

friends so the caretakers have provided a valuable presence on site and made sure that many of our residents have not felt isolated or alone.

Residents have told us that it's made all the difference seeing their caretakers' friendly and familiar faces each day, always making themselves available to help and support those who are vulnerable whether by doing a bit of shopping or making time for a quick chat to keep resident's spirits up.

Complaints received in regard to the service have been minimal and the response from residents have been very encouraging so we thought it would be a good idea to share these in Open House and recognise our 'every day heroes.'



"A big thank you to our caretaker Keith for helping me in so many ways during these difficult times. He's helped me with shopping and been a friendly face during this uncertain period."

Ann, Academy Gardens



HEROES

OPEN HOUSE

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“Wingate Crescent is lucky to have excellent caretakers who do their work properly and do not cut corners. The service has been, as always, very clean during lockdown.”

Jill, Wingate Terrace



The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders

Keep up to date with all the latest housing and community news by signing up to receive our e-newsletter at www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/residents/ohnews and join the resident involvement Facebook page to share your views: www.facebook.com/croydonresidentinvolvement

GARDEN

PART

COMMUNITY GARDENING EVENT GIVES EXTRA CARE RESIDENTS SOME MUCH NEEDED TIME OUTDOORS

Thanks to some mild autumn weather, elderly residents in our extra care schemes enjoyed a fun day garden planting with refreshments of tea and freshly baked cakes.

The social value team within our repairs and maintenance service organised the event so that residents could come together in a Covid-safe environment, observing social distancing guidelines, to support their physical health and mental wellbeing.

Residents told us; "It's lovely to all get together like this. We haven't really done anything outside this year and it's been fun. I can now look out the from my room and see the colourful flowers. It's like a room with a view now. So much colour, very nice."

Residents can now keep these planters colourful and tidy through the winter and into next spring, giving everyone an opportunity to get outside more.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make this event happen, especially Axis Europe for their continued support by providing the community payback team with materials

and tools. Our thanks also go to Guideline (who supply our lifts) for sponsoring the plants and helping with the logistics of delivering the planters, Good Food Matters in New Addington for providing organic compost, Cherry Orchard Hub for plants and delivery, and finally Bloomin' Lovely florists in New Addington and Croydon Blooms for donating an amazing array of beautiful colourful plants. Lastly, a big thankyou to everyone else who kindly donated homemade cakes and bulbs for planting.



TY



EXTRA CARE: RESIDENTS TEND TO THE FLOWERS IN THE NEW PLANTERS



SUPER FLY

THE BULKY WASTE CREW AND THEIR FIGHT



A big shout out to our bulky waste crew who are part of the tenancy and caretaking service.

This team, which operate two bulk waste trucks from 8am through to 4pm, collect up to four

8

tonnes of fly-tips and bulky waste from council estates throughout the borough. The service is included as part of council rent and service charges. You can report fly tipping through the Croydon online service My Account

where you can also book a paid for collection of large items from your own home should you need one.

The crew's work has been especially important during the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting national lockdowns

GUY'S

AGAINST FLY TIPPING

OPEN HOUSE



SO SOLID: THE BULKY WASTE CREW (L/R) JOSEPH BRADSHAW, FLOYD QVALLO, KEVIN FIELD, PAUL REED.

when fly tipping and dumping of unwanted items has increased. Whilst some of the team have had to self-isolate, colleagues have stepped up to the mark to ensure the service has not been impacted. Recently the crew supported

the London Fire Brigade following an incident where two residents were rescued. Fire damaged items from the properties were left on the curb side and needed to be urgently removed. The Bulk crew responded to the call and

collected it. One crew-member, Paul Reed, said "We are proud to serve our community and came and soon as we could!" (Photos of the debris from the fire damaged houses can be seen above).



THE NEAR FUTURE

Refurbishment works to the first College Green tower block located in Upper Norwood is due to be completed this Spring. New windows, cladding, lifts and roofing works have been completed to the block. The final phases of these works include the creation of four new flats, a new community room, laundry, mobility scooter storage area together with new fencing, landscape improvement works and car parking to the rear of the block (continues on p 12-13)





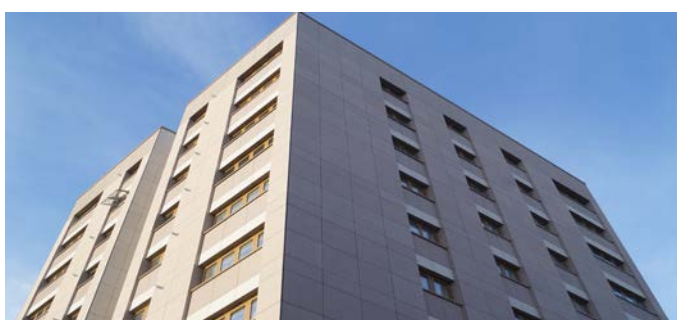




The council's investment last year for refurbishment works to three other council housing blocks included the installation of a renewable heating system - ground source heat pumps. Ground source heat pump systems pipe natural heat from around 200 metres underground into each council flat, saving each household around £100 per year on heating bills (this could be more depending on the block's current heating system), cutting carbon emissions and helping to improve air quality.

The install of the new heating system to around 40 council flats at Chertsey Crescent in New Addington has been completed. The refurbishment works to the block are underway and includes new windows, cladding, lifts, roofing works, landscape and car parking improvement works. The carbon reduction for these works are equivalent to a 4,000 mile car journey per property. Works are due to be completed to this block late autumn 2021.

