

SUMMER 2022

# RavenTimes

10 years of  
Community  
Investment

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This year at Raven it's all about anniversaries. We turned 20 back in March and this October we celebrate 10 years of our Community Investment programme.

We're proud that over the last decade we have committed over £6m to supporting people and communities to thrive. Over the years, we've delivered youth work, provided help with money and benefits, offered employment support, help with computer skills and much more. Our teams and local partners work closely to do as much as we can for you and your communities. Here's what we're most proud of delivering in the last 10 years.

**Money and benefits**

The Moneywise team has helped secure over £12m in benefits and grants for you, our customers, ensuring you get everything you're entitled to and providing support to manage debts.

**Employment support**

Our employment support projects have expanded thanks to over £1.5m in funding from sources including the Big Lottery. By helping with childcare costs, volunteer placements, qualifications and training, the team has supported 425 people into education, training, work and better paid employment since the programme started.

**Helping customers stay in their homes**

Occasionally customers get into extreme difficulties trying to manage their tenancies. Our Parashoot team is jointly funded by local authorities and Raven, supporting people at risk of losing their homes. We offer up to six months of intensive support and have supported 1,945 people to remain in their homes since the service started.

**Getting online**

Our Digital Inclusion team works with people to help with digital skills and provide kit where it's otherwise unaffordable. During the pandemic they helped run the 'Level Up' project, providing 1,200 laptops to children for home schooling.

**Settling in**

Moving home can be expensive and stressful, so we created the Settling in Service which has supported 50 customers over the last 18 months. This includes helping people get off to the right start with affordable furniture, understanding tenancy responsibilities, access to grants and support with rent and benefits.

If you would benefit from any of these services please get in touch via MyRaven, emailing [raven@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:raven@ravenht.org.uk) or calling 0300 123 3399. We're here to help!

**#20Years OfPurpose** Anniversary At the heart of local communities

As part of our 20th anniversary celebrations, we made a pledge to do 20 positive acts by the end of the year. Staff are rising to the challenge of going above and beyond – here's some examples of what we've been up to...



**20 Easter eggs** donated to a local women's refuge we work closely with, in response to their appeal to ensure all children living there had an Easter treat.



**20 flowers** planted by Neighbourhood Warden Conrad, working with residents to spruce up an area on Cromwell Estate, Redhill.



**20 swift bird nesting boxes** installed on Knighton Road, Earlswood, supporting our environmental goals.



Staff donations organised by the Income team to a local **food bank** to support customers affected by the rise in living costs.



A team effort by staff to help resident Ann **declutter her flat** at Portland House sheltered scheme, Merstham; ensuring she has enough space to live comfortably in her home.



Neighbourhood Wardens **clearing a resident's garden** in Merstham who was struggling with a bereavement.

If you know of someone or a cause that could benefit from one of our positive acts then please let us know by emailing [raven@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:raven@ravenht.org.uk).

# Family return home after fire

A family celebrated returning to their home following a fire that swept through a row of houses in Merstham last year. The blaze, which started in a neighbouring property, spread through four houses. One of the homes damaged is owned by Raven and is the family home of this young girl who was living there with her parents.



Following extensive repair work, including a new roof, new kitchen, rewiring and complete redecoration, the family is now over the moon to be home again and settling back into family life.

They were left with nothing following the blaze, but thankfully a local support group set up a donation hub for clothes, food and household items and a fundraising site was launched, raising over £11,000 in just two days to help the families affected by the fire.

Mum said: **"Until this happens to you, you have no idea of the cost to replace just basic items in a home. We have been really lucky; neighbours and friends in the Merstham area clubbed together, raising funds to help all of us affected by the fire, so this will help us refurnish our house. We are just so happy to be home."**

Their daughter added: **"The fire was really scary and I was sad, but everyone was super kind and helped us lots. I am so happy to be back in our home now."**

Following the fire in June 2021, the family was offered alternative accommodation but chose to stay with relatives while work was carried out, wishing to return home to their family and friends in the community rather than move somewhere new.

Sue Young, Head of Housing Services, said: **"It's been a traumatic and unsettling time for the family and so to see them back home is wonderful."**

**"On a practical note, it has highlighted the importance of customers ensuring they have contents insurance to cover their belongings and rent in the case of an emergency such as this."**

**Unfortunately, at the time of the fire the family did not have contents insurance, so they are now keen to urge others to make sure the same doesn't happen to them."**

Raven insures the bricks and mortar of its properties, so the repairs to their home were covered by our insurance, but unfortunately this does not extend to your contents or rent.

Although this situation occurred following an accidental fire, this is a good time to remind all customers of the importance of allowing us or our contractors into your home to carry out essential gas and safety checks. They are a legal requirement and tenancy obligation. Failure to do so could lead to serious consequences such as an injunction or a fire.

