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# OPENHOUSE

The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders

SUMMER 2020

## CHANGE REACTION

HOW CROYDON IS WORKING  
TOGETHER TO PROTECT LIVES



Not all heroes wear masks...but these do! Find out more about these community spirited heroes on page 5. Main picture: Alistair Shervington, Croydon Food Hub



**WATCH: EXCLUSIVE AXIS COVID-19 REPAIR VIDEO IN ONLINE EDITION OF OPEN HOUSE**  
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# Team Building

HOW CROYDON'S HOUSING TEAMS HAVE BEEN SUPPORTING RESIDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

During the coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown which followed, officers in housing services have joined forces with other teams at the council to support residents in need. We asked our colleagues to share how they've been helping the council respond to Covid-19.

### Providing vital supplies of fresh food to vulnerable residents

The Croydon Food Hub has been providing fresh food deliveries to 'shielded' residents throughout lockdown. Shielded residents are those thought to be most vulnerable to Covid-19 due to underlying health conditions and were advised by the government to stay in their homes for at least twelve weeks from the start of lockdown.

Residents who needed help getting food were advised to register on a website set up by the government and in Croydon, a food distribution hub was quickly established at the council's offices at Bernard Weatherill House. By late March two hundred and fifty people had registered on website, and the hub received its first delivery of food, supplemented by generous donations from local businesses and supermarkets.

Parcels containing fresh food were packaged up by council officers and delivered to residents. Those residents not included in the shielding scheme were offered the council's business as usual wraparound service.



ALL CHANGE: (From left): Croydon's Tenant and Leaseholder Panel meets online and Food Hub; how Croydon's adapted to support residents during the coronavirus pandemic.



Head of tenancy and caretaking services Sharon Murphy told us; "The numbers of shielded clients requiring a food parcel increased each day. We have been delivering on average approximately forty parcels a day, working our way through tonnes of food! We delivered high quality fresh foods and canned items that can feed a family for up to a week and the recipients are all so very grateful – this is such a rewarding job!"

### Keeping in touch with vulnerable residents

Resident involvement officer Gemma Smith was redeployed into a new role which involved making phone calls to people registered as vulnerable to make sure they were able to get food, medication and other essential services during lockdown. She told us; "I have truly enjoyed calling residents. Most people had

already registered on the government's website to receive parcels and had organised for medication to be delivered by their local pharmacy or family, friends or neighbours. It was lovely to hear how families and local communities had been pulling together to help each other during this time. Most of all I have enjoyed the positive response from people we have called, and even those that did not need help have been grateful for the call, many enjoying a quick chat during a time when people have been feeling lonely and isolated.

We often think of our vulnerable as only being the older generation, but this experience has reminded me that people of all ages can be vulnerable and need help from their local community and council. Croydon does have a caring community and you only need to reach out to find

people who will help.

### Supporting local businesses

Resident involvement support officer, Vanessa Gauld volunteered to assist the business rates team that give government grants to help local businesses that have not been able to trade. Initially she assessed each application and made recommendations for approvals but she soon became an approver herself. "I wanted to help this team with their intense workload and have really enjoyed it. It's been really rewarding to do something to help Croydon businesses survive this crisis, save jobs, and help sustain the economy."

### Resident involvement goes digital

The resident involvement team have been keeping in touch with residents living in council homes by establishing online groups using

video conferencing software MS Teams which allows people to talk to each other via their laptops and other digital devices, sharing video and audio through internet connection. The software also allows those taking part to share what is on their screens such as presentations, making online meetings a great alternative to face to face conferences.

So far informal TLP (Tenant and Leaseholder Panel), Health and Safety and Performance Monitoring Group meetings have been conducted online and we've had great feedback from those involved.

This has meant that the important work of our resident groups and panels have been able to continue at this time. Now that this technology is up and running, residents unable to attend meetings in person can easily get involved in improving housing services from the comfort of their own home.

