

WINTER 2023

# Raven Times



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

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Spotlight on Moneywise

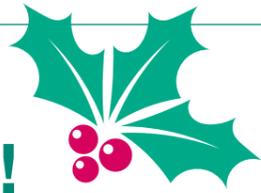
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[www.ravenht.org.uk](http://www.ravenht.org.uk)

 **Raven** Housing Trust

# Welcome to the Winter issue of your Raven Times!



**“It’s hard to believe that we’re quickly approaching the end of the year. We know it’s been a difficult year once again for many and in this issue we have a spotlight on our Moneywise team on page 6 to show what support is available to you as a Raven customer.**

We also take a look back at some of the projects supported by our Brighter Community Fund this year on page 3 and our wardens give their update on page 4.

Don’t forget you can contribute ideas for Raven Times or give us your thoughts by emailing [raventimes@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:raventimes@ravenht.org.uk).

Whatever the festive season looks like and means to you, we hope you have an enjoyable time.”

**Joanne Silner**  
Head of Customer Experience  
Raven Housing Trust



## 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](mailto:raventimes@ravenht.org.uk).

### Men in Sheds – Horley

This project meets at the Horley Health Club every Tuesday morning between 9am-12pm. It’s a great opportunity to meet, talk and get creative together.



### Men’s Pitstop – Merstham and Tattenham Corner

A chance to get together as part of a confidential support group for men every Wednesday at the Merstham Community Hub from 6:30-7:30pm and every Thursday at St Mark’s Church in Tattenham Corner from 6:30-7:30pm.



### Free Wellbeing Walks

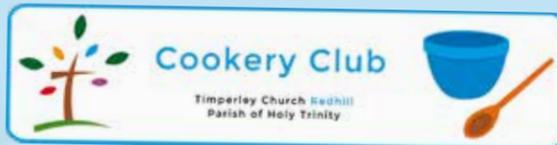
YMCA East Surrey hosts free wellbeing walks in the area. Just head to their website and choose a walk that’s suitable for you, no need to book, just turn up to get out in the fresh air; a great opportunity to meet new people and get a little exercise at the same time. [www.ymcaeast Surrey.org.uk/walks/](http://www.ymcaeast Surrey.org.uk/walks/)



### Cookery Club – Redhill

Timperley Church in Redhill run regular Cookery Club sessions for mums wanting some inspiration for cooking for their families.

For more information about upcoming sessions email [clare@htredhill.com](mailto:clare@htredhill.com)



# Does your community project need funding?

**Our Brighter Community Fund is a pot of money which, as one of our customers, you can apply to use to make things happen in your community. For example, it could be used to fund an event, service or activity that local people would enjoy.**

In the year 2022-23 we’re delighted that we were able to help fund and support 13 projects. Could your project could be next?

Here are some of the projects we’ve supported recently:

### Cromwell Community Garden



The community has come together to create a fantastic communal garden on Observatory Walk on the Cromwell Estate in Redhill. Our Brighter Community Fund provided and installed benches for local residents to use when enjoying the garden.

### Merstham Ladies FC



Ladies and girls football has been growing in popularity over the last few years, especially with the recent success of the Lionesses. For the 2023/24 season, Raven is the sponsor for the Merstham Ladies and Wildcats girls teams and covered the kit costs for team players. The team is a great way for ladies and young girls to keep active, enjoy football and make friends. You can follow their success here – [www.facebook.com/mersthamladiesfc](https://www.facebook.com/mersthamladiesfc)

### MYTI club



The MYTI club is a weekly youth club session 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. The Brighter Community Fund covered the costs of these sessions for three months.

## How to apply

Applications can be made by an individual or a community group and projects must support our purpose of ‘Building homes, Changing lives’. Your application will be reviewed by a panel of Raven customers. The total fund is £30,000 each year and you can apply for up to £5,000 for each project.

The next deadline for applications is 7th February 2024 and decisions will be made on 6th March 2024.

Find out more and how to apply here - [www.ravenht.org.uk/get-involved/improving-your-community/](http://www.ravenht.org.uk/get-involved/improving-your-community/)

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

## Raven people power at community activities

Each year we have an all-staff day, during which we spend the morning in our communities taking part in activities, everything from painting and gardening to supporting local charities and activities at sheltered housing schemes. This year 295 members of the Raven team worked across 18 different projects – that's a massive 885 hours of people power!