Works are also underway at two other council housing blocks located at Dartmouth House in Broad Green and the second College Green tower block in Upper Norwood. In addition to the renewal heating system, the refurbishment works include new windows, cladding, roofing works, landscape and car parking improvement works, together with the creation of three new flats, new lifts and the provision of a secured private garden at College Green and secured fencing at Dartmouth House. Refurbishment works to these blocks are due to be completed autumn 2022.





SEASONED GREETINGS



OPEN HOUSE



The repairs & maintenance service social value team and council contractors Guideline, Axis, AJS were delighted to have the opportunity to support the fantastic 'Christmas in a Bag' initiative for residents.

They generously provided 120 families with a delicious Xmas dinner of turkey, vegetables and all the trimmings, a fresh fruit hamper, topped off with a Christmas pudding - complete with crackers for everyone!

In addition to this, the Good Food Matters charity in New Addington cooked and prepared Christmas dinners for 100 elderly Croydon residents, which was delivered door to door by Food Stop, a local food charity.

Alistair Shervington, social value co-ordinator, praised the initiative saying: "This scheme really helped those most in need and our contractors welcomed the opportunity to help out after what has been an extremely tough year for many."

Others services involved in supplying food include supermarkets Morrison's and Waitrose, FareShare - the food redistributors, Fieldway Ward Councillors, the Palace for Life Foundation, Salvation Army and many volunteers.

Julia Weller, CEO of the Family Centre, thanked all those who contributed, saying they had made a real difference to Christmas for those who were receiving the packages.

She said: "This year has been extremely hard for everyone, and we would like to ensure that every family and resident who we support has a Merry Christmas."

One resident who received a Christmas dinner said, "We were in the situation of either buying the food for our family this Christmas or putting something under the tree for the kids. Now we can do both. I can't thank you enough. I didn't even think we could have a turkey this year."



COVID UPDATE

Now that Croydon, like the rest of the country, is in lockdown, we all have to take extra steps to keep ourselves, each other, and Croydon safe - make sure you know what this means for you.

Whatever your circumstances it is important that you make yourself aware of all the information and support that's available to you.

You can find out how the latest restrictions affect your services on the council's website at <https://new.croydon.gov.uk/>

[coronavirus-information-and-service-updates](https://new.croydon.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-and-service-updates).

If you are suffering financial hardship and finding it difficult to make ends meet you can find out about support available at <https://new.croydon.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-and-service-updates/support-hardship-or-difficulties>.

If you need urgent support we have a dedicated helpline for residents who need immediate help as a result of COVID-19. Call: 020 8604 7787 – open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm.

If you are having trouble getting through, please complete our Coronavirus support form.

Depending on your needs,



we will arrange a call after you've submitted the form to talk through your most urgent needs – such as food, medicine



**Croydon
Healthy
Homes**

Croydon Healthy Homes is Croydon Council's free energy advice service aimed at Croydon residents on low incomes, and those more vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home (especially families with young

children, older residents and residents with pre-existing medical conditions). To be eligible you must pay for your electricity directly to your energy supplier, either through a direct debit, on receipt of a bill, or through a key or card (prepayment) meter.

Our team of qualified energy assessors can offer the following:

- advice about gas and electricity tariffs and payment methods;

- checking you receive all the support you are entitled from your energy supplier. This could include Warm Homes Discount (a £140 discount on your electricity bill), and support

through the Priority Services Register

- using OFGEM accredited price comparison sites, assisting you find the best fuel tariffs for you, and if want to change to the new tariff, supporting you switch
- advice about any debt you owe to your energy supplier
- advice about discounts and support from your water company (such a 50% discount on your water bill)
- advice about Smart Meters.

For further advice and guidance contact the Healthy Homes team at healthyhomes@croydon.gov.uk or call 0800 292 2529 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).

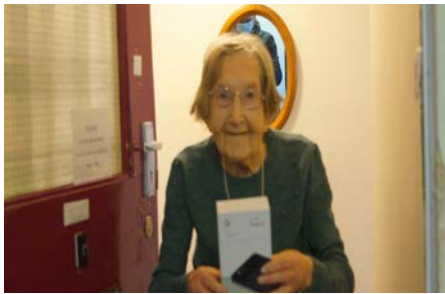
work other requirements.

For those of you wishing to assist the NHS with practical help there are opportunities to volunteer for a variety of roles as an NHS Responder. Visit <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/i-want-to-volunteer> for more information.

NHS Responders

NHS Volunteer Responders can help with food, prescriptions, essential items and can also Check in and Chat (short-term telephone support).
Telephone: 0808 196 3646.

Croydon Council is asking residents to give their views on the future of the library service. To take part in the consultation, visit our website: www.getinvolved.croydon.gov.uk/project/678 or to request a questionnaire in a different format email: librariesconsultation@croydon.gov.uk or call us on 020 7884 5159.



VIOLET GETS SMART

Croydon resident Violet Attrill, was the happy recipient of a new Google smart phone, kindly donated to our pilot digital skills project by local community tech experts Clear Community Web. Violet who is 94 years old has been improving her digital skills by taking part in online learning sessions, and shows that digital technology is for everyone at any age.

REPAIRS HOW TO

At this time of year you may find that your radiators are not giving out as much heat as they should. This could be because they need bleeding. In this video we show you how this is done.