CROYDON HOUSING

# OPEN HOUSE



The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders



## **Foreword**



**Mayor Jason Perry Executive Mayor of Croydon** 



Councillor Lynne Hale **Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes** 

#### Welcome to the spring edition of Open House 2025!

As we approach the end of the financial year in April, we are excited to provide an overview of the steps we have taken to improve housing services.

We remain committed to improving the quality of your homes, and by April 2025 we will have invested over £30 million in home improvements to ensure they meet your needs and statutory standards. These works include planned renovations and upgrades to keep your homes safe, comfortable, and fit for purpose. This is an effective way to proactively address repair issues and prevent future problems. For a breakdown of what we have achieved, please see page 7.

While we work to improve the quality of our homes, it is equally important that we engage with you. That is why we have introduced a new and comprehensive Resident Engagement Strategy. This strategy works alongside our Housing Strategy and was developed in collaboration with our council tenants, leaseholders, and the Tenants' Participation Advisory Service (Tpas). We would like to thank everyone for their help and support in this process. The strategy reflects our commitment to a customer-focused approach in service delivery. We aim to rebuild trust and confidence in the services we provide. You can read more on the four pillars of our Resident Engagement Strategy on the next page.

We are especially proud that Croydon is leading the way in tackling social housing stigma. We are hosting the first-ever Stop Social Housing Stigma event for residents on 27th March 2025. This event provides an opportunity to come together, share experiences, and challenge negative stereotypes about council housing. We invite all council tenants to attend. Please see page **12** for details on how to register.

Finally, our resident involvement team will be holding several roadshows across the borough. If you have any questions or ideas for improving your estate, our housing team would love to hear from you. Do come and chat with us at one of our upcoming roadshows, which you can read more about on page 5.

## BE CAUTIOUS WHEN LETTING PEOPLE INTO YOUR HOMI

All our staff and contractors carry an official ID badge or lanyard featuring the Croydon logo and/or the contractor they represent. Always ask to see this before allowing anyone into your home. If they cannot provide one or if you have any concerns, do not let them in. Inform us immediately on by calling **020 8726 6101**.













## **NEW RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY** & RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT BRANDING



We are excited to announce a new Resident Engagement Strategy developed in collaboration with our residents and Tenants Participation Advisory Service (Tpas), a leading expert in resident engagement. This strategy is designed to strengthen how we listen to our tenants and leaseholders and ensure your experiences shape the way we deliver housing services.

Our vision is clear: every resident living in Croydon homes should feel heard and empowered to influence decisions that affect them. Whether it's shaping strategies, policies, or service delivery, your input will guide our actions. This commitment will be reflected across every team within the housing department, providing real value to our service users.

### Our strategy is built on four key pillars:



Croydon leadership drives a culture that requires and values resident influence and ensures resources are available.



Timely, respectful, two-way communication is in place with residents having evidence that their voice is heard and acted on.



Residents can trust staff, and staff are held accountable for listening and acting on residents' voices



Effective, transparent, structures and processes are in place for delivering services and for engagement opportunities.

This strategy reflects a customer-focused approach to engaging with you and ensuring that our services are tailored to meet your needs. With this goal in mind, we have also worked with residents to develop a new resident involvement banner (see above) that communicates our vision more clearly bringing our service users to the forefront.

A huge thank you to all our residents who have been involved in bringing our new strategy and banner to life! If you have feedback or want to get involved in future projects, please email: residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk or call: 020 8726 6100, ext: 44524.

You can read the full strategy by scanning the QR code or visiting: www.shorturl.at/gxmUm



## **INTRODUCING THE MEMBERS OF CIAP**

A warm shout out to the members of our new Customer Influence and Assurance Panel (CIAP)! In our autumn edition of Open House, we announced the launch of a new resident-led panel which will play a crucial role in shaping the future of housing in our borough, based on user experiences and holding us accountable to Customer Standards.