It was a great day, one team member said: "I'm usually office based, so it was a brilliant chance for me to get out in the community to make a difference to neighbourhoods for our customers."

We're already gearing up and looking forward to next year's activities. If your community has a project you'd like our teams to come out and support next autumn – let us know. You can email your suggestions to [raven@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:raven@ravenht.org.uk)



## Estate inspections

We're regularly in and around our estates inspecting and ensuring they're kept clean and safe. Each year we also do a more formal inspection of estates, health and safety checks, fire risk assessments and checking for any urgent repairs. We've been busy over the last few months with these. It's our priority to make sure your community and neighbourhood is safe, clean and comfortable. We appreciate your co-operation when we've been completing these checks.



## Helping with overgrown gardens

We understand that sometimes circumstances can prevent some customers' ability to maintain their gardens. These challenges may be because of mental and/or physical health issues, leading to gardens becoming overgrown, untidy looking and overwhelming to tackle alone. As a team, we've been supporting customers on a case-by-case basis to get their gardens back to a point where they can then maintain it.

If you're struggling at the moment and need some extra help, please let us know by calling **0300 123 3399** or raising an enquiry on your MyRaven online account.



Before



After



# Ask Raven's Chief Executive

In the last issue of Raven Times, we asked you to share your questions for Jonathan Higgs, our Chief Executive.

Thank you to everyone who submitted a question. Each person who asked a question has been sent a direct reply from Jonathan.

Here are some of the questions you raised.

**Q - How often are Raven properties fully inspected internally and externally over the years to cut down on maintenance and cost? I feel if this was done on a regular basis, I won't say half the problems would be sorted out, but at least it would be a starting point.**

**A -** Currently our teams carry out what's called a stock condition survey every five years. This is when we inspect the property internally and externally. Thank you for raising this, this is an excellent suggestion. It's actually something we've recently started to look into. We're currently looking at our service processes to see if there's areas we can improve, and the frequency of our inspections is one of the things we've highlighted to look at further, as you say to see if it could make our residents' lives easier, but also save us time and money on repairs and maintenance. We will definitely keep you posted on this.



**Q - Could we please have a lift installed at Swale House? Some of your tenants are now becoming housebound.**

**A -** For people reading this who aren't familiar with Swale House, Swale House is one of our properties dedicated to people aged 55 or over. It contains 9 individual flats.

I'm sorry to hear that some people are finding it difficult to move around so easily and while I'd like nothing more than to be able to say we could install a lift, unfortunately it's not possible for us to do this in this building.

There is not a lift shaft within Swale House, and the amount of work required to create a suitable location and install a lift in a building of this structure and size isn't practical I'm afraid. I will make sure this is picked up by the housing manager though, although we're not able to add a lift to this building, we can speak with individuals and help them look at whether there's alternative accommodation that's better suited to people's changing needs.

We always want to hear from you if you have questions to ask, concerns or issues to raise or ideas to share. #WeHearYou

Ways to contact us:

MyRaven: raise an enquiry

Telephone: 0300 123 3399

Facebook Messenger: [www.facebook.com/RavenHousingTrust](https://www.facebook.com/RavenHousingTrust)

Email: [raven@ravenht.org.uk](mailto:raven@ravenht.org.uk)





## Spotlight on the Moneywise team

**This year our Moneywise team is celebrating its ten-year anniversary. Over this time, the team has helped thousands of customers with budgeting, debt management, eligibility for benefits and grants, distributing food bank vouchers, energy advice, applications to our Customer Support Fund and much more.**

Even if you're working, there may still be some benefits, grants and additional support you're entitled to. In the year 2022-23, the Moneywise team helped customers to apply for benefits and grants totalling £1.58 million – and they may be able to help you too!

The support from our Moneywise team is free and completely confidential. You can arrange an initial chat with them through your MyRaven online account or by calling **0300 123 3399**.



### Customer Support Fund

We know times are difficult, so we've invested more money in our Customer Support Fund to support you if you're struggling to pay for new appliances, essential furniture, debts and other unexpected bills.

The fund is available to ALL customers, whether you're employed, on benefits, in sheltered accommodation, or a leaseholder.

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.

Last year, we received 153 applications to the fund, we paid out a total of £30,870 to help customers like Mrs C\* from Merstham who was struggling to sleep because she was so cold: "I received my blanket yesterday.

