



OPEN HOUSE

The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders

WINTER 2023

Celebrating New Year with our involved residents

A very belated Happy New Year to all our tenants and leaseholders!

On 12 January, we hosted our first annual resident festive party in two years. Over 40 residents were invited to the celebration at Croydon Clocktower Cafe in recognition of their support and involvement in helping us to improve Croydon housing services.

We had a great turn out – despite the cold and wet weather. Residents enjoyed a buffet, festive quiz, and a prize draw raffle, raising £141 in aid of the Mayor's charities. It was great to see our residents coming together after so long.

Executive Mayor Jason Perry, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes, Cllr Lynne Hale, and our Corporate Director of Housing, Susmita Sen, all paid tribute to residents, with a special thank you to the chair of the tenant and leaseholder panel Yaw Boateng, vice-chair Les Parry and long-standing panel member, Kim Wakely. They worked with us to develop the Residents' Charter, which has now been formally adopted by the Mayor, [see page 4](#).

Many residents continued to support us during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we are especially grateful for their ongoing involvement at that time, not to mention getting to grips very quickly with the new technology we all found ourselves having to use.

We need more of our tenants and leaseholders to get involved!

Whether it's taking part in our Neighbourhood Voice scheme, completing surveys, or joining one of our panels - we need you!

To find out more, visit www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/information-council-tenants/resident-involvement/ways-get-involved or email residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk or call us on 020 8726 6100, ext: 44524.



Our involved residents Sheryl Reid, David Mundy and Guy Pile-Grey



Our involved residents Jill Arboine and Marilyn Smithies

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WELCOME

Mayor Jason Perry, Executive Mayor of Croydon & Cllr Lynne Hale, Deputy Mayor & Cabinet Member for Homes

In the last edition of the Open House newsletter, we shared our commitment to drastically improve the housing services you receive from the Council and we are pleased to share that a lot has happened since. This includes the formal adoption of the Residents' Charter by Croydon Council's Cabinet, approval of the Housing Transformation Programme and continued work with residents to procure our new repairs contractor.

We asked for your views as we made these decisions and we want to thank you for engaging with us by letting your voices be heard. We still have a long way to go to improve our housing services to the standard that you deserve, and we will continue to work in partnership with you as we do this.

Croydon's new Housing Transformation Programme was developed in line with our priorities to invest in council homes, drive up standards, develop the workforce and create a responsive and effective housing service. The three to five-year plan addresses previous feedback from tenants and the Council's independent Housing Improvement Board – who we continue to work closely with.

Between 13 December 2022 and 26 January 2023, we launched a statutory six-week consultation with residents on the Regina Road estate to help decide the best way of providing warm, modern homes that are fit for the future. Homes at the Regina Road estate are not the standard we would want for our residents and we will be either refurbishing or demolishing and rebuilding part of the estate. Residents will vote on these options in a ballot which will take place in Spring.

As many of you know, the council has filed a Section 114 Notice which prevents all but essential spending to get its finances back on track. We want to reassure you that the delivery of housing services will not be affected by this, as the funds of the Housing Revenue Account are held totally separate from the general funds of the Council. Our commitment to doing what is necessary to improve your housing services remains, as we continue to provide vital services to our most vulnerable residents.

We have also launched a Household Support Fund (HSF) grant to support residents in need with the cost-of-living crisis. Please see [page 7](#) for more information about the grant and other support that's available to you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason".

Mayor Jason Perry
Executive Mayor of Croydon



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynne".

Cllr Lynne Hale
Deputy Mayor & Cabinet Member for Homes

MESSAGE FROM SUSMITA SEN

Corporate Director of Housing

Dear resident,

I've been at Croydon now for several months and wanted to say how much I am enjoying meeting and working in partnership with residents to improve your housing services, making Croydon a place in which you are proud to live.

Thank you to everyone that attended our vision workshops in the months of August and September, either online or in person. In total, we held 20 housing workshops across the borough where council tenants and leaseholders were invited to share their views on changes they would like to see and give feedback on the Residents' Charter.

It was a pleasure meeting you and having conversations about your experiences and expectations. The feedback you gave both during the workshops and in the surveys was incorporated into the Residents' Charter which has now been formally adopted by Croydon Council's Cabinet. Read more about this on [page 4](#).

Since I last wrote to you in Open House, Mayor Perry has also now approved our new Housing Transformation Programme, which sets out how we will improve your experience of housing services. I am determined that we will deliver this in close partnership with our residents. A new programme of estate inspections - when residents and officers patrol an estate together to highlight issues and how to resolve them - has started. If you would like to arrange an estate inspection where you live, email residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk.

