LOVE COPENHOUSE The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders





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Foreword



Mayor Jason Perry
Executive Mayor of Croydon



Councillor Lynne Hale
Deputy Executive Mayor and
Cabinet Member for Homes

Welcome to the summer edition of Open House!

It's been some time since our last newsletter, so we're delighted to bring you the latest edition as you enjoy the warmth of the summer sun.

A big thank you to all our residents who participated in our rent survey to help us understand your housing priorities. From your feedback, 'repairs', 'tackling anti-social behaviour', and 'improvements to grounds maintenance' were the top three areas you wanted us to prioritise. In our previous Open House newsletter, we shared some improvements we have made to our repair services. In this edition, we will be sharing actions we have taken to tackle anti-social behaviour to ensure safety on our estates (page 6). We have zero tolerance towards anti-social behaviour and will do everything within our power to protect our tenants and assets against perpetrators.

Our commitment to improving our housing services remains unwavering, which is why we're excited to share two new initiatives that bring us closer to our goal: the new housing portal and Photobook. We've replaced the old housing portal with a new, more user-friendly version for those who are active online (page 4). If you don't have internet access, our contact centre (020 8726 6100) is here to help. Plus, we've introduced 'Photobook', a detailed guide to caretaking and cleaning standards, which will help both staff and residents monitor the quality of our caretaking services (page 3). A huge thank you to all our tenants who have been involved in both initiatives, helping us to keep you at the heart of what we do.

It's encouraging to see that the annual results from our tenant satisfaction survey 2023 – 2024 indicate that satisfaction has increased in most areas across our service (pages 12-13). This is good news as we know that our efforts are being reflected in your experience and feedback. We recognise we still have a long way to go, so we encourage you all to continue sharing your feedback with us as we work hard to bring our housing services to the standard you deserve.

Your safety continues to be a top priority. As part of our commitment and legal duty to you, our team of experts will visit your homes to fit window restrictors on windows that meet specific health and safety criteria to prevent accidental falls (page 11). We are also working to implement the new Building Safety Act for high-rise buildings and sharing fire safety information to help you stay informed and well-protected (page 7).

Lastly, our summer of fun is back again this year with activities on our estates for children aged eight and over **(page 16)**. Younger children under eight years old can attend with their parents. There will also be a range of free educational and recreational activities organised by Young Croydon on specific days, so look out for the summer van!

PHOTOBOOK: IMPROVING OUR HOUSING SERVICES



Croydon Housing has partnered with Housemark to launch 'Photobook,' an inspection management platform designed to improve caretaking services across council properties.

Photobook provides visual guidelines for cleaning standards, illustrating how specific areas of an estate should look after being cleaned. This helps caretakers clearly understand expectations and ensures inspectors have a consistent framework for monitoring maintenance quality across all council properties.

"A huge thank you goes to all our residents who have helped develop the standards and this photobook. Your support and commitment will drive improvements in all our estates, helping to make them places residents feel proud to live in." - Jason Perry, Executive Mayor of Croydon

If you're interested in joining our Neighbourhood Voice scheme to help us monitor the caretaking service on your estates, please email: residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk or call 020 8726 6000, ext: 44524.

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JOIN OUR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE REVIEW PANEL

To improve the quality of our grounds maintenance service, we're inviting interested tenants to work with us on conducting a comprehensive review this summer.

It's a great opportunity to share your views and ideas on how to improve the service.

If you would like to take part in this review, please email:

nick.spenceley@croydon.gov.uk, or call: 020 8726 6000. ext: 44524.





COUNCIL RESIDENTS TEST OUR NEW

HOUSING PORTAL

Our new housing online portal is now live! This is another significant milestone in our strategy to make housing services more accessible to you.

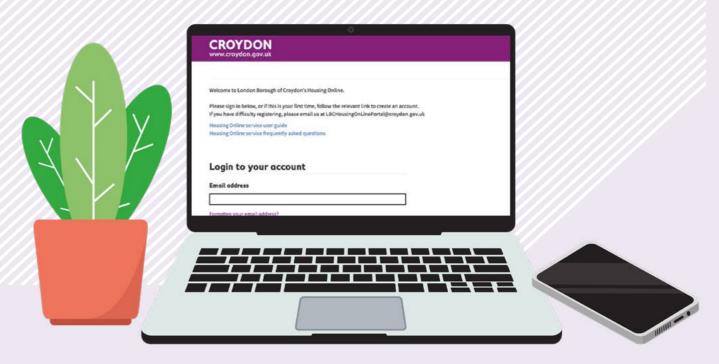
It is a great way for our tenants and leaseholders who are online to access the information they need, when they need it. By capitalising on the use of technology, part of our service is now accessible 24/7 online. This eases pressure from our contact centre so our residents who are not online can access our services faster.

