

Raven Times

“Welcome to the Autumn issue of your Raven Times!”

As we come to the end of Summer (yes, apparently that was it!), in this issue we look back at the fantastic community events we were part of in our wardens' round up on page 3 and announce the winners of our gardening competition on page 8.

We've got details of our new gas contractor on page 2, letting you know how we're managing the transition over to them and what you can expect moving forward.

We hope you enjoy this issue and don't forget you can contribute ideas to the community noticeboard feature by emailing raventimes@ravenht.org.uk.”

Joanne Silner

Head of Customer Experience
Raven Housing Trust

#BeLikeBetty



Betty loves MyRaven.
She can book a repair,
pay her rent and do
so much more.



MyRaven
Register here:
myraven.ravenht.org.uk

Community Noticeboard

Page 2

Introducing the new Insight to Action Panel

Page 7

Introducing our new gas contractor

We're pleased to let you know that from 1st October 2023, all annual gas safety appointments, gas servicing and boiler repairs for Raven properties will be booked with Gas Call Services instead of Smith & Byford.

We'll be working with Smith & Byford to ensure any outstanding work is completed. Smith & Byford will also continue with our new boiler installation programme alongside Gas Call Services until October 2024, this programme will then be fully taken over by Gas Call Services.

You can report gas boiler repairs and discuss annual gas safety checks by calling the dedicated Raven customer Gas Call Services number: 0330 002 1169 from 1st October 2023.

Your safety is our priority and we appreciate your support in working with Gas Call Services to allow them access to your home to carry out their safety checks and repairs.

Community Noticeboard

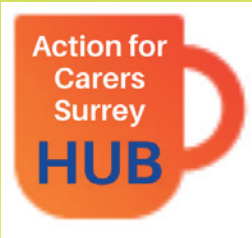
The Raven Times community noticeboard includes things that are happening in your local community. It doesn't have to be a Raven initiative. It could be a new community group that's been set up, an event or activity you're planning that you want to spread the word about, or a community event that was a great success.

Please email your suggestions to raventimes@ravenht.org.uk.

Action for Carers

The group runs regular free drop in events in Banstead, Epsom, Horley, Caterham and Leatherhead. Here you can get information, advice and support on your caring role and enjoy a chat and a cuppa.

Visit the website for upcoming events - www.actionforcarers.org.uk



Action for
Carers
Surrey
HUB

Epsom and Ewell Phab

The Epsom and Ewell Phab club provides activities for young (8-16 years old) disabled and non-disabled people such as sports, arts, crafts, games, drama and dance.

The group meets on a Friday evening, more information can be found on their website - www.epsom-phab-site.herokuapp.com

Redhill Women's Group

The Surrey Minority Ethnic Group runs a weekly women's group in Redhill. It's a great opportunity to meet new friends, and to get involved in special events and activities. It can also help women to develop new employability skills, and learn English with certified tutors.

The group meets every Monday from 9:15am-12:30pm at Surrey Choices, 49 Holland Close, Redhill, RH1 1HT.

The MYTI Club

Supported by our Brighter Community Fund, the MYTI club runs weekly youth club sessions at The Phoenix Centre in Preston for young people aged from 8-14 years. Held every Friday evening from 4:15-7:15pm, there's a brilliant programme of events including cooking, karaoke, arts and crafts, as well as physical activities.

Find out more and sign up for membership at - www.myticlub.org.uk



What's happening in your communities – an update from our wardens



Summer events

We've been busy at lots of community events over the last few months, and our smoothie bikes have proven to be as popular as ever! We've braved the not so wonderful summer weather but it's been fun to see so many of you at these brilliant events.

Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to organise them all.

Our thoughts are now going to turn to our Christmas events – keep an eye on our social media for more information on these.



Hooley Residents Association noticeboards

We've also been busy in Hooley installing new community noticeboards for the Hooley Residents Association. Members of the Hooley Residents Association raised funds through metal recycling and from the Reigate and Banstead Borough Council Community Infrastructure Levy. When you're next in and around Hooley, keep an eye out for the boards and details of what's happening in the local community.



