

Ten cheap things to do with (or without) kids this summer

School holidays can be a difficult time of year, with increased food and utility costs from having the kids at home.

See below for our hints, tips and resources to to kick start your summer without it costing the Earth.

In addition we have a hardship fund which supports customers struggling to pay for essentials. We have provided items such as beds, white goods and carpets over the last year and we are excited to announce we can now offer help with school uniforms. To find out if you are eligible please contact our Moneywise team on 0300 123 3399 for more information.

Want some ideas for smart shopping? [Click here](#) to find out more

1. Enjoy your local parks and playgrounds.



We're fortunate to have some idyllic parks throughout Surrey and Sussex. So get the kids off that games console and drag them out to visit your nearest green space for some outdoor activities. Why not make it extra special and prepare a picnic for the day? Here's a comprehensive [list](#) of parks and playgrounds near you (Surrey). Sussex list is [here](#).

2. Make the most of Mother Nature



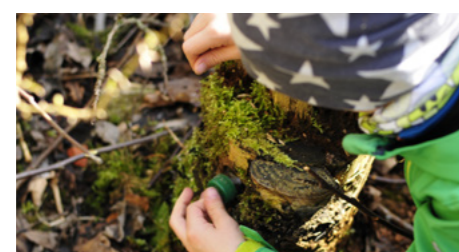
Get outside and see some of the most beautiful natural spaces in the UK. We're talking about the North Downs, South Downs, Box Hill and Banstead Woods. Go out for long walks (bring the bikes and scooters) and witness the abundance of wildlife on display. If you have kids - bring bats, balls, other outdoor games, and dare we say it... Pokémon Go for the older ones. You've Gotta Catch 'Em All!

3. Explore with Treasure Trails



Follow the trail, solve the clues and see the sites with Treasure Trails - an imaginative way to explore towns, cities and villages throughout the UK. Take a self-guided tour along an easy to follow route, while cracking clues and taking in some fascinating sites. Routes are available in Reigate, Box Hill, Dorking, Oxted, Epsom and Tilgate Park in Crawley. At just £6.99 for four to five people, it's an absolute bargain for a day out. Please visit the [Treasure Trail](#) website for more information on how to book.

4. Have a go at Geocaching



Using the same technology as Pokémon Go, Geocaching is an

outdoor activity where people use their mobile phones and other devices to hide and find "geocaches" or "caches" at locations marked by coordinates around the world. This is a perfect activity to blend the use of smartphones with the great outdoors. It's also beneficial for kids because it teaches them how to read a map and improves their observational skills. Fun and educational! [Download the App now](#) to get started.

5. Visit a local museum



Some museums have free entry and make for a perfect day out. The best museums are often the little independent ones, run by enthusiasts who are bursting to share their knowledge of toys, trains and aeroplanes with anyone who will listen. We've picked two of our favourites:

East Surrey Museum, Caterham – on display are artefacts and documents relating to social history, archaeology and the geology of East Surrey from the earliest times to the most recent past. Opening times and events are available to view at www.eastsurreymuseum.org.uk

Gatwick Aviation Museum, Gatwick – boasts a unique collection of British aircraft. From the end of WWII until the 1970s British aircraft designers produced some of the most innovative and advanced aircraft of the day. Check opening times by visiting www.gatwick-aviation-museum.co.uk

6. Go swimming



Taking the kids swimming is a fairly cheap and healthy activity. Locally, there are leisure centres with pools in Redhill, Tadworth and Horley. So dust off the inflatables and take a plunge in the deep end! Visit www.better.org.uk to check timetables and locations.

7. Visit your local library



You don't need to be a bookworm to enjoy a visit to the library. Libraries are often overlooked because people just aren't aware of the free family-friendly craft activities, treasure hunts and book challenges they host. While you're there, why not take out a book detailing the area where you live, to give you further ideas of things to do. If the weather's bad, borrow a film or have a movie marathon from the comfort of your home.