Since the launch, we have invited residents to test the portal and share their feedback, helping us identify areas for improvement. A huge thank you to all our those who attended our sessions!

'Getting our tenants to test and review the portal helps us to understand how you prefer to use the platform, measure whether we are meeting your expectations and identify areas of improvement. Keeping your interests at the heart of what we do is our top priority'

Susmita Sen, Corporate director of housing

You can also go online and share your experience with us! Learn more about the portal and how you can get involved on the next page.



YOUR NEW HOUSING PORTAL

Have you registered on our new housing portal? If not, visit:

https://housingonline.croydon.gov.uk (or scan the QR code)... By registering you will be able to:

- View and amend your contact details.
- Apply for accommodation or a transfer.
- View your account balance and statements.
- View repairs on your property.

Please continue to report online repairs through 'My Account' or by calling us on **020 8726 6101.**



REGISTERING FOR YOUR HOUSING ONLINE ACCOUNT

It's quick and easy to create a housing online account - just follow these steps:

F	
Email address	
Forgotten your email address?	
Password	
	□ Show
Forgotten your password?	
Log In	
Create an account (EXISTING Tenants, Lease	holders and Applicant
Create an account (NEW Housing Advice, H Register Applicants)	omeless and Housing

Visit https://housingonline.croydon.gov.uk Existing tenants, leaseholders and applicants:

- 1. Register using the blue 'create an account' button.
- 2. Enter your email and create a password.
- 3. Follow the instructions * in the validation email sent to the email address you provided.

If you are new to Croydon's housing services: please register using the blue 'create an account (unregistered)' button and follow steps 2 and 3 above. * You must provide your payment reference number and the exact name you used when you first became a resident. If you need more help, we've produced a registration help guide - scan the QR code for details.

We will be adding more features to the portal in the coming months and to hear your feedback, we are setting up a review panel. If you would like to join the panel then please email: **lbchousingonlineportal@croydon.gov.uk.** We only have a limited capacity for this panel, so we apologise in advance if you are not able to join because we have had too many requests to participate.

HOUSING PRIORITIES

TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

In our recent housing priorities survey, you told us that tackling anti-social behaviour is one of your top priorities, and we agree! Here's an overview of what anti-social behaviour is and some of the actions we have taken to tackle this on our estates.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) refers to actions that harm or lack consideration for the well-being of others. This includes behaviour that is disruptive, hostile, or harmful to individuals or communities, such as vandalism, aggression, theft, or other forms of disorderly conduct. A council tenant who demonstrates anti-social behaviour is in breach of their tenancy agreement with Croydon Housing. We will take action to protect residents who are being affected by this behaviour.



Here are three recent cases we have dealt with:

CASE 1: CAR PARK OBSTRUCTION

A resident obstructed access to the car park with a large trailer and refused to remove it regardless of several complaints from other residents. We issued a Community Protection Notice Warning. The resident then complied, removing the trailer which resolved the ASB complaints on the estate.

CASE 2:
NOISE AND
DRUGS-RELATED
ACTIVITIES

For several years, residents complained about anti-social behaviour at a property. The perpetrator was accused of drugrelated activities, shouting and banging on walls throughout the night keeping residents awake. When a neighbour asked the perpetrator to reduce the noise, they received death threats. We applied for a Premises Closure Order against the resident in question, which was granted allowing us to repossess the property.

CASE 3:
AGGRESSION,
NOISE AND
OTHER CRIMINAL
ACTIVITIES

A tenant was regularly being reported due to serious antisocial behaviour including aggression, verbal and racial abuse and noise. A fire was also started on the property which could have endangered the lives of other residents. Following a thorough investigation, we applied for a Premises Closure Order to provide relief to residents. The Court granted a three-month Closure Order, extended thereafter, banning the perpetrator's access to the property.