I had a good night sleep without my dressing gown and hot water bottle. Thank you very very much for your help."

Find out more about how to apply for our customer support fund [www.ravenht.org.uk/customer-support-fund](http://www.ravenht.org.uk/customer-support-fund)

\*names have been changed to protect the customers' identities

### Getting extra support

**The Moneywise team also has strong links with local and national charities and extra support services that they can refer you to.**

We're a partner of Citizens Advice Bureau Reigate [www.carbs.org.uk](http://www.carbs.org.uk) and as one of our customers, you can contact them for advice on a wide range of subjects like legal, health, employment, family law and immigration.

We can refer you to Stripey Stork <https://stripeystork.org.uk>, a local baby bank, that supports families in need of help with everything from clothing, toys, equipment, and toiletries, from birth up to age 16.

There are a number of local Food Banks, including Loveworks [www.loveworks.org.uk](http://www.loveworks.org.uk), St Matthews [www.redhillfoodbank.org.uk](http://www.redhillfoodbank.org.uk) in Redhill, Epsom and Ewell <https://epsomewell.foodbank.org.uk> and other food banks across East Surrey and West and Mid Sussex that we can provide you with vouchers to access. This is a short-term fix for emergency food and we'll work with you to find long term solutions to help make sure you have access to food.

### Top tips for saving £ in the run up to Christmas

The festive season is filled with memorable moments but it's also a time when our wallets can take a big hit. With the right planning and some creative thinking you can enjoy a fantastic Christmas without breaking the bank. Here are some of our top tips for saving money in the run up to Christmas:

- 1. Focus on the kids:** Due to the cost of living, lots of families only buy presents for the children, particularly if the families are large. Most people understand the need to cut back and this decision can bring relief to others who might be struggling too.
- 2. Most shops are only closed on Christmas Day so don't stockpile!** Make

a meal planner and only buy items required for the meals on your list. That way, you won't buy what you don't need and there will be a lot less waste.

- 3. Enjoy local entertainment:** Instead of splurging on high-priced theatre performances, opt for local amateur dramatics. They will be a lot cheaper than a star-studded pantomime and you can usually take your own snacks.
- 4. DIY games night:** Save your money on entertainment by making your own games. Classics like charades, pictionary, who am I? can all be recreated at home and provide hours of fun for the whole family.

## Support available at Christmas

**For many people December is a time filled with joy, and opportunities to spend time with friends and loved ones. But it's also important to take a moment and consider that for some of us it can be a lonely and sometimes stressful period.**

It's important to recognise that if you're struggling over the festive period, you are not alone. There are many support groups and helplines available. If you are finding things difficult, reach out and ask for help.

If you are concerned that you are developing a mental health problem you should seek the

advice and support of your GP as a matter of priority. [www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/](http://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/)

If you are in distress and need immediate help and are unable to see a GP, you should visit your local A&E. [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

NHS Information page for dealing with a mental health crisis or emergency. Including NHS 111 Helpline. [www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/dealing-with-a-mental-health-crisis-or-emergency/](http://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/dealing-with-a-mental-health-crisis-or-emergency/)

Samaritans Telephone: **116 123** (24 hours a day, free to call)

Mind Telephone: **0300 123 3393** (9am-6pm Monday to Friday)  
Website: [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines)

ChildLine Telephone: **0800 1111**  
Website: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)





# Christmas Opening Hours

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December  
9am - 5pm

Christmas Day - Closed

Boxing Day - Closed

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> - Friday 29<sup>th</sup> December  
9am-5pm

On the days the customer call centre is closed, we'll still be taking emergency calls on 0300 123 3399



## Remember

When our customer call centre is closed, you can still report an emergency by calling **0300 123 3399**. And you can raise a non-emergency repair through your **MyRaven** online account.

You can use your MyRaven to manage your home and accounts, online, 24/7:



- Pay your rent and charges
- Let us know about a repair, upload photos and book an appointment
- Raise queries
- Manage your tenancy
- Track cases of anti-social behaviour and complaints

**Sign up today –**  
[myraven.ravenht.org.uk/register](https://myraven.ravenht.org.uk/register)



### 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](mailto:raventimes@ravenht.org.uk) with any feedback – thank you!

Call: 0300 123 3399 Facebook messenger: RavenHousingTrust

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



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