8. Widen your horizons



Go visit one of the 23 free museums in London. If you run out of local options, the Natural History, Science, and British Museums aren't too far away. The main expense here is travel. If you choose to visit London on the train, children under five travel free with a fare-paying adult and children aged five to 15 get a 50% discount on most train fares. To save some cash, we recommend taking a picnic to enjoy in one of London's many parks. Here is a full [list](#) of free London museums.

9. Get beach ready



Make your way to the seaside! Don't forget to take sun cream, swimwear, towels and a picnic. Again, travel costs are the main expense, but when you get there, it's a cheap day out. You could go crabbing – there's an initial cost of around £5 for the kit (bucket, net, and crab line) but hours of fun and great value for money because once you have the kit, you can go over and over again!

10. Stay at home

Failing all of the above, there's plenty of things to do at home and in the garden. Try baking, making fruit kebabs, building a den or making a camp. You could learn to make playdough, go birdwatching, make a camp in the garden, start a jigsaw puzzle or host a family board games evening. Here's a list of [30 other fun things to do at home](#).

Are you looking for a job? Or need help with training or finding a work placement?

If so, a new project which Raven launched this spring could help.

Working Homes is an employment support scheme run by Raven with local partners.

It is open to anybody who is trying to find employment and who lives in a home where there are no working adults.

"The project provides support for as long as it is needed and will help people to identify and meet their employment goals," said Angela Ellis, Raven's Head of Community Investment and Partnerships.

The sort of support on offer is varied and flexible and includes training courses, work placements, counselling, help with childcare costs, travel expenses – and much more.

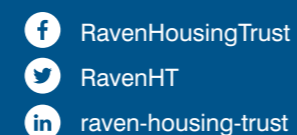
The Working Homes team are very experienced and have had great success in supporting people into jobs and helping them to fulfil their ambitions.

If you are looking to get into work and would like to take advantage of support from the Working Homes team, email employment@ravenht.org.uk or call **Carla on 01737 272519**.

For more information

For more information on any of the articles featured in this edition, for the latest updates surrounding coronavirus and how our services may be affected, or for support and advice during this unprecedented time, please visit www.ravenht.org.uk or follow us on social media.

T: 0300 123 3399 E: raven@ravenht.org.uk



RavenTimes

SUMMER 2021

Dear Raven customer

Last month has been a busy and exciting one for our Customer Services Centre as we continue at pace with our Better Connected transformation programme.

Better Connected is an ambitious two-year technical plan which will allow all residents and staff to access the information they need - anytime, anywhere and on any device. It will connect you to the services you value and trust; saving you time, giving you options and helping you enjoy your home.

We recently marked our first major milestones – a new phone system and a new customer relationship system meaning all customer information is now in one place. We are pleased to report that the new features introduced in these systems are already improving our services.

"Our customers are much happier now there is a 'call back' function so that they don't have to stay on the line waiting for an advisor during busy periods," said Toby, Customer Service Team Leader, following the launch of our new phone system.

The customer panel which helped to develop the Better Connected project told us they wanted reassurance that a query or request has been recorded on the system - so we now give you a reference number when you call or email us.

Searching for customers on our system has also been made much easier with the introduction of another new feature. If your details are registered on our system, your record will pop up in front of our advisor, making it simpler and quicker to deal with your request.

Another new function is a conference call facility. Complaints Officer Sam explained: "The facility is great for customers who give us authority to speak to someone else on their behalf – it makes dealing with their request much faster."

Raven is on an exciting journey to improve services and make life easier for you to deal with us. Our team is enthusiastic and positive about the changes over the coming months we look forward to sharing progress with you.

If you want to be part of this journey we have lots of exciting opportunities for you to be involved. However much time you may have, we would welcome having you on board. Find out more by emailing raven@ravenht.org.uk

Joanne Silner
Head of Customer Experience

Introduction

Welcome to the summer edition of Raven News. We hope you are all enjoying the warmer weather. In this issue we are focusing on sustainability and affordability. We have two articles on budgeting – one giving you tips about how to make your home less expensive to run and another which has lots of ideas about cheap activities for

children during the summer holiday. Information about our 'Hardship Fund' is also included and if you are looking for a job there is news inside about a new scheme which could help. You can also read about the exciting new 'green' housing development we are building and the way we are improving services. In addition there is news about all the new opportunities

for you to get involved in the way that Raven is run – by joining a customer committee or even becoming a Board member. We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and please get in touch if you have any ideas for stories or feedback about content.