Keeping you safe

One of our key priorities as wardens is to keep you safe. When we're doing block checks we're looking for items in communal areas that could cause a safety risk and will put warning notices on them to be removed. We're doing this to keep you safe – items such as prams, bikes and shoe storage are a fire risk. Not only would they be fuel for a fire, they would also make it difficult to exit in the case of an emergency. We appreciate your support in keeping communal areas clear, please make sure you use the dedicated pram and bike storage appropriately and help to keep everyone safe.



Meet Sian!

We have a quick chat with Sian to find out what it means to be a Tenancy Services Officer at Raven.



What's the main role of a TSO at Raven?

Our team is here to look after tenants and their tenancies. We're here to help you from when you first move into a Raven home and right throughout your tenancy. We can help you manage any changes and check you have everything you need for a successful tenancy with us.

What does the TSO do at the start of a tenancy?

When you first move into your new property your TSO will do your sign up, checking you have everything you need and making sure you understand the rules of your tenancy. For most tenancy types, we'll get in touch with you and come and see you after one month, four months and a year to see how you're getting on.

What else can TSOs help customers with?

If there are any changes you want to make to your tenancy, we can help you. Perhaps you want to change from a joint tenancy to a sole tenancy, or maybe the other way round. Or if you need to add or remove occupants from a tenancy then you can also let us know - for example if you have a new baby, or a child has grown up and is leaving home or if someone is no longer with us. If you want to pass your tenancy to someone else we can also let you know if that's possible and help you arrange this if it is.

"We're on hand to give general advice on your tenancy, on housing and manage home exchanges."

We work closely with the Tenancy Enforcement Team to make sure customers are following their tenancy agreement. We used to handle low level ASB but this now sits with Tenancy Enforcement but we do continue to support them as needed.

What do you enjoy most about being a TSO?

I enjoy building relationships and helping you with your tenancy. Housing can be complicated so I like being able to help and point you in the right direction to get what you need and help you understand. It's also fantastic being able to watch you turn an empty house into your home.

How long have you worked at Raven?

11 years – this is my third role at Raven. I worked in a couple of other teams before a natural progression opportunity opened for me in Tenancy Services.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I am pretty busy outside of work! You might hear me if you're ever listening to Radio Redhill at East Surrey Hospital – I am a presenter, producer and head of PR there. I'm also a Beaver Scout Leader in Reigate. Alongside this I'm a big football fan and am a Football Supporters' Association Women's Network Member, National Council Member and Board member. I've recently joined the Fan Advisory Board at Tottenham Hotspur FC representing women's season ticket holders. I'm also Chair of the Tottenham Hotspur Women's Supporter's Club, I co-host N17 Women podcast, am Secretary for the Proud Lilywhites, official LGBTQ+ Supporter's Group for Spurs. I think that's enough to keep me out of trouble for now!

Your Tenancy Services Officers

Meet your Tenancy Services Officers (TSOs), the team that is here to work with you to help you manage and maintain your tenancies successfully. The team is split by geographical areas so you can easily know who you need to speak with about your Raven tenancy.



Angela Stirrat
Chipstead, Hooley, Merstham, Tandridge, North Redhill, East Redhill (Ladbroke Road, Frenches Road) and Dorking. Angela works Tuesday – Thursday.



Jill Ducker
All sheltered housing schemes, Jill also looks after some other tenancies near to these schemes.



Katrina Andrews
Crawley, Earlswood, Horley (except Court Lodge area), Horsham, Mid Sussex (Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, Lindfield, Handcross) and Salfords.



Katrina Sinnick
Court Lodge area of Horley, Redhill, Reigate, St John's and Woodhatch.



Sian Wallis
Banstead, Epsom, Kingswood and Tadworth.

You can contact your TSO by raising an enquiry on your MyRaven online account or by calling 0300 123 3399.