# #WeHearYou – making change together

A new campaign which aims to make Raven even more open and transparent, putting you, our customers, at the heart of everything we do.

The #WeHearYou initiative will keep you informed about the changes we're making as a result of your feedback. We're listening in all sorts of ways, such as surveys, customer panels and learning from complaints. Please get in touch and give us your feedback as we strive to do better. There are lots of opportunities to tell us what you think. Look out for the #WeHearYou hashtag on social media and make sure your voice is heard in shaping your services.

## Complaints

Although we deliver great services most of the time, we're not perfect and we know sometimes we don't get things right, which is why we look upon our complaints process as a way to gather valuable insight. Complaints enable us to put things right and learn from experiences. If you don't tell us why you are unhappy then we simply won't know where we can improve. You can be absolutely reassured that this will never be held against you. Changes we have made so far include:

- Updating our complaints policy so a positive approach to complaints is encouraged. You'll be listened to and we'll make improvements where we need to
- We've made it easier to complain if you need to. It is now possible to raise and monitor complaints through the new MyRaven
- We now routinely publish changes as a result of complaints on our website

- We have identified, through complaints, that we need to improve the way we work with people when they are required to move out of their home for repairs. We've changed the procedure to improve communication with customers.

## Customer Voice Panel

Another vital method of feedback is our Customer Voice Panel - a group of customers who meet every six weeks and are involved in challenging performance, working with the Board to influence priorities and helping to keep customers central to our decision making. It's a forum for us to listen to your concerns and be held accountable, as well as bring about change.

**Get involved** – if you would like to be part of this panel we are actively recruiting. You will need to be able to commit to a minimum of one year, with the option to extend this for up to three years. Please register your interest by raising an enquiry on MyRaven.

The Panel and our Board members met for the first time recently and the room was buzzing with energy. Discussions were around people's motivations to get involved, the various roles available and how members can be supported.

## Motivations to get involved examples...

"Make a difference and have a positive impact"



"Use personal life experiences and skills to help"

Everyone left eager to meet again, when top of the agenda will be learning from complaints, which everyone agreed is a really important area to focus on. A great example of customers and Board members working in collaboration to bring about change.

## Task & Finish Group for Building Safety

Over the last few months a group of customers, staff and Board members have been meeting to discuss new building safety regulations. Since the Grenfell Tower incident, there's quite rightly been a big focus by the government on safety, especially in higher risk buildings. We feel it's important to listen to your thoughts on these issues, as well as involve you in decisions we make.

The outcome of the group was a draft 'Resident Engagement Strategy for Building Safety' which will be launched in late Autumn and will highlight:

- How we will keep you informed on building safety
- What you can do if you have an issue
- How to keep you safe in your home.

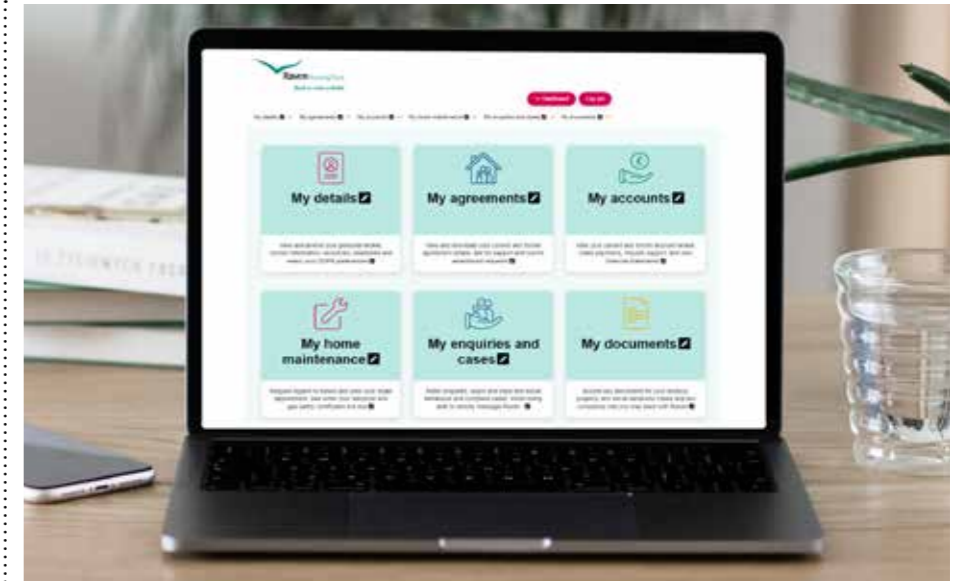
This is another great example of what can be achieved when we work together with customers.

# MyRaven – what's new and what's coming

We've had some great feedback from a recent survey to find out what people think of the revamped 'MyRaven' experience.