Customer Connect

Customer Panel – What have we been doing?

The Customer Panel 'Customer Connect' was set in September 2020 to support the Better Connected programme in delivering Ravens Vision to 'ensure all our customers are connected to services they value and trust; services that work alongside them, saving them time, giving them options, and helping them enjoy their homes'.

To deliver this vision, Raven will be putting customers at the heart of what they do, through various means, where the panel is a key part. We provide advice and challenge on the Better Connected Programme and Core Principles. Meeting regularly on specific issues, we act as a critical friend on the new processes being put in place, to ensure they are designed with the customer in mind.



Update from Claire, member of the panel.

Recently myself and the other panel members have been meeting (virtually)

with various people from Raven who are involved with making sure us residents are receiving the best possible service from Raven and their contractors. We have been able to get

really involved and have our say about what we feel would benefit residents from all perspectives. We've been able to give our good and not so good experiences so improvements can be made.

It's been really interesting meeting all the different people involved and hearing all the proposed ideas being suggested to give residents a better service that suits everyone.

I can honestly say Raven really does have all of us at the heart of the ideas - such as appointment times that suit us and yearly checks completed in one single appointment - are being tested.

We are always looking for more people to join the panel, to find out more an register your interest please [click here](#)

Involving customers in shaping our Customer Experience Strategy and Customer Engagement Framework



Update from David, member of Falcon (Residents Board)

In May this year a member of the Better Connected panel and myself (a member of

Falcon), both representing residents, presented the Raven Board with a new and more customer-focused approach

to tenant engagement.

Over the last few years resident groups and Raven have recognised that more understanding is needed of residents' concerns, priorities and aspirations. Also, that a better way of capturing these insights was needed to improve decision-making, policies and services.

Members of the resident board have been involved from the beginning in the above developments - many discussions have taken place about customer service standards and Raven's transformation plan which is leading to a much more digitally-connected service.

We have used research by national housing organisations to help develop this new Customer Experience Strategy, which will allow for different levels of involvement, such as social media platforms, tenant forums, Raven's website, contacting Raven staff, completing surveys by telephone, text or online, resident panels and other discussion groups and neighbourhood tenant groups etc.

Much good work has already been done by Raven but more will follow to ensure the customer voice is heard at every level and residents have a stronger role in holding their landlord to account, with greater transparency in decision making.

All Change at Chavecroft

An innovative, affordable and sustainable housing development which is set to bring new life to part of Tadworth has just been given the go ahead.

Raven is behind the zero-carbon project to provide a range of much-needed new affordable homes at the former Chavecroft sheltered housing scheme. Went zero carbon buildings are those where the amount of carbon emissions associated with it's product and construction stages up to practical completion is zero or negative, through the use of offsets or the net export of on-site renewable energy. This will be Raven's first net zero carbon development.

The two blocks of 1960s flats, on the corner of Board Walk and Long Walk, are no longer needed as temporary accommodation and will be demolished as part of the regeneration proposal.

"This is an exciting development for many reasons," said Natalie Mc Neish Investment Development Manager at Raven.

"We have consulted with the local community about plans to replace the scheme with 23 high quality affordable homes in two new detached blocks and improve the environment of the site."

One block will comprise five three-bedroom family homes, each with its own garage and off road parking space, and the other will comprise 18 one- and two-bedroom flats. There will be private amenity spaces for the houses and flats. The scheme includes 56 car parking spaces, including the re-provision of 12 spaces for existing residents of Chavecroft Terrace. A further 44 spaces are provided for the new homes, which includes a garage of an appropriate size and parking space for the houses.

Natalie continued: "Our aim is to provide zero-carbon homes, using innovative construction methods and including features such as ground source heat pumps, which will revitalise the estate and offer new excellent quality homes which are affordable to rent and run. We are able to bring affordable homes to our customers and improvements for the environment in this development."