Supporting you with employment

We understand that it isn't always easy to know where to start when it comes to getting paid work. That's why our employment support team is on hand to help with:

- Understanding what might be stopping you from finding work
- Identifying volunteering and work experience opportunities to develop your skills
- Advice for your CV, interviews and skills

With the cost of living on the increase, many people are also looking to get better paid work. Our employment advisors are able to support you with accessing opportunities to develop your skills and confidence to be able to get these higher paying jobs.

We hold regular free drop in employment support sessions in Redhill and Merstham. To find out when the next sessions are and to register your interest, call us on **0300 123 3399**.

Livy's* story

Livy joined one of our employment programmes back in October 2020. At the time she was a single mother, living at the women's refuge, following escape from a violent husband.

Livy had moved to a new area with no local family or friends. She needed to find work to give her income so that she could find a home for herself and her son.

When we began working with Livy, she had lost confidence and was worried about finding work. Her advisor helped her to update her CV and discussed various job opportunities in the healthcare sector as she had a lot of experience in the industry.

We supported Livy to look at various jobs and apprenticeships and online training courses. Livy was offered an apprenticeship in May, which she accepted. We helped Livy to apply for a bursary, which was successful and the Pathways to Employment

programme also helped pay for her initial travel to college and we put her in touch with Moneywise for further budgeting and benefit advice.

Livy wrote to us to thank us for the support we gave her: **"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the team for all the help, support, and encouragement my son and I have received over the years. I have managed to finish my nursing course with a distinction. It's official! I managed to apply for a local job with your team's CV guidance (I am now working at East Surrey Hospital)."**

Our Pathways to Employment programme has now come to an end but we can still provide employment support and let you know about future programmes we're planning if you contact us on **0300 123 3399** or raise an enquiry through your **MyRaven** online account.

*name has been changed to protect the identity.

Preventing condensation in your home



Keeping your home well ventilated and preventing condensation is the most important thing you can do to avoid damp and mould appearing. If there's a build up of damp and mould in your home you might become unwell, which is something we want to avoid.

As we near the end of summer and enter into autumn, it's a good time to check your home is well ventilated, and report any issues that you notice. You can raise a repair on your **MyRaven** online account or call us on **0300 123 3399**.

We also recommend you consider the ways you can reduce condensation in your home such as:



Cook with pan lids on and turn the heat down once the water has boiled



Use the minimum amount of water needed to cook vegetables, pasta, rice or potatoes on the hob



When filling the bath, start with cold water then add the hot (this reduces the amount of steam)



Keep trickle vents open on your windows, or leave a small window slightly open



Close the bathroom and kitchen doors when these rooms are being used



Keep rooms warm enough to avoid condensation



Avoid drying clothes on radiators and dry them outdoors wherever possible. If you do have to dry them indoors, put them in the bathroom on an airer with the door closed and window open, or extractor fan on

For more advice, visit our website www.ravenht.org.uk/preventing-condensation

Changes to Universal Credit and how it impacts you

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are continuing to move eligible working age people on to Universal Credit. If you're claiming just tax credits you'll receive a letter from the DWP before the end of March 2024 telling you that your tax credit claim will end and that you need to claim universal credit instead.

Those receiving tax credits along with other benefits will be moved on to Universal Credit in the coming years. However, some people could be better off claiming Universal Credit now rather than waiting to be moved. Please remember if you make a claim and find out you would be worse off with Universal Credit, you cannot go back to your old benefits.

If you'd like more information about how the change of benefits will impact you, please contact our Moneywise team on **0300 123 3399** or raise a request on your **MyRaven** account. Our team is here to help you make sure you receive what you're entitled to.

The Government website has more information about what you need to do if you receive a notification telling you that your benefits are changing - www.gov.uk/guidance/tax-credits-and-some-benefits-are-ending-move-to-universal-credit

Introducing the new Insight to Action Panel



We understand we don't always get it right, but instead of saying sorry and moving on, it's important to us that we learn from things that go wrong and listen to what you're saying about us.