Many of you may have heard about the fire at Sycamore House which resulted in the rehousing of 70 households. Our team worked around the clock to successfully rehouse all affected people and I want to thank all volunteers who provided support when it was most needed. I want to also assure you that fire safety remains one of our priorities and we will be sending you evacuation plans and more communication on how to stay safe. Please take time to read the fire safety advice from the Borough Commander for Croydon on [pages 8 and 9](#).

Lastly, I want to remind you that you can contact me directly at talktosusmita@croydon.gov.uk if an issue you've raised with housing colleagues isn't getting resolved as it should be. Equally, if you have a positive experience, I'd love to hear about that too!



Susmita Sen
Corporate Director of Housing



Residents' Charter formally adopted by Croydon Council's Cabinet



Yaw Boateng
Chair of TLP

The Residents' Charter was developed by members of our Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP) - chair Yaw Boateng, vice-chair Les Parry and Kim Wakely, a long-standing TLP member - to foster good relationships between our residents and housing services. It was formally adopted by Croydon Council's Cabinet on 7 December 2022.

Residents were asked for their feedback on a draft version of the Charter before it was formally adopted. Residents generally agreed with the core principles, but also told us:

- Respond to complaints on time and publish them
- Keep us informed – treat us as adults
- Engage with us before decisions are made
- Small things matter – respect that small issues may mean something to us
- Always be truthful even if it's not what we want to hear
- Listen – don't interrupt – make us feel heard
- Routine inspections of estates and repairs
- Understand and respect the diverse needs of residents
- Better communication for residents who don't live on estates



Les Parry
Vice-chair of TLP

The Charter is more than a document on a page. It sets out the levels of service that you should expect from us and those delivering services on our behalf, including our staff and contractors. Scan the QR code below to read the full Charter on our website.

If our service delivery does not meet these standards we have committed to or you would like to get involved in helping us to improve them, get in touch by emailing residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk or calling 020 8726 6100, ext: 44524.



Kim Wakely
Long-standing member of TLP

Read or download the full Residents' Charter here:



www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/information-council-tenants/resident-involvement/residents-charter

We're reviewing our approach to damp and mould

We were all shocked by the tragic news of two-year-old Awaab Ishak who died because of prolonged exposure to mould in his Rochdale home. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and community.

We are reviewing our approach to damp and mould and have set up a new specialist team to respond quickly to issues related to damp and mould that are reported by residents.

The team will be responsible for identifying the cause of the damp and mould and putting measures in place so that it is treated quickly and doesn't return. Residents who have damp and mould issues should contact us immediately.



dampandmould@croydon.gov.uk



020 8597 2085

Update on repairs contract: invitation to get involved in the next stage

Residents have been helping us to choose a new contractor who will provide our responsive repairs and gas-servicing.

We have worked with our residents at every stage of the tender process, including:

- Developing a set of customer service standards
- Refining the standards based on the survey feedback from tenants, freeholders and leaseholders
- Accessing the bids from the various contractors
- Shortlisting the potential contractors
- Evaluating the offers submitted by the shortlisted contractors

Our trained team of resident evaluators talked to the shortlisted contractors about their approach to engaging with residents. These residents will play a part in selecting the company that is awarded the contract in March 2023.

We are grateful to the residents who have been involved in the process for all the time they have dedicated to this project so far.

We are now looking for more residents to be involved in monitoring the performance of our new repair and gas contractors, once the contract is in place from August 2023. We want to know about your experience

in the area of customer services, the quality of repairs, service standards and communications. From simple surveys to face-to-face or online meetings, depending on the time you have available, there are many ways to get involved.

Training and support will be provided. Any time you can give to us from simple surveys to face to face or online meetings would be welcomed.

These services must be accessible to everyone so we are especially keen that residents from diverse groups have their voices heard, including those with protected characteristics (age, disability, race, sexual orientation, sex, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity). We also want to hear your experience if English is not your first language. We can provide translation services or sign language assistance if needed to ensure residents are fully able to take part.

Contact residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk or call us on **020 8726 6100, ext: 44524** to tell us you're interested.

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

Soaring energy bills and food prices have affected the wellbeing and quality of life for many of our residents. Please remember that support is available if you are struggling to make ends meet.