## GET INVOLVED

If you want to find out more about getting involved, get in touch with us at [residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk). We can help you if you need support getting online or getting to grips with the software.

## JOIN US ON FB

Our Facebook page is another great way to get involved. You can keep up to date with the latest news from the council, local resident communities and organisations. It's a great place to share your views with us and other residents [www.facebook.com/residentinvolvement](https://www.facebook.com/residentinvolvement)



# STAR survey the results are in!

It's important we understand how you feel about the housing services you receive from us and how you think we can improve them. We get feedback from our tenants and leaseholders in a number of ways including resident panels, focus groups and working with local residents' associations. We've been working with specialist research company Acuity to conduct the STAR satisfaction survey, it's carried out by the majority of social landlords. Every three months 350 randomly selected tenants and leaseholders are contacted and asked a number of questions about their housing services. We've just received our annual report for the year 2019/20. Read on for a summary of some of the things you told us and how it compares with our last set of results in 2016.

## Satisfaction with the neighbourhood 77% (up 3%)

The majority of you say that you are satisfied. Those that weren't raised concerns in relation to crime, ASB and neighbour problems, the need for more security and issues with litter on estates.



### 87% feel safe in their own homes

For the first time we asked you how safe you feel in your home and 87% of you say you do. Of those that don't concerns about ASB were given as reasons for not feeling safe.

## Customer Contact

We asked what you thought about customer service: 75% of those surveyed had been in contact with us in the previous 12 months. Of these, 57% found it easy to get their last query resolved while 36% said it was difficult. 77% were satisfied with the customer care they received and said we listened, resolved their issues and staff were helpful. But you also told us it takes too long to get through on the phone and it's hard to find right person to speak to.



### Satisfaction with the repairs service 72% (up 3%)

Again satisfaction is high and rising but some tenants thought we could improve the service by improving the quality of repairs and ensuring that repairs get completed first time.

## Satisfaction with the quality of your home 76% (down 1%)

We're pleased that most of you are happy with your homes. Those that were dissatisfied cited issues such as damp, maintenance problems, unfinished repairs, improvement works (e.g. kitchen, bathroom, windows) and unsuitability of home (e.g. being overcrowded).



### 56% are satisfied that we listen to their views and act upon them (up 7%)

### Overall service provided by Croydon 75% (up 3%)



75% of our tenants feel satisfied with Croydon housing services.

## HOUSING ROUND UP

### COMMUNITY SPIRIT

(from cover)

On 23 June Open House visited the Food Stop in the Family Centre, Fieldway, New Addington. It's run by a dedicated team of volunteers who've made sure that residents in the area have been able to get affordable food for a small weekly payment. Michelle Saulet, Julia Weller, Lisa Hatton and Samantha Shirley are joined by council officers Sharon McGregor-Kerr and Biddy Sobamiwa on Fridays who deliver food supplies to residents in sheltered blocks. The team were nominated by local resident Marilyn Smithies as lockdown heroes for supporting their community throughout the pandemic.

### THORNTON HEATH YOUR HIGH STREET, YOUR VIEWS

Residents in Thornton Heath are invited to help create a plan to regenerate Thornton Heath High Street. It's an important opportunity for the local community to influence change so that it provides the community facilities, homes, transport and public spaces needed. Read more at [www.croydon.gov.uk/thorntonheath](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/thorntonheath), and check back for updates about how you can get involved.

## FILLING THE VOID

With residents on our waiting list or in temporary accommodation waiting to be rehoused its important empty or void properties are re-let as quickly as possible and for every week that the property is empty, we lose out on the rental income. Occasionally you may see a property that has been empty for many weeks and even sometimes months. So why does this happen?

Before we can offer an empty property to a new tenant we need to make sure that it's safe to live in and in good repair. In most cases, properties only need minor works to bring it up to lettable standards. But some properties need a lot more work before they can be offered to a new tenant. We went to Norbury to meet Thomas Connolly, project manager for council contractors Mulalley. He gave us exclusive access to two adjoining homes to explain why.