Thank you to all those who replied – this feedback is invaluable and enables us to improve your services.

Your feedback has told us the majority of you find most functions easy to use; in particular, the ability to raise and track anti-social behaviour and complaints online. You also told us that you like seeing the progress of your case and being able to upload documents.



We identified early on that some of you were having trouble logging into MyRaven which was due to problems registering accounts. Everyone affected was contacted individually and is now up and running!

Difficulties reported were related to rent payments and rent statements. We've solved some data accuracy issues and are improving the process so it will soon be seamless.

In the near future we will be improving reporting and tracking of repairs, as well as adding more functions you've said you'd like to see. Watch this space and look out for posts on social media to find out what's coming when.

If you would like support with getting online and/or registering and using MyRaven, please email [digitalinclusionteam@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:digitalinclusionteam@ravenht.org.uk) or call **0300 123 3399** and we'll be happy to help.

# Help with energy bills

**You should have received your first 'Cost of Living' payment of £326 from the government if, on 25 May 2022, you were receiving a means-tested benefit, such as Universal Credit, Pension Credit, income related employment and support allowance, income support or income-based jobseeker's allowance. Your second payment of £324 will be sent in the Autumn.**

For those on tax credits, your first payment will be in September - if you haven't received it already - and the second in the Winter.

People who were receiving disability benefits on 25 May 2022 should get an additional payment

in September of £150 and pensioners receiving Winter Fuel Payment will receive an additional £350 per household this year. Winter Fuel Payments are usually paid automatically in November without needing to make a claim if you already get a state pension.

From October, bill payers will start to receive money off their electricity bills; £67 in October and November and £66 for the remaining four months. If you pay by pre-payment meter and do not have a smart pre-payment meter, your utility company will send you a voucher either by text or email. **It's important that your utility company has your up-to-date contact details or you could miss out!**

**Remember** - if you're struggling with repaying money you owe to a creditor, as a Raven customer you're entitled to free, confidential and impartial help through Reigate and Banstead Citizens Advice Bureau, even if you don't live in this area. You can contact them on **0808 278 7945** or get in touch with our Moneywise team.

We can also refer you to our Customer Support Fund if you're struggling financially and have no other sources of help. See website - [www.ravenht.org.uk/customer-support-fund](http://www.ravenht.org.uk/customer-support-fund) - for more details of the kind of things we can help you with.

**Need money or benefits advice?** Contact the Moneywise team on [moneywise@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:moneywise@ravenht.org.uk) or **0300 123 3399**.

# Retired couple say “no more” to scammers



**There was a fantastic result recently for a retired couple supported by our Parashoot team who help people at risk of being evicted.**

When the team was asked to investigate why a disproportionate amount of customers in this age range were falling into rent arrears, they discovered one couple had taken out more than 55 separate insurances for things like white goods and plumbing emergencies, and they also had lots of duplicate policies. Their bank account was being emptied by direct debits as soon as money went in.

Cold callers and scammers had set up these payments, convincing them that the items required insurance, but the couple had no idea what they were paying for, or what was covered.

Their support officer cancelled all of the direct debits they didn't

need. She also discovered there were 29 payments taken from their bank account for food deliveries over a two-month period; even though they'd never ordered them and wouldn't have known how to! She contacted the bank and £935 was immediately repaid into their account, which as you can imagine the couple are delighted with.

We're pleased to report that the following month they were in credit by £1,700 after paying all of their essential bills. Not only are they now safe from eviction, they have extra income which they didn't even know was possible.

If you suspect you may be overpaying on direct debits or have signed up to policies you don't need, then we can help investigate. Contact the Moneywise team on [moneywise@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:moneywise@ravenht.org.uk) or **0300 123 3399**.

## Competition time

The cooler nights will soon start drawing in, which means comfort food will be on the menu. There's nothing that says this more than a one-pot stew, chilli or curry which has been cooking all day ready to enjoy with minimal effort. And the good news is it's around 20p cheaper per meal to use a slow cooker than an electric oven, meaning if you use your slow cooker on average three times a week you'll make an annual saving of over £30. With energy costs soaring, it's definitely worth investigating.

This is why we're giving you the chance to win a slow cooker, accompanied by a cooking on a budget recipe book and a £25 grocery voucher towards ingredients for your first few meals. All you have to do is email [competition@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:competition@ravenht.org.uk) by 11:59pm on **Monday 31st October** with your favourite budget or slow cooker meal recipe (or link). The lucky winner will be randomly selected and all entries will be shared in a blog on our website. Only one entry per person, entrants must be over 18 and a Raven customer please. **Thank you and good luck!**



## Green spaces – maintenance contract out to tender

### Why

Our grounds maintenance contract, which means that your shared green spaces are looked after, is coming to an end so we are asking firms to quote for the work. We will ensure the appointed contractor provides a service which is consistent in quality, gives value for money and meets the required standards which will be published in the near future.