Disability Cost of Living Payment

If you receive a disability living allowance, you can also get a one-off £150 payment to help with extra costs, such as for specialist equipment or transport. Visit: [Cost of living support Factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Household Support Fund (HSF)

The HSF grant is a one-off award to help to buy food, gas and electricity if you are facing hardship or a financial emergency. The scheme provides support, such as vouchers rather than cash grants. Visit: www.croydon.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund-hsf

Discretionary Support Fund

You can get extra support for rents or deposits if you receive Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit, and you need help with rent or deposits. Visit: www.croydon.gov.uk/benefits/financial-hardship/discretionary-housing-payments

Council Tax Support

You can get a discount or reduction on your council tax if you're eligible. For example, if you're a full-time student, a sole occupier or disabled. Visit: www.croydon.gov.uk/council-tax/get-money-your-bill

Pensioners Cost of Living Payment

Pensioners will receive an additional £300 Cost of Living Payment in 2023-24 from the government to help with bills. This payment will not affect existing benefits. Visit: [Cost of living support Factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



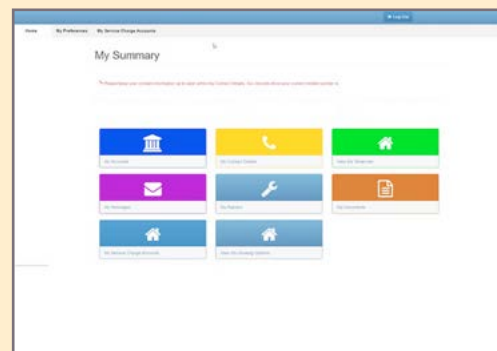
SCAN ME

www.croydon.gov.uk/get-help-rising-cost-living

Testing your new housing portal

We are introducing a new housing portal and we're looking for volunteers to help us test the system before it goes live. The housing portal is an online platform which will allow our tenants and leaseholders to access services online such as reporting repairs issues, accessing rent statements and viewing messages.

If you're interested in helping us test the housing portal, please email us at residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk or call us on **020 8726 6100 ext.44524**. We are keen to hear from a diverse range of people from all backgrounds drawing on different perspectives and digital abilities.



Free home safety check -

Let us help you to make your home a safer place.

If you are a council tenant with children under five years old, we are offering you a free home safety check.

This means that a specially trained Home Safety Officer will check all areas of your home and give practical help and advice on ways to improve safety for you and your children.

The practical help may be:

- fitting safety equipment, such as cupboard catches and socket covers
- checking plugs and fuses
- the provision of up to two stair gates or fireguards free of charge



The home safety check may take about one hour. This will depend on the size of your rooms. If you are eligible and would like to book a home safety check, contact the Home Safety Team:

Telephone: **0208 760 5434** or **0208 726 6100**
Email: homesafetyservice@croydon.gov.uk

GET INVOLVED

LOVE
WHERE YOU
LIVE

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE....

If you are a Croydon Council tenant, leaseholder or live on a council estate, get involved and tell us what you think about the housing services you receive from us.

Listening to and acting on what you tell us about your homes, neighbourhoods and housing services is important to us. By getting involved, you get the chance to tell us what matters to you and help to make things better where you live.

It's easy – just scan the QR code or call **020 8726 6100, ext: 44524**

Follow us on Facebook:
Croydon Resident Involvement

SCAN ME



www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/information-council-tenants/resident-involvement

CROYDON
www.croydon.gov.uk

FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety is a priority for Croydon and we are committed to providing safe homes to all our residents. Every block managed by the council receives regular fire safety inspections and fire safety works are carried out as a priority.

We work closely with the London Fire Brigade and partners to ensure our residents are safe in the event of a fire and can be evacuated as quickly as possible if there is an emergency.

We are also working towards meeting the requirements of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. The Building Safety Act 2022 sets out safety requirements for landlords of buildings that are at least 18 metres or 7 storeys high.

Residents in high-rise buildings will have more say in how their building is kept safe and will be able to raise building safety concerns directly to the owners and managers of their buildings. From Spring, we will be talking to residents living in these blocks to get involved, so please watch this space!

The Act also outlines what tenants and leaseholders must do to help keep their home and communal areas safe. Landlords must also ensure that fire safety information is available to residents - such as a Fire Action Notice.

A Fire Action Notice should be visible in the communal areas of our blocks. Please contact Axis on **0203 597 2085** if it is missing or damaged and we will replace it.



Example of a Fire Action Notice



Example of a Fire Action Notice

For the ongoing safety of all our residents, please read the fire safety information below, including the interview with the Borough Commander for Croydon.

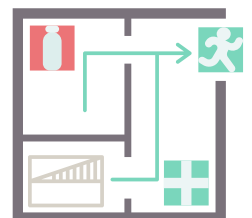


EVACUATION STRATEGY - STAY PUT OR EVACUATE?