Dealing with anti-social behaviour remains one of our priorities so don't suffer in silence. If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour, please contact your Tenancy Officer or call: 020 8726 6000.

BUILDING SAFETY: KEEPING YOU SAFE

New safety measures for high-rise buildings

To ensure your safety in high-rise buildings (those over 18 metres tall or 7 floors high), the government has introduced the Building Safety Act and Fire Safety Act.

Your safety is our top priority. We've set up a dedicated Building Safety Team to make sure we meet these new standards. Here's what they'll be doing:

- Conducting thorough safety assessments
- Managing building safety documentation
- Working closely with the new Building Safety Regulator

Our team is meeting with residents in high-rise buildings to explain their role in building safety and hear their concerns.



We will also start a project to check the front entrance doors of individual flats for residents on the 11th floor and above. This initiative is in addition to our regular quarterly inspections of communal fire doors. Residents will receive a letter with specific details when we are scheduled to visit their block. Notices will also be posted on communal noticeboards to keep everyone informed.



What should I do in the event of fire?

Many of our high-rise residential buildings are designed to support a 'stay put' approach. This means that in the event of fire, there are fire resistant doors at strategic entrances to prevent the spread of fire for a period of time. The fire evacuation plan for your building can be found on the notice board. Here is what you should know;

- If there is a fire in your building but not in your home, stay put if your building's evacuation plan advises to do so. However, evacuate if the heat or smoke from the fire is affecting you.
- 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.
- 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.



ELECTRIC BIKES AND SCOOTERS

E-bikes and e-scooters offer a great way to get around and have a lot of benefits. However, if the batteries become damaged or begin to fail, they can start fires when charging them. Last year, the London Fire Brigade attended 116 fires caused by e-bikes or e-scooters. This year, they have been called once every two days for e-bike and scooter related fires.

Here are some tips to help reduce the risks when charging lithium batteries:

• Don't block your exit with charging batteries or e-bikes and e-scooters. If a fire breaks out, you won't be able to safely leave your home. Store them in a shed or garage where possible.

- Keep an eye out for warning signs that your battery might be failing and becoming a fire risk.
- Unplug your charger once the battery has charged. Never leave your battery to charge when you are out or asleep.
- Make sure your battery and charger meet UK safety standards.
- Let your battery cool before charging it.
- Fit smoke alarms in the area



Scan the QR code for more fire safety advice or visit this link: www.london-fire.gov.uk/ safety/the-home/e-scooters-and-e-bikes



Summer is the perfect time for BBQs, but safety should always come first!

Here are some important tips to keep in mind:

- Don't use a BBQ on a balcony. Flames, sparks, and hot embers can cause a fire and spread quickly to other parts of the building.
- Position your BBQ on level ground (not decking) and keep it well away from anything that may catch fire, such as sheds, fences, or trees
- Never light a barbecue in an enclosed space and don't use accelerants to get the fire going.
- Avoid distractions from people around you and never leave the BBQ unattended.
- Avoid drinking alcohol if you are in charge of the BBQ.
- Keep children and pets at a safe distance from the BBQ. Have a bucket of water or sand nearby for putting off the fire in case of an emergency use.
- After your BBQ, let the coals cool and make sure the fire is properly out. Smouldering ashes can give off dangerous carbon monoxide fumes which can be fatal when inhaled.



Scan the QR code for more tips: www. london-fire.gov.uk/ safety/the-home/ cooking/bbqs



HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE

ARE YOU COVERED?



Did you know that without home contents insurance, your belongings aren't protected against damage or theft?

Croydon Council housing tenants can apply for a special council-run insurance scheme. Premiums range from £1.78 to £6.22 per week, depending on the coverage amount you choose, from £10,000 (minimum) to £35,000 (maximum). This insurance covers your home's contents, including furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

It's more affordable than many other insurance options, and you can pay weekly instead of in one lump sum. To be eligible, payments on your rent account need to be up to date. For more information on how to apply and details of the terms and conditions, email: housingrentaccounting@croydon.gov.uk, who will send a policy booklet to you.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD



A huge thank you to everyone who attended our housing drop-in sessions!

Earlier this year, we held several drop-in sessions across a number of our estates where residents were able to share their views on our housing strategy and give their feedback on our services, including repairs, caretaking, etc.