A huge thank you to all the residents who applied to join the panel. After a series of interviews, here are the panel members. Introducing:



Dave Mundy



Devina Dwyer



Les Parry



Marceline Kasongo



**Pauline Ahenfie** 



Ramona Beckford



Raymond Kaluga



Sharma Joseph



Teresa Yip



Yaw John Boateng

This panel will work alongside the council to review feedback, highlight areas for improvement and make sure services align with residents' needs. They have already had two productive meetings -setting the stage for impactful changes. Stay tuned for updates on their progress!



## Get involved

We are encouraging all our council tenants and leaseholders to get involved in making housing-related decisions. Getting involved isn't only about attending meetings. You can participate by completing online surveys, join an estate walkabout, attend a one-off focus group discussion, or spend a few minutes on the phone as a mystery shopper – you get to decide how you want to get involved and the level of your commitment!

To register your interest, scan the QR code, email: residentinvolvement@croydon.gov. uk or call: 020 8726 6100, ext: 44524. www.croydon.gov.uk/housing-get-involved



## RENT INCREASE FROM APRIL 2025 - THERE'S RENT SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Every year, we review rents in line with government guidelines and implement any necessary changes to ensure we can continue delivering our housing services.

This year there's an increase of 2.7 % which will take effect from **1 April 2025** so you will receive a letter explaining these changes.

We understand that this increase may be concerning, so we want to remind you of the financial support available. If you are experiencing financial difficulties, please contact us by emailing councilrents@croydon.gov.uk or calling 020 8726 6100 and ask for the income recovery team.





# HOW CAN WE IMPROVE YOUR ESTATE COME TALK TO US



Our housing team is coming to your estate! We will be holding roadshows across various council estates in the coming months so you can talk to us about what's working and what's not.

This is your opportunity to speak to our housing officers about:

- Repairs
- Community safety
- Welfare benefits
- Caretaking and more

These are drop-in sessions – no appointments needed! Just stop by and let us know what's going well and what we can do better.

Look out for the roadshow dates on your notice boards or contact us on: residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk or call: 020 8726 6100, ext: 44524.





### **DELIVERING MORE THAN REPAIRS:**

## HOW OUR CONTRACTORS ARE SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

It has been eighteen months since Croydon housing services began working with the repair contractors; Wates, Mears and K&T Heating (now Sureserve). As part of their contract with us, they pledged to invest in social value initiatives that would contribute to the development and wellbeing of the community. In simple words, social value is how companies give back to the community in which they work. Examples can be providing local job opportunities, using local suppliers and doing their bit to protect the environment.





Investing in young people & skills

K&T Heating (Sureserve) has supported four local young people through apprenticeships, giving them a chance to learn and develop new skills. They have also worked on community projects, including installing heating systems in community hubs, so residents can use them all year round for social events and training.





Creating safer & more inclusive spaces

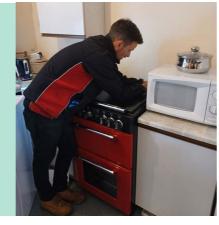
Wates has renovated the communal lounge at Sevenoaks estate installing new flooring, modern blinds and comfortable furniture. They also cleared the garden at Laxton Court. Wates, alongside K&T Heating, supported the Council in transforming a community space at Tamworth Estate, creating a place where residents can meet and connect.





Improving
local
facilities and
supporting
community
initiatives

Mears has redecorated a communal laundry at Ashwood Gardens, a sheltered development in New Addington to make it more welcoming for residents. They have also supported us with local charities like Good Food Matters, based in New Addington, to transform an unused space into a new kitchen and working area. This will help the charity provide more cooking courses.



By honouring their social value pledges, these contractors are supporting our ongoing work to make Croydon a better place for everyone. We look forward to continuing to work with them and building a stronger, more vibrant Croydon for years to come.

## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF OUR COUNCIL HOMES FOR YOU

Croydon Housing has been making significant investments to improve the quality of homes for residents. By April 2025, we will have spent over £30 million on essential upgrades, ensuring homes are safer and meet both residents' needs and statutory standards.





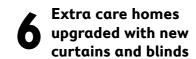


89 new kitchens installed

60 new bathrooms fitted

12 pitched roofs installed

Sheltered housing blocks with new communal flooring and refurbished community rooms



43 Minor estate improvements carried out



62 properties with brand-new windows



18 blocks with new communal flooring



232 new front entrance doors fitted

In our previous Open House (Autumn edition), we informed you about our partnership with John Rowan and Partners (JRP) to assess our properties and identify areas needing improvement. So far, 68% of tenants' homes have been surveyed, and 93.8% of our council homes meet the government's Decent Homes Standard. While we continue working to improve the remaining 6.2%, we are proud to be getting closer to our set target.

## YOUR HOME SURVEY APPOINTMENT

If you receive a letter or card from John Rowan and Partners (JRP) stating they missed you, please get in touch to book an appointment. The easiest way is to scan the QR code included in the letter with your smartphone. This will take you directly to the JRP website, where you can select your surveyor and schedule a convenient time.



You can also:

Call: **074 6449 0748** 

Email: jrpscssurveyappointments@jrp.co.uk
Scan the QR code or visit: www.shorturl.at/HbqnJ





## FIRE SAFETY SHOULD ALWAYS BE AT THE FRONT OF ALL OUR MINDS

Your safety remains our top priority. We are working closely with the London Fire Brigade to apply lessons learned from Grenfell and strengthen fire safety measures. We hosted two fire safety training events at the vacant 1–87 Regina Road, providing residents with valuable practical tips on fire safety.

Our team is currently conducting fire door assessments. We recognise that fire safety is a shared responsibility so as we continue these assessments and improvements, here's what you need to know about fire doors and how you can play a role in keeping your home safe.

#### What are fire doors?

Fire doors are specially designed to withstand fire for an extended period, preventing flames and smoke from spreading. They act as barriers to protect escape routes and provide crucial time for safe evacuation. You'll find fire doors in communal areas such as stairwells and corridors, as well as flat entrance doors in some of our council buildings. Fire doors are easy to identify by their self-closing mechanisms, which ensure they shut automatically.



#### What we are doing

We are actively assessing fire doors across our estates and ensuring they meet the latest safety standards. Our ongoing Fire Door Inspection Programme includes:

- Quarterly inspections of communal fire doors in council buildings over 11 metres tall (typically five storeys or more).
- Annual inspections of flat entrance doors in these buildings.
- Upgrading fire doors where necessary, prioritising higher-risk buildings.

## Fire door keep closed Do not block or wedge open

A maintained

fire door can keep fire out for

a minimum of

30 minutes

#### How you can help

Fire doors only work if they are used correctly. Here's what you can do to help keep your home safe:

- Always keep fire doors closed never prop them open with door restrainers or other objects. A closed fire door slows the spread of fire and smoke.
- Do not tamper with self-closing mechanisms they are designed to ensure doors close automatically in an emergency.
- Keep fire doors clear never block fire doors with furniture, bikes, or other items, as this can prevent safe evacuation.

you notice a damaged fire door or self-closing mechanism, report it immediately through our online portal or repairs service:

By working together, we can make our homes safer for everyone. If 020 8726 6101.

### **KEEPING YOU SAFE:**

## TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a key priority in keeping your estate safe. The council has put further measures in place to tackle actions that harm or disregard others' wellbeing across the borough. This includes vandalism, aggression, theft, and other disruptive or harmful acts. If you witness such behaviour, we encourage you to report it, whether it's on your estate or elsewhere.

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:



#### **NOISE AND FLY-TIPPING**

After receiving complaints of ongoing anti-social behaviour including screaming, shouting and dumping rubbish, we took action against the perpetrators. Despite several attempts to work with them to reduce and stop these behaviours, the issues persisted. As a result, we filed for a property repossession with the court which was granted in October 2024. The tenants were evicted, bringing relief to the affected residents. We are now preparing to re-let the property.