One of the main concerns people have in the event of a fire is whether to 'stay put' or to 'evacuate'. Every building is different which is why we have a customised Fire Action Notice in your communal area to guide you as to what action to take. Here's what to remember

- In the event of a fire in your flat, you should leave the building immediately taking family members with you and closing the front door behind them.
- If there is a fire in your building but not inside your own home, stay put if your building's evacuation plan advises so, unless the heat or smoke from the fire is affecting you.
- Follow the emergency evacuation plan which includes taking stairs instead of the lift and waiting at the designated safe area for the fire brigade.
- Call 999.

Visit our website for more information on fire safety: www.croydon.gov.uk/fire-safety



FIRE SAFETY

with Mark Edwards, Borough Commander for Croydon



We spoke to Borough Commander Mark Edwards about fire safety. Here is his advice on how to keep safe in your home.

What are the five most common causes of fire in the home?



Cooking

About 60% of fires in the home begin in the kitchen so be alert when cooking. Use timers and take extra care when cooking with hot oil.



Candles

In 2020, over 200 fires in London were linked to candles, so I don't advise people to use them. But if you have to - be careful. Never leave them unattended, especially before bed. Also, use a heat resistant holder to keep them upright.



Smoking

If you smoke, always smoke outside and never in bed or anywhere you could fall asleep. Use proper ashtrays and stub cigarettes out properly.



Electrical appliances

Do not overload electrical sockets and always replace damaged wires. Get into the habit of unplugging appliances when you are not using them.



Heating appliances

When the weather is cold the chance of a fire caused by heating increases. Replace electric blankets that have scorch marks, a buzzing sound when switched on or are 10years+ old. Also keep portable heaters 1m away from you when it is on. Never leave electric blankets or heaters on overnight or when you go out. Staying safe is just as important as staying warm.

[Visit our website for more information and tips: www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/](http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/)

What are your top three tips to residents when it comes to fire safety?

1: Fire prevention is the most important thing, so be aware of the hazards. If you're unsure of the fire risks at your home, use our website's 'Home Fire Safety Checker' for tailored advice.

- 2: Install and regularly check the smoke alarms in any room where a fire can start e.g. rooms with plugged in appliances. In smoky or steamy rooms like your kitchen or bathroom, a heat alarm is more suitable.
- 3: Be prepared. Know the emergency evacuation plan for your building and make sure nothing would block your escape if there was a fire.

Home contents insurance – are you covered?

Did you know that without contents insurance for your home, your belongings are not insured against damage or theft?



Croydon Council housing tenants are eligible to apply for a special council-run scheme. Premiums range from £1.78 to £6.22 per week, depending on the amount of cover you want - £10,000 (minimum) to £35,000 (maximum). The insurance covers the contents of your home, including items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

The cost is cheaper than many other insurance companies and you can pay in weekly instalments instead of a large lump sum payment. To be eligible, payments on your rent account need to be up to date.



For more information about the application form and terms and conditions, scan the QR code or email housingrentaccounting@croydon.gov.uk, who will send a policy booklet to you.

www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/information-council-tenants/home-contents-insurance

ESTATE INSPECTIONS

Report issues, ask questions, get involved!

Estate inspections give residents the chance to work alongside tenancy and caretaking services to identify issues around their estate.

During these inspections, residents and officers make a note of any issues that need resolving. Afterwards, an action plan is produced outlining what needs to happen next and in what timeframe.

We also ask residents to complete a monitoring form to help us make sure the process is working. The monitoring form can be download from our website (scan the QR code).

Estate inspections will be advertised in advance so do get involved if one is happening where you live. If you would like to speak to us about an inspection in your area, contact residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk or call us on 020 8726 6100 ext. 44524.

For more information, scan the QR code



www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/information-council-tenants/housing-maintenance-and-safety/estate-inspections

HELP US KEEP CROYDON CLEAN

The Love Clean Streets smartphone app is the fastest way to report fly-tipping, graffiti, abandoned cars and many other issues on Croydon's streets.

Download the free 'Love Clean Streets' app on your smartphone and select Croydon as your home local authority. To report an issue

- Select your location
- Add a photo
- Choose a category and add a short description
- Hit send – and you're done!



www.lovecleanstreets.info/report

DOWNLOAD YOUR BIN COLLECTION CALENDAR!

You can now visit our website (*scan the QR code*) to check when your bin will be collected. We provide a breakdown of what kind of bin will be collected and when. We will also tell you if there are delays with your bin collection and you can report any issues.

If you do not have communal bins, visit our website and download your personalised bin collection calendar for 2022/2023.