We appreciate your feedback and suggestions for improving your estate. Our team is actively working on your ideas, and we'll provide an update in the next edition of Open House.



You don't have to wait for our next drop-in session to make your voice heard. If you have any feedback for us, please email: residentinvolvement@ croydon.gov.uk or call: **020 8726 6000, ext. 44524.**

You can also register online to receive surveys and focus group invitations to get involved.

Scan the QR code to register: www.croydon.gov.uk/ residentinvolvement



RENT SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Every year, we review rents in line with government guidelines and implement the necessary changes to ensure that we continue to maintain the delivery of our housing services. As there has been an increase this year, we want to remind you of the financial support that is available.

The rent hardship fund is available to tenants facing financial difficulties. If you need support, please get in touch by emailing: **councilrents@croydon.gov.uk** or calling: **020 8726 6100** and asking for the income recovery team.



DO YOU RECEIVE BENEFITS? IMPORTANT UPDATE



Since April 2024, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been sending letters to some people who receive these benefits to let them know that they need to claim Universal Credit instead, to ensure they continue receiving financial support. This letter is called a 'Universal Credit Migration Notice'.

This notice letter is important as it will tell you that your existing benefits are stopping, and you need to make a claim for Universal Credit. It will also tell you what you need to do and by when. You don't need to do anything until you get the letter. However, when you receive it, be sure to check the date by which you need to apply for Universal Credit, otherwise your benefits will stop by the deadline stated in your letter.

It's important to read your letter carefully and follow the steps before the deadline to make sure you don't miss out on any financial support.

IS YOUR HOME SAFE FOR YOUR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 5?

WE CAN HELP YOU

Each year, an average of 55 children under the age of five die from accidents in or around the home. Additionally, 370,000 children visit accident and emergency (A&E), and 40,000 are admitted to the hospital as emergencies.

We offer a free home safety service to help our council tenants with children under five. 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. We also offer free safety items to help you. These include:

- Up to 2 stair gates
- A fireguard
- Plug socket covers
- Kitchen cupboard door and drawer locks
- Door jammers
- Fridge and freezer locks
- Window restrictors (see page 9)

Council tenants can access this service by emailing:

homesafetyservice@croydon.gov.uk with their name, address and contact phone number of the parent(s).

WINDOW RESTRICTOR INSTALLATION – HELPING TO KEEP



Why are we fitting window restrictors?

As part of our commitment and legal duty to ensure the safety of our residents, we are checking and fitting window restrictors on windows that meet specific health and safety criteria. These restrictors are crucial for preventing accidental falls from large window openings. These restrictors can only be disengaged with a special tool or key for added security.

What should you do?

Our contractors will be visiting your home to install the window restrictors on all relevant windows, so we need you to give them access. Once fitted, please do not try to remove the restrictors as they are there for your protection.

If you already have window restrictors on your windows, we will check to make sure they are working properly. If we need to replace them, we will. If you notice any broken or missing window restrictors, please call our repairs contact centre on **020 8726 6101.**

If our contractors come by and you are not in, we will leave a card for you to call us and arrange for another visit.

SPOTLIGHT ON TENANCY FRAUD: PROTECTING OUR HOMES

Tenancy fraud affects 1 in 20 social housing tenancies in London, draining a vital public resource. This means that the people who need our social housing the most are deprived of the opportunity to acquire a home.

There are various forms of tenancy fraud, common ones include:

- Sub-letting: renting out part or all of a home without the council's permission
- Fraudulently acquiring a tenancy: providing false information to obtain a home from the council
- Succession fraud: giving false information to take over the home of a deceased person

Croydon Council is committed to tackling tenancy fraud. With a dedicated team of fraud specialists, we have achieved significant results in the past year:

- Recovered 26 council properties from fraudulent tenants
- Prevented the sale of three council properties by individuals using false information
- Declined three housing assistance applications by people using false information.

Every report of suspected fraud is thoroughly investigated, and the council uses the full force of the law to bring offenders to justice. If you suspect a tenant of housing fraud, don't stay silent. Report your concerns to the council's Anti-Fraud service using the online reporting tool at Croydon Council's website.