There are lots of ways we make sure the customer voice is heard through Raven; our Customer Voice Panel, satisfaction surveys and our We Hear You campaign just to name a few.

We've now built on this by creating our new Insight to Action Panel. The panel includes senior managers, members of our complaints team and the Executive Director of Customer Experience. They meet monthly to discuss what we learn from conversations with customers, complaints, and survey feedback and most importantly, how we can implement new processes to create a better, more positive customer experience.

With this panel we hope to improve the quality of the service we provide to you, to learn and improve from feedback and complaints and further build a positive relationship with you, our customers.

What have we done so far?

The panel heard that customer communications in ASB cases were very factual and weren't sympathetic to the human impact of the ASB issue.

So we're now looking at the tone of voice and language used in ASB letters to customers.

If you have feedback you'd like us to investigate, please let us know by raising an enquiry on your **MyRaven** online account or call us on **0300 123 3399**.

Ask Raven's Chief Executive



It's important to us that you feel you're able to ask us questions about Raven, our plans, our services and how we work.

We want to hear your thoughts and answer any concerns you may have, so in the next issue of Raven Times (out in December) we're going to have a Q&A with our Chief Executive, Jonathan Higgs, your opportunity to ask any questions you have.

Now is your chance to ask Jonathan anything – whether it's about the challenges our organisation faces, our plans for the future or something that impacts you day to day like estate cleaning or community facilities. Whatever it is, we want to hear from you!

Email your questions to **raven.comms@ravenht.org.uk** with the subject 'Ask Jonathan' or call **0300 123 3399** and let one of our advisors know your question.

Celebrating the winners of our Gardening Competition

Thank you to everyone who entered our 2023 Gardening Competition, sponsored by Groundscapes, and a huge congratulations to all the winners. It was amazing to see what those who entered have created, from small container or balcony gardens, to welcoming and inclusive communal gardens for neighbours to enjoy.

Our judges – Michael from Groundscapes and Sapna from Raven – spent the day visiting our finalists' gardens, hearing the stories behind the gardens and meeting the people who have worked hard to create them.

Sapna, Marketing and Communications Manager at Raven enjoyed visiting the gardens: **"It was a privilege to be a judge for our gardening competition. Each garden creation had its own special story behind it, and it was inspiring to see the tremendous effort and love each gardener has poured into making their space look amazing. Well done to all the entries!"**

Michael, Operations Manager at Groundscapes, commented: **"The gardens I saw were inspirational and the time and effort the residents have put in is amazing, they should be proud of themselves."**

Congratulations to all of our winners - we hope you agree how fantastic they look. Whether you only have space for a couple of containers, or want to take on a community gardening project – we hope these gardens inspire you to get gardening and we look forward to seeing even more entries next year!

The winners

Communal garden



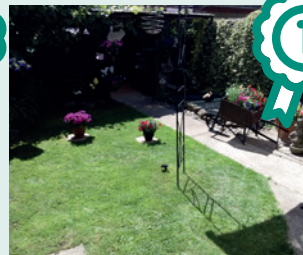
Winner: Merland Green, Tadworth

Container garden



Winner: Patricia, Merstham

Back garden



Winner: George, Merstham

Front garden



Winner: John, Tadworth



Runner up: Court Lodge Road, Horley



Runner up: Steve and Lynne, Tadworth



Runner up: Jan, Reigate



Winner: Marlis, Merstham – age 10

What do you want to see in Raven Times?

This is your quarterly magazine to show you what's going on at Raven and in our communities. We hope you enjoy having a read of it over a cuppa! We'd love to know what you'd like to see more and less of to make this something you find informative and useful. Drop us an email raventimes@ravenht.org.uk with any feedback – thank you!

Call: 0300 123 3399 Facebook messenger: RavenHousingTrust

Email: raven@ravenht.org.uk Address: Raven House, 29 Linkfield Lane, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 1SS



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