

AUTUMN EDITION

RavenTimes

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Light at the end of the tunnel



Before



After

Life can feel overwhelming when you suffer with ill health and struggle to keep your home clear and tidy. Recently, support teams at Raven helped a customer turn this around. He had become ashamed of his flat due to hoarding and was struggling to sort it out because of ill health. We were also finding it difficult to fit building safety equipment in the property.

Hoarding disorder is complex and can have many triggers. In this case,

“He was hoarding due to bereavement - the tragic loss of a son – he felt ashamed of what he was living in and would put off inviting his other son over as he didn’t want him to see it.”

explains Allyson, Raven’s tenancy enforcement officer.

“On my initial meeting with him, I reassured him that Raven would help as much as possible, and it was important that he allowed us to assist and to work with us.

“He wanted to change and make his flat a home again – he was positive and keen to work with us.” said Allyson.

It was a team effort; with four members of staff working with him to clear his kitchen and bedroom, making a huge improvement. This also enabled us to fit a new fire alarm, making his home safer.

We also made sure he was connected to other sources of support going forward, including regular contact from Raven’s support coordinators.

Once the work was completed, he commented ***“I can see the***

light at the end of the tunnel and I appreciate all the help and understanding that you have given and shown me.”

Despite continuing poor health, he now has the tools to carry on clearing the property and is tackling the last room.

We’d like to thank all those involved in helping to transform his home and showing him that there is hope. Building homes, changing lives at its best!

If you or anyone you know who is a Raven customer needs support with hoarding, please let us know by calling **0300 123 3399**.

We will treat all information with dignity and respect, and do our best to help.

Level Up

Raven's lockdown IT project scoops Mayor award



Volunteers who provided a technology lifeline for Surrey families struggling during lockdown have been officially recognised for their sterling work.

The team behind the 'Level Up Redhill Reigate Banstead' project scooped a Volunteer Crisis Response Award in the annual Reigate & Banstead Volunteer Award scheme.

Raven and Voluntary Action Reigate and Banstead (VARB), took on and extended the local Level Up project to support families unable to afford a computer for their children's home schooling during lockdowns.

The initiative involves collecting donated unwanted laptops, refurbishing them, then

gifting them to children and teenagers. The initial focus was helping those struggling to get online for home schooling.

A total of 1,100 computers have been provided so far and over 800 are due to be distributed during the next academic year.

Steve Ward, Raven's Digital Inclusion Officer, took on the project in January 2021 after seeing a shortfall in support provided by government schemes.

He said:

"Our volunteers have done fantastic work over the past 18 months, so I am delighted that their hard work and dedication have been recognised with this award, which is very well deserved."

"Many of them volunteered after they themselves were furloughed or had to work from home, which is a tribute to their selfless commitment to making a difference in their communities and helping others through this pandemic."

"As a result of the team's hard work, students all over the borough have been thrilled with their laptops – which have opened up a range of educational and recreational opportunities for them during extremely challenging times."

Level Up's I.T volunteers replace old hard drives and install software to give computers a new lease of life, while the project's volunteer drivers collect old laptops then deliver the revamped computers to schools and colleges across the borough.

Improving your digital services

We're progressing well with our digital transformation programme. We're focusing on how we can make sure services are easy to use, trusted and valued by you, our customers. This programme is called Better Connected and it's a big task that will take a few years to complete.

We've started by improving our customer database to ensure the information we hold is accurate and up to date, and we are now developing a new website and customer portal – the 'gateway' to your online services.

None of this is possible without your involvement. As well as responding to surveys, we've listened to challenges and problems you have with our current systems and we have a customer panel working with us to help get this right.

Shuna China, Customer Engagement Manager, said:

"I would like to thank customers who recently completed the online consultation for the new website, which has played a major part in the redesign.

"Understanding your frustrations and what you want to use the website for is helping us to design a new site which fits your needs.



"We will be continuing to involve customers in the testing of the new website. Keep an eye out for news of this going live early next year."

The new customer portal, which will work seamlessly with the new website, is due to be launched at the same time and will feature new functions.

Shuna also thanked customers who completed an online consultation about the portal and said that feedback had been listened to and acted upon.

"We will soon be involving you more with designing and testing the portal, so please take part where you can." she added.

If you would like to find out more or be involved in the Better Connected Programme, please contact shuna.china@ravenht.org.uk in the first instance.

The Customer Connect Panel, our customer panel for the Better Connected Programme, might be of interest to you, see our website for more information. Find out more: www.ravenht.org.uk/communities/get-involved/resident-voice/customer-connect/



Our new Environmental Sustainability strategy

We are all concerned about our environment. International governments are meeting about climate change in Glasgow this month and our UK politicians have made ambitious commitments to change.

Locally, Surrey County Council declared a climate change emergency in 2019 and we can all see changes in our weather.

Raven has responded to these concerns by developing a new strategy and programme that