"In some properties, a lot of work needs to happen before they're fit for habitation. These particular homes need major underpinning works, internal structural repairs to walls and floors, rear extensions to increase the kitchen and dining space, a new roof, complete rewire and installation of central heating which could take months to complete."

Occasionally, tenants may leave their home without telling the council or returning their keys. If you see an empty home and suspect that this has happened, please let the council know by calling 020 8760 5470 or emailing [Tenancy.CaretakingOMs@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Tenancy.CaretakingOMs@croydon.gov.uk).

These finished homes are now being decorated throughout, soon to provide fantastic and much needed family homes for Croydon residents!



## What next?

The detailed annual report has been presented to service managers who will discuss it with their teams to see how they can address the issues which some tenants have raised. The report has also been discussed with the residents' performance monitoring group who work in partnership with officers to develop action plans to improve your future services.

If you are keen to get involved in helping us monitor and improve your housing services, why not get in touch to find out more about the performance monitoring group or other ways to get involved, email: [residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk) or call 07789 395 721.

# YOUR SERVICES

Although lockdown has eased, council services will continue to be delivered in a different way for some time so that we're able to comply with social distancing guidelines. These changes are essential to limit the spread of the Coronavirus and keep residents safe. Read on for the latest service updates about how our housing services are running.

## FOOD STOPS & FOOD BANKS

The council has four food stops with community partners in Fieldway, Selsdon, Thornton Heath and Purley. If you are eligible, you can have £20 worth of fresh food and other groceries for £3.50 per week. For more information email [gcc@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:gcc@croydon.gov.uk).

You may be eligible for food bank vouchers. For more information contact the discretionary support team at [dhp2@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:dhp2@croydon.gov.uk) or call 020 8604 7226 from 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

## TENANCY SERVICES

Due to coronavirus all tenancy surgeries and tenancy related home visits are cancelled until further notice. Caretakers are working to their existing schedules and timetables but only on a priority basis. For example, if you live in a block where you receive caretaking once a week, there may be occasions where this service becomes fortnightly, or less – but we will try to do this only in extreme circumstances.

Call us on 020 8726 6000, ext 88121 – Open Monday to Friday: 9am – 4pm

You may not receive an immediate call back and we ask that you wait 48 hours before re-calling to help us prioritise requests. If we cannot take your call or the line is engaged, please leave a message. Or you can email the relevant operation manager in your area.

### North Croydon:

[terry.edwards@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:terry.edwards@croydon.gov.uk)  
[karen.reid@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:karen.reid@croydon.gov.uk)

### East Croydon:

[jo.joannou@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:jo.joannou@croydon.gov.uk)  
[kingsley.eze@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:kingsley.eze@croydon.gov.uk)

### South and Central Croydon:

[adam.curtis@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:adam.curtis@croydon.gov.uk)  
[angela.bradford@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:angela.bradford@croydon.gov.uk)

## REPAIRS

Our repairs contractors Axis will be carrying out essential repairs only, including gas servicing and a small number of repairs in communal areas. Over the coming months, steps will be introduced so that other types of repairs can be carried out in your home while keeping to current social distancing controls. Axis have created a short video, 'Keeping you and your homes safe' during the coronavirus pandemic' which you can watch at [www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/counciltenants/repairs/repairs-reporting-repairs-during-covid-19](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/counciltenants/repairs/repairs-reporting-repairs-during-covid-19) (also available in the online edition of Open House).

You can still contact the repairs team in the normal way on 020 8726 6101 or email [croydonrepairs@axis.eu](mailto:croydonrepairs@axis.eu).