#### **FLY-TIPPING**

Croydon's pollution team receives alerts when venues in Croydon request temporary event notices for late-night openings, to sell alcohol or hot food, or provide entertainment. Following complaints

about noise from previous events at two venues in the borough, the team recently submitted objections to new applications for events at those venues. The borough's Licensing Sub-Committee reviewed the applications and the decision was made not to grant the licences.

**NOISE** 

In January, following reports of large amounts of rubbish in the front garden of a property in Thornton Heath, the Council's licensing team issued the landlord with a Community Protection Notice Warning (CPNW). Local residents had shared photos of the mess, including black sacks and rubble from recent works, on social media. A CPNW can be issued when someone's behaviour is antisocial and negatively impacts the local community. Upon receiving the warning, the landlord responded quickly by clearing the area.

**Executive Mayor of Croydon, Jason Perry**: "Antisocial behaviour can cause real misery for people, and we will not tolerate it in Croydon. As seen in these three examples, the Council can respond to a wide range of antisocial behavioural issues. If you're experiencing it, report it, and if we have the evidence and the powers to deal with it, we will"

Find out about different forms of antisocial behaviour and how to report them: www.croydon.gov.uk/community-and-safety/safety/crime-and-antisocialbehaviour/antisocial-behaviour



# IMPORTANT: UPGRADE YOUR RADIO TELESWITCH (RTS) ELECTRICITY METER BEFORE 30 JUNE 2025

Do you use a Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) at your home? A RTS enables certain electricity meters to switch between peak and off-peak rates. This service is managed by individual electricity suppliers however, it is set to be discontinued on 30 June 2025. If you use RTS, please contact your energy supplier to switch over to a smart meter before the deadline, as your heating and hot water systems may stop working after this date.

#### How to identify if you have RTS:

- Look for a separate switch box near your electricity meter labelled "Radio Teleswitch.
- Consider if your home uses electric storage heaters or has no gas supply.
- Check if you're on tariffs like Economy 7, Economy 10, or Total Heat Total Control (by contacting your energy supplier)

#### Contact your electricity supplier:

If unsure about your meter type, reach out to your supplier promptly.



Arrange an upgrade to a smart meter to ensure uninterrupted service.

For free and impartial advice about your energy supply, contact Citizens Advice.

Ensure your energy supply remains uninterrupted by acting before the **30 June 2025** deadline.

## WINDOW RESTRICTORS MAKING YOUR HOMES SAFER

Our window restrictors project to ensure your safety is still ongoing. 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, helping to keep you and your household safe.

#### 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 and can only be disengaged with a specific tool/key for added security. We will also check to make sure existing window restrictors are working properly and replace where needed.

Our contractors will be contacting you to arrange an appointment to visit and inspect your windows. Always check the ID cards of the contractors before letting them into your home.

## **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

We continue to collaborate with residents to enhance the grounds management services we provide. Our recent service review with our residents' grounds maintenance panel (between July and November 2024), recommended procuring an external contractor to provide grounds maintenance services.

Our team is now working to procure a longer-term contract to ensure that grass cutting and shrub maintenance on our estates is carried out on a regular basis over the coming years. We expect this contract to be in place from **July 2025**.

Until then, the grass cutting services will start in **March** (depending on weather conditions) and will be provided across our estates from **April to June**, every four-five weeks. We will make the schedule available on your notice boards.



### **DEEP CLEAN AT COLLEGE GREEN**

Our caretaking team carried out a deep clean at College Green, thoroughly cleaning the interior communal areas and removing all unwanted items. Their efforts have made a noticeable difference in creating clean and well-kept communal areas for residents.

We have received positive feedback from residents, as well as from the ward councillor and visitors, who have recognised the improvements.