### When

We hope to award the new contract by the end of September and for the contractor to be in place by 1st November.

### How

Staff and customers are being kept involved throughout the process. We have a panel evaluating the bids, which includes our Customer Engagement Manager, Head of Repairs, and Grounds Maintenance and Arboricultural Officer. The Customer Engagement Manager has been consulting with customers to ensure their views are represented at every stage of the project. As this contract will

affect leaseholders too, we have also been consulting with them throughout the project.

### Benefiting your communities

As part of the tender process, we ask each contractor to show us how they will help to:

1. Support communities into employment - such as trainee initiatives, employment opportunities for young people via job centres and colleges, and assisting school leavers with CV writing and interview techniques
2. Support those experiencing hardship - such as providing work opportunities for the unemployed, training and free online courses in their area of expertise
3. Promote environmental sustainability - such as their plans to minimise vehicle movements, move towards electric vehicles and manage waste.
4. Support the local economy - such as seeking to employ a qualified engineer from the geographical areas we cover within the first three months.

5. Provide safe, thriving and resilient neighbourhoods - such as creating volunteering opportunities, enabling community development and engagement, contributing to the health improvement programme and addressing health inequalities.

In the meantime, please be aware that:

- We are still working hard to ensure that green spaces are maintained to the standards required and expected
- Following an extremely hot Summer, we remain mindful of water shortage issues and ask you to do the same
- It is nesting season until the end of the Summer so we are unable to trim hedges until then
- Our Grounds Maintenance and Arboriculture Officer, and Neighbourhood Wardens are out on-site daily and are regularly inspecting the green spaces. They report any issues to the current contractors to ensure that our estates are kept up to standard.

## Jubilee photo competition - a crowning glory for Irene

The winning picture in our Jubilee photo competition was taken by Irene at the Merland Green Jubilee community party in Tadworth.

We love how it shows her community really coming together across multi-generations, with smiley faces all around, against a sea of red, white and blue. Irene received a £20 shopping voucher for being the star photographer and a £250 community prize that she's decided to put towards a communal shed. It will be used by Irene and her neighbours to store items like garden tools, bikes and buggies, which will free up space in their homes and keep communal areas clear.

We were pleased to supply 15 Jubilee party packs to help customers with their celebrations and equally pleased to receive so many competition photo entries - a right royal affair was clearly had by all!



## Two couples from Ukraine helped through employment scheme

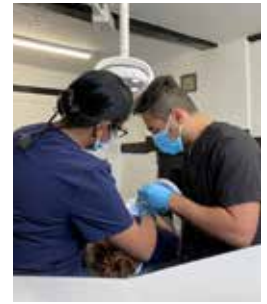
Two couples fleeing the war in Ukraine were referred to us for employment support by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and were keen to start earning as soon as possible.

One of the couples, D and N\*, are now both in full time work after assistance from Liz, an employment adviser for our Working Homes initiative.

D has a degree in translation and speaks four languages but her real ambition is to become a make-up artist. She was given guidance on finding work and now has a job in a pharmacy where she plans to use her staff discount to buy make-up to start her own business.

Her husband N was studying dentistry when the couple fled Ukraine. Liz helped him write his CV and showed him how to search for work. He will continue studying for his final year with his Ukraine university, whilst supporting himself working as a hotel room attendant. Liz gave him advice on what he needed to do to practice as a dentist in the UK, as well as gain his UK driving license and an English language qualification.

Liz said: ***"It has been an absolute pleasure supporting D and N; their determination and resilience has been inspiring. With a bit of support, they have taken it upon themselves to find work and have been amazingly proactive and positive about building a life for themselves here."***



Debbie, also an employment adviser, has supported K and M\* who were also keen to start working as soon as possible.

M was finishing his final year of studying to become a dentist and Liz and Debbie discovered that, amazingly, the two trainee dentists had been studying at the same university and knew of each other. They were put in touch and have been a huge support to each other.

M is now working as a dental assistant, while his partner K continues to study online for her master's degree. She was also helped in her search for work to support her studies and is now in a permanent job as a logistics manager.

She said: ***"Suddenly we had to start our life again in another country whilst dealing with what we'd been through. To know we had someone on hand to give us career advice and help us to navigate the UK job market has been a huge relief and a big contributing factor to how quickly we've settled in."***

The Working Homes scheme provides employment programmes and advice for customers as well as others in the local community who need assistance. See our website or email [employment@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:employment@ravenht.org.uk) to find out more.




*\*Names not provided to respect the privacy of the individuals*



### For more information

Please get in touch for more information on any of the articles featured in this edition or with suggestions for future issues. Follow us on social media to keep up to date with our news, stories and latest updates.

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