We carried out detailed consultation with local residents and stakeholders and the architect's drawings were presented at a 'zoom' meeting.

Raven have been granted full planning permission for this exciting new development and are now looking to appoint a contractor to build the redevelopment and we will keep you fully informed of progress.

Budgeting



We asked our Moneywise Team for their top tips to help you make the most of your money - and here they are:

Set yourself a budget and stick to it

It can be easier to manage your money if you know how much you have coming in and how much you having going out. This can be particularly useful to help you save for things like Christmas, birthdays and new school uniform throughout the year, rather than having a financial shock when it comes time to buy them.

Haggling

Most big companies (insurance, broadband, mobile phone etc.) would prefer to keep you as a customer than risk losing you and your money. Therefore, when your contract runs out it is worth contacting them to see if they can give you a better deal.

Switching

If you are unable to get a better deal with your current supplier for things like mobile phones, TV packages, insurance, gas, and electricity then it is worth thinking about switching to a cheaper company. There are price comparison sites on the internet that will help you work out who the cheapest is. Be careful though as some cheaper companies can have awful service if things go wrong so study their customer reviews and ratings.

Tasting the difference

Some people have set themselves the challenge of seeing what food and drink they can switch from big name brands to cheaper brands. How about seeing if you and your family and friends can spot what you have swapped for a supermarket own brand?

If you would like help with any of these ideas, or with better managing of your money generally, please contact our Moneywise Team, moneywise@ravenht.org.uk or 0300 123 3399.

Exciting opportunities to get involved – What have we been doing?

We want you, our customers to have a say in how we provide services and help us prioritise the right decisions. Working in close partnership with you we can deliver high quality, value for money services, making sure we're clear, open and transparent about our decisions. Whether it is by responding to Facebook polls and surveys, attending events, joining a group or becoming a Board member, there are lots of ways to get involved

Becoming a Resident Board Member

This is a really exciting opportunity and we can't wait to work with you to develop this role. Raven is governed by a Board and we're seeking to recruit a resident to join them as the current resident Board member is due to stand down next year.

The Board is responsible for setting our strategic vision and direction and is made up of independent members who are recruited and chosen for their expertise in key fields, such as finance, development, asset management, legal work and management experience.

You will have the opportunity to shadow the current Resident Board member and receive training to achieve the skills and knowledge over several months to carry out the role fully from next year. The role of the Resident Board will be for 5 years.

To register your interest and find out more please [click here](#).

Join the Customer Core group

Want to make a difference? Want to help decide our priorities? We are setting up a new strategic engagement group of customers to work closely

with the Board. You'll be involved in challenging performance, working with leaders and Board members to influence strategic priorities and supporting us to keep customers at the heart of decision making.

We will provide you with the support and training to develop skills and understand data to challenge and hold us to account.

Are you one of the 12 customers who will work with us to improve performance and ensure the customer voice is being heard at a strategic level? The commitment of the group will be a minimum of a year, but could be up to 3 years where the positions will be reviewed to enable other residents who are interested to join.

To register your interest and find out more please [click here](#).

Specialist Panels

If you have a key interest in a particular service, or general knowledge and experience, a Specialist Panel may be an ideal way for you to get involved.

Over the next five years we will be setting up panels for particular projects. You'll have an opportunity to

get involved in a project that interests you, for a fixed period of time, so there's no long term commitment. We want to hear from you and involve you in shaping Your services

This year we have two areas to focus on:

- Customer Portal and website – What frustrates you about our website? What do you wish you could just do yourself on line? What would make it easier to navigate? What do you like about MyRaven – and what is missing? Got some great ideas? Come and help design and test our new customer self-serve portal and website. Your input is going to make it so much better!
- Building safety – Making sure you feel safe in your home is a top priority. There is a lot of new legislation and some key changes affecting building safety. In particular around fire safety. Come and help us work on solutions that keep you safe, make it easy to manage safety checks and understand what is most important to you.

To register your interest and find out more please [click here](#).