One of the biggest challenges our team faces is residents leaving belongings in communal areas. This doesn't only make cleaning difficult but also is a fire hazard.

We ask all residents to keep these areas clear. It's a breach of contract to have unauthorised items in communal areas.





## TACKLING SOCIAL HOUSING STIGMA

**STOP** 

**SOCIAL HOUSING** 

**STIGMA** 

**JOIN US ON 27TH MARCH IN CROYDON** 

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Have you ever been a victim of negative stereotypes or experienced any form of disrespect or judgment because you live in a council home?

Croydon Council is partnering with the nationwide 'Stop Social Housing Stigma' (SSHS) campaign to challenge and end social housing stigma. We are working alongside others to drive meaningful change in how social housing and its residents are perceived. Join us on Thursday, 27th March 2025 as we host a residents-led forum to hear your stories and plan a way forward.

#### What does this mean to you?

This campaign is about giving council tenants a platform to share their lived

experiences and allowing their voices to be heard. It takes a twofold approach: raising awareness of the impact of social housing stigma on tenants' lives and reshaping the narrative with positive experiences.

CROYDON CROYDON

This is a tenant-led movement, and our role as a council is to provide a safe space for you to freely speak up and share ideas on how we can help tackle this stigma. By engaging with you, we aim to create a powerful, collective movement towards fairness and dignity for all social housing residents.

We are proud to have one of our residents co-chairing this campaign – Shout out to Yaw John Boateng!



I currently serve as the Deputy Chair of the Stop Social Housing Stigma Campaign. I got involved because I wanted to help amplify the residents' voices. I want to contribute to ensuring that residents are respected and valued by their landlords and that their lived experiences play a key role in shaping policies and services.

Yaw John Boateng

We're inviting our council tenants to join the national campaign with the first event kicking off in Croydon! Refreshments and lunch will be provided.

Date: Thursday, 27 March 2025

Time: 9:30am to 1:30pm

Location: Croydon (register to get the full address)

Scan the QR code to register: www.shorturl.at/DoyD3

If you have questions or require assistance attending the event, please email: **residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk** or call: **020 8726 6100**, ext: **44524**. See you soon!

To find out more about the campaign, visit: www.stopsocialhousingstigma.org

SHOUT OUT TO DAVID PALMER



Huge congratulations to David Palmer for receiving a Community Champion Award from the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH, October 2024).

David is a passionate advocate for Auckland Rise/Church Road Estate, Crystal Palace, and the wider community. His 28+ years of volunteering—working with Croydon Housing as well as other institutions—have helped improve safety and ensure that residents' voices are heard in decision-making.



I am truly honoured to receive this award. It is very fulfilling to know that residents feel listened to and that their needs are taken seriously. I find great purpose in helping to find solutions that improve our community and bring smiles to people's faces. Volunteering does not only allow me to contribute to my community, but it also helps me feel connected to something bigger than myself. Regardless of my health challenges, I will continue to stay committed to making a positive impact on the lives of others.

## FIELDWAY - RESIDENTS' NEW YEAR PARTY

The community development team, with support from the resident involvement team, hosted two New Year parties for our residents of sheltered housing at Fieldway, New Addington. It was a wonderful way to celebrate the New Year — reuniting old friends and fostering new connections in a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Residents enjoyed a delicious three-course meal and a game of bingo, with prizes awarded to the winners. The event created a heartwarming start to the year.

We received very positive feedback from the residents and look forward to finding more ways to keep our sheltered residents engaged and strengthen their community ties.









# BECOME A HOUSING SERVICE MYSTERY SHOPPER HELP SHAPE HOUSING SERVICES!

Are you passionate about improving our housing service delivery? If so, why not join our team of mystery shoppers?

As a mystery shopper, you will go undercover and conduct anonymous evaluations of council housing services based on real-life scenarios. This could involve calling our contact centre and speaking with a member of staff or making an in-person visit as a service user. You will then record your experience and provide feedback to our team.