## MENTAL HEALTH

Lockdown has been a difficult experience for many people, including those living alone who've been unable to connect with friends, family or other networks or parents and carers trying to juggle work and home-schooling. If you're struggling, don't suffer in silence. There are many services that support mental health and wellbeing:

### All ages

- South London and Maudsley (SLaM) Mental Health Trust. Tel: 0800 731 2864, 24 hour helpline.
- Mind: 0300 915 4644
- Samaritans: Test: 116 123, email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or text the word 'Shout' to 85258.

### Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

- Croydon Talking Therapies, a free, confidential NHS service for young people aged 17 and over. Telephone 020 3228 4040, email [croydoniapt@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:croydoniapt@slam.nhs.uk) or search Croydon Talking Therapies online.
- Getting it On website at [www.gettingiton.org.uk/services/croydon/croydon-drop-in](http://www.gettingiton.org.uk/services/croydon/croydon-drop-in) for emotional health and wellbeing support for young people aged 13-19.

### Older people

- The Silver Line: a confidential and free helpline for older people. Open every day and night of the year. Tel 0800 470 80 90.

- If you need help but are not sure which service to contact, get in touch with Age UK's advice line on 0800 678 1602. It's open every day between 8am and 7pm.

## RUBBISH &



## RECYCLING

Rubbish and recycling collections are taking place with a reduced workforce, with food and rubbish prioritised. Your collection may be later than usual. If your collection is missed, leave your bins at your normal collection point. Our waste operatives will try to return, but you may have to wait until your next scheduled collection. For more information visit <https://new.croydon.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling>.

For the latest news and updates about council services, including those not listed here, please visit [www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk). If you are not online and need help or are interested in receiving a free Get Online guide please contact our digital inclusion and engagement officer Dan on 07742 40522 or email [daniel.powell@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.powell@croydon.gov.uk).



## NEW DIGITAL SKILLS GUIDES COMING SOON!

During the lockdown the importance of digital technology has become clear, whether it be as a means of staying in touch with friends and family through social media or video conferencing, a way of accessing the fantastic free resources at the local library or a way to get up to date information through online radio and television.

Not everyone, however, is online yet. This may be for a range of reasons such as concerns about cost, worries about security or just a lack of confidence. But we are determined to help ensure that everyone who wants to take advantage of digital technology is able to and that's why we are releasing a new series of printed illustrated guides which will help people develop the skills that they need to get online and enjoy the many benefits of digital technology. The guides are especially designed for beginners with clear and easy to understand information.

And this is just the start. As fast fibre broadband continues to roll out to council accommodation across the borough, more residents will be able to gain access to high speed internet and we will help give support wherever we can to guide people to helpful resources or ways of accessing affordable technology.

Get Online digital skills booklets will be available free from all Croydon libraries when they reopen.





**A New World.**

**A New Future.**

## Croydon College and Coulsdon College are ready to welcome students in September with physical and online courses

Croydon College and Coulsdon College are preparing to support teenagers and adults alike to educate, train and upskill them ready for the post-COVID working world when the new academic year starts in September.

Throughout the lockdown both Colleges have remained open providing support for pupils and staff but also adapted to move teaching online, with an expansive online learning programme across vocational, A Level, degree and apprenticeship courses.

With the announcement that schools and colleges will be open to all students from September, the Colleges will be ensuring that all COVID-19 safety measures are in place to make learning accessible and safe for all. For those not able to attend in person, there will be continued online teaching.

So whether you have just finished your GCSE's and looking to take the next step, you want to take on a new degree, you would like the opportunity to gain a qualification while working as part of an apprenticeship, you've been furloughed or made redundant and wish to upskill or you just want to learn something new – Croydon College or Coulsdon College has the course for you.

**Email [admissions@croydon.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@croydon.ac.uk) Tel: 020 8686 5700 for Croydon and 01737 551176 for Coulsdon.**

To talk to someone about opportunities, join our weekly virtual advice clinics hosted by the College every Wednesday between 2pm – 4pm. To register or for more information visit <https://croydon.ac.uk/> or [www.coulsdon.ac.uk](http://www.coulsdon.ac.uk).