<https://service.croydon.gov.uk/wasteservices/webpage/bin-day-enter-address>

New Tenant Satisfaction Measures & recent survey feedback

From 1 April 2023, all registered providers of social housing will need to collect information (Tenant Satisfaction Measures or TSMs) on how they are performing across a range of service areas such as responsive repairs, property condition, management of communal areas, how they engage with residents and deal with complaints. These new TSMs are there to ensure that landlords are meeting the standards set out in the Charter for Social Housing Residents.

We are already conducting surveys four times a year, which tell us how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the housing services you receive from us. New questions have been included about how we handle anti-social behaviour and deal with complaints. The first results from these new tenant satisfaction measures will be included in the next issue of Open House.

Although we have seen some improvements since we last shared survey results we are still far from where we would like to be. We will continue to deliver our Housing Transformation Programme at pace so that your experience improves.

Recent survey feedback

50% SATISFACTION WITH THE HOUSING SERVICE OVERALL

53% SATISFACTION THAT WE ARE EASY TO DEAL WITH

45% LISTENS TO VIEWS AND ACTS UPON THEM

58% KEEPS YOU INFORMED ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER

64% TREATED FAIRLY AND WITH RESPECT

64% PROVIDES YOU WITH A HOME THAT IS WELL MAINTAINED, SAFE AND SECURE

Residents that were dissatisfied told us about issues with the condition of the property, including damp, mould and condensation, repairs service, safety and security, (especially door and window security) and the condition of communal areas.

If there is damp or mould in your home, please contact our dedicated team. Turn to **page 5** for contact information.

53% WE ASKED RESIDENTS WHETHER THE COUNCIL HAD CARRIED OUT A REPAIR TO THEIR HOME IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS.
said Yes

Of these, **64%** said they were satisfied with the repair and **57%** said they were satisfied with the time taken to complete the repair after they reported it.

49% KEEPS COMMUNAL AREAS CLEAN, SAFE AND WELL MAINTAINED

Residents told us they were dissatisfied with the frequency and quality of the cleaning service, grounds maintenance issues, safety and door security

We also asked residents what **one thing would make the difference to a better service**. Top of the list at **22%** was improved customer services and contact, followed by better communications and information (**17%**) and improved day to day repairs (**13%**).

- Surveys are carried out on our behalf by a company called Acuity
- We survey 250 tenants four times a year and we will share the results of surveys in Open House.
- Your feedback helps us to make improvements to the way we deliver housing services.
- We need residents to work with us to shape these improvements. Turn to **page 5** to find out how you can get involved in monitoring the performance of our new repairs contractor. Turn to **page 10** if you would like to arrange an estate inspection on your blocks or estate.

Shout out to our residents!

All smiles on her 110th Birthday

Our regular readers will remember Merah Smith from our last winter edition of Open House. We continue to celebrate her incredible life as she turned a 110 last November! She's one of the oldest residents in Croydon and possibly across the whole of London. A group of friends and family celebrated Merah's impressive milestone with her. Croydon's Civic Mayor, Cllr Alisha Flemming, and other housing officers accepted the invitation to join the celebration.



When asked what her secret to her long life was, Merah said she owes it to her "faith, reading the bible and eating good food". Merah is already planning her 115th birthday – Open House editors hope we get an invite!

Soulfood Garden wins 1st prize for Community Garden

Congratulations to Soulfood garden for winning last year's Wandle Greenfingers' 1st prize for the best Community Garden in the borough!



"Our community Soulfood garden is a place where neighbours can contribute and reap the harvest while connecting with mother nature. It brings life and community spirit to our neighbourhood and we are honoured to receive this prize."

You can follow their journey on [@soulfoodgardenn](#)



Old benches brought back to life

A big shout out to one of our residents' representatives, David Palmer, Cllr Patsy Cummings and Cllr Nina Degrad for giving the old benches a fresh look!



They teamed up to paint and varnish two benches at Church Road, Upper Norwood. Many thanks to the local business who supported them by supplying paint and other equipment needed to make this possible.

Volunteers work together to keep the Tamworth Road Estate tidy



In November, a group of volunteers on the Tamworth Road Estate came together for a community clean up. The litter pick was organised by the New Life Christian Centre which plays an active role in the community. Local councillor Esther Sutton joined and supported the volunteers.



Chair of the Residents Association at Tamworth Road, Kelly Gater, thanked all the volunteers who were involved. A huge shout out to our Croydon Champions and Tracey Bellamy, who is one of the council's clean and green champion co-ordinators. Without her, this wouldn't have happened.