The insights from your experience as a customer will help us improve our services and enhance overall customer satisfaction for all residents.

#### What we offer:

- Full training and support
- Flexible hours to fit your schedule
- Reimbursement of any expenses incurred during assignments

Our recent mystery shopping exercise of both the tenancy and income services have resulted in improvements.



#### Mystery shopper finding:

"Some staff I spoke to did not give their full name or the department they are in."

#### Action taken

We have provided additional training for staff to improve corporate greeting, including call handling and other customer facing roles.

#### Mystery shopper finding:

"Some staff I contacted for help did not provide a comprehensive overview of financial support available to me although it was needed."

#### Action taken

We have introduced targets for staff to increase referrals to income support funds & welfare benefits advice.

#### Mystery shopper finding:

"I waited too long on the phone before my call was answered."

#### Action taken

We have adjusted our call centre rotas to increase the number of staff on phone duty during busiest hours. We have also improved the management of staff absences. Abandonment rates (customers hanging-up) now down by 50%.

#### How to apply:

If you are interested, contact the resident involvement team! Email: residentinvolvement@ croydon.gov.uk or call: 020 8726 6100, ext: 44524. We can't wait to hear from you!

# **K&T HEATING NOW SURESERVE COMPLIANCE SOUTH**

K&T Heating, our gas and heating contractor, has officially changed its name to Sureserve Compliance South. For a short while, you will continue to see the old K&T Heating vans and uniforms as they move over to the new branding with the new Sureserve Compliance logo.

If you have a gas or heating appointment, please check the contractor's name badge to confirm their identity before allowing them into your home. You can also call: 020 8269 4500 to confirm their identity.



# ARE YOU 18-35 AND LIVING IN A COUNCIL HOME? LET'S HEAR YOUR VOICE!

Young people's perspectives are vital in shaping the future of council housing in Croydon.

Decisions about repairs, rent, antisocial behaviour, and community initiatives affect you — so why not have a say?

There are many ways to get involved. You can choose how you want to get involved and to what extent—just register your interest.



Email: residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk

Call: **020 8726 6000** ext. **44524** 

Visit for more information: www.croydon.gov.uk/housing-get-involved

## **DISABILITY BENEFITS**



Did you know that you may be eligible for disability benefits if you have a disability or care for someone who does? There are benefits available to help you manage the extra costs if you fall into this category. These benefits are not dependent on your income or savings.

If you would like to learn more about what benefits you may be eligible for, please contact our welfare rights advisers at: **counciltenantswba@croydon.gov.uk**. Alternatively, you can call: **020 8726 6000**, ext: **44524** to speak to an officer who will forward your details to our welfare rights team.

## LIVING INDEPENDENTLY DOESN'T MEAN BEING ALONE



Do you know of CarelinePlus? It is a council-run 24/7 emergency alarm service that connects you to help instantly—day or night. This is perfect for older adults, people with disabilities or anyone feeling vulnerable at home. With a simple pendant or wristband, members can call for assistance anytime.

Once the pendant is pressed, the alarm alerts our 24-hour call monitoring centre, where trained operators assess your needs and

contact the council's response team. Whether it's a fall, feeling unwell, or needing urgent support, help is always on hand. CarelinePlus offers support to people in need while ensuring the peace of mind to family and carers.





## TAMWORTH ESTATE FUNDRAISING - SPRING JUMBLE SALE

The Tamworth Estate Residents' Association is organising a boot sale event to raise funds for the estate. They are inviting residents in and out of the estate to join in and make it a success. Don't be quick to clear out all your stuff! Come sell them and support our community while doing so.

Date: Saturday, 3 May 2025

Time: 10am - 2pm

Venue: TERA Community Hub and Otterbourne Road

Car Park

Note: Bring your own table and anything you would like to sell. Spaces will be £5 for residents and £10 for non-residents.