Scan the QR code or visit our website: www.croydon.gov.uk/benefits/report-potential-fraud



TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES (TSM)

HOW ARE WE DOING? - SATISFACTION RESULTS

As we have reached the end of the financial year, we now have a comprehensive view of your feedback on our housing service. Over the past year, we've provided quarterly updates in the Open House newsletter. With the year's results in, we can now compare the data from 2022-2023 with that from 2023-2024. Please note that the full results covering all the TSM questions will be published on our website.

Overall, the TSM results for 2023/2024 show encouraging improvements in several key areas compared to the previous year. While we are proud of this progress, we acknowledge the need to continue striving for the level of service our residents deserve.

The overall satisfaction with housing services increased from 50% to 53%, indicating a positive shift in residents' perceptions. Notably, satisfaction with our repairs service saw a significant jump from 59% to 65%. However, satisfaction with the time taken to complete the most recent repair slightly decreased from 56% to 55%, highlighting areas needing more attention.

General satisfaction with repairs and maintenance improved from 47% to 52%, and the perception that we provide well-maintained homes rose from 51% to 55%. These figures demonstrate our commitment to enhancing our housing services. Additionally, maintaining safety remains steady at 61%, while satisfaction with the cleanliness and maintenance of communal areas saw a slight uptick from 50% to 51%.

We have also made progress in keeping residents informed (53% to 58%) and listening to their views (40% to 43%). However, satisfaction with our approach to complaints handling remains low, despite an increase from 22% to 26%, highlighting an important area for ongoing improvement.

In general, while these results are encouraging, we remain dedicated to improving our services by listening to you. If you receive a phone call from Acuity asking you to take part in the survey on our behalf, please do as your feedback will help improve our services.



		22/23	23/24
		Average	Average
	Overall satisfaction with housing services	50%	53%
56	Satisfaction with the overall repairs service over the last 12 months	59%	64%
3	(Asked of those who said they'd had a repair carried out)		
	Catification with the time telement and all the complete comments are also as a second comments.		
	Satisfaction with the time taken to complete your most recent repair after you reported it (Asked of those who said they'd had a repair carried out)	56%	55%
	General satisfaction with repairs and maintenance (additional question)	47%	52%
C			
	Satisfaction that we provide a home that is well maintained	51%	55%
	Satisfaction that we provide a home that is safe	61%	61%
Ma	Satisfaction that we keep communal areas clean and well-maintained		
	(Asked of those who said they live in a building with communal areas)	50%	51%
	Satisfaction that the housing services makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood	46%	49%
	you neighbourhood		
@#	Satisfaction with housing services' approach to handling anti-social	400.	400:
2 #	behaviour	48%	49%
	Satisfaction that we are easy to deal with (additional question)	44%	46%
		40%	420/
	Satisfaction that we listen to your views and act upon them?	40%	43%
i	Satisfaction that we keep you informed about things that matter to you	53%	58%
1700	Agreement that `Croydon Council housing services treat me fairly	59%	58%
JOSON STATE OF THE PARTY OF THE	and with respect`	J9 /0	30 /0
	Satisfaction with housing services' approach to complaints handling (asked of those who said they'd made a complaint)	22%	26%

GET INVOLVED



Are you a Croydon Council tenant, leaseholder, or resident on a council estate? We want to hear your thoughts on our housing services!

Getting involved is easy and flexible—it's not just about attending meetings. You can connect with us online, in person, over the phone, or by post. Whether it's joining an estate walkabout, participating in a one-off focus group, or taking a few minutes to complete a quick survey, we love to hear from you! Check out the various ways you can engage with us!

- Estate walkabouts
- Neighbourhood voice scheme
- Mystery shopping
- Housing scrutiny panel

Scan the QR code to find out more: www.croydon.gov.uk/housing-get-involved



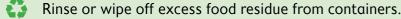
IMPROVING RECYCLING ON OUR COUNCIL ESTATES: Join the effort!

Croydon Housing is partnering with ReLondon to improve recycling practices. We are kicking off a pilot project at Croftleigh, Handcroft, and Church Road estates, where new recycling bins with clear signage will be strategically placed. This phased approach will help us identify the best improvements before expanding to other estates.



A major challenge we face with recycling is 'recycling contamination'—when incorrect items end up in recycling bins. A common example is when there's still food in a food packing. For instance, jars with bits of jam in it, pizza boxes with food residue or even takeaway containers that still have a lot of grease in them. While you don't need to wash your food packaging, a quick rinse to remove excess food residue helps. Small amounts of residue are fine, but too much contamination can render the whole bin unrecyclable.

Top tips for better recycling:



Remove any polystyrene or bubble wrap from cardboard boxes.

Take off plastic lids from carton boxes.

Check the recycling bin labels carefully before disposing of waste.

If your pizza box is greasy, tear off the greasy sections before recycling.

For more information on what you can and cannot recycle, visit: www.croydon.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/bins/recycling-bins

Join us in this crucial effort to reduce contamination and improve recycling—because every small action adds up to a big impact!





With longer days and warmer weather, it's the perfect time to dive into gardening! Whether you're nurturing a cozy indoor garden or transforming your outdoor space into a vibrant floral haven, we've got some practical tips to help you on your journey.

INDOOR GARDENING TIPS

1. Maximise natural light

Place your plants near windows that get plenty of sunlight. If natural light is limited, try using grow lights to give your plants a boost.

2. Water wisely

Overwatering is a common mistake. Make sure the top inch of soil is dry before watering again. Use pots with drainage holes to prevent water from stagnating at the bottom.

3. Choose the right plants

Pick low-maintenance indoor plants like snake plants, spider plants, or pothos.
These hardy plants can tolerate occasional neglect, making them perfect for beginners.

4. Regular dusting

Dust can block sunlight from reaching your plants. Wipe leaves with a damp cloth to keep them clean and healthy.

OUTDOOR GARDENING TIPS

1. Prepare your soil

Good soil is the foundation of a thriving garden. Enrich your soil with compost or create your own compost from kitchen scraps and garden waste.

2. Watering techniques

Water early in the morning to reduce evaporation and allow plants to absorb moisture before the day heats up.

3. Mulching

Apply a layer of mulch around your plants to retain moisture, suppress weeds, and regulate soil temperature. Organic mulches like wood chips or straw work great.

4. Protect against pests

Use organic pest control methods to keep your garden healthy. Encourage natural predators like ladybirds and hedgehogs, and use barriers or netting to protect crops from birds and insects.

Bonus tip! Planting for pollinators

Support local wildlife by planting pollinator-friendly plants like lavender, foxgloves, and sunflowers. These attract bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects.

We hope these tips inspire you on your gardening adventure! Happy gardening!

COMING UP THIS SUMMER: SUMMER OF FUN

For young people aged 8 and over (under 8's with parents)



29 July - 22 August 2024

Green Lane (North) - The Rugby Club, County Road (Off Green Lane)

- Thornton Heath, CR7 8HN
- 10am to 2pm
- Monday to Thursday

Tollgate/Longheath (Central / Ashburton) - Malling Close

- Oroydon, CR0 7YD
- 9am to 1pm
- Monday to Thursday

Wayside (New Addington) 21 Wayside, Fieldway

- New Addington, CR0 9DX
- 9am to 1pm
- Monday to Thursday

Shrublands Childrens Centre, Lilac Gardens

- Shirley, CR0 8NR
- 2pm to 6pm
- Monday to Thursday





For more information or to register, please contact PlayPlace:

t: 01689867366

e: info@playplace.org w: www.playplace.org





29 July - 2 August 2024

Tollers Community Centre, 23 Jutland Gardens

- Coulsdon, CR5 1DW
- (s) 9:30am 12:30pm
- Monday to Friday

29 July - 14 August

Regina Road Portland Bill Pre-School

- 🔾 110 Regina Rd, SE25 4TW
- 🕔 10am 1pm
- Monday to Wednesday

5 August - 14 August 2024

Handcroft, Eastney and Tamworth Handcroft Resource Centre

- 19 Hood Close, CR0 3SN
- 9:30am 12:30pm
 - Monday to Wednesday

KEEP IN TOUCH

We'd love to hear from you! Share the latest community activities happening on your estate with us. If you have an event to share or would like to invite us, please call us at **020 8726 6000**, ext: **44524** or email **residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk** and ask for the resident involvement team.

Large print: to receive Open House and other housing information in large print, please call 020 8726 6000 ext. 44524



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Also subscribe to our e-newsletter: www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/residents/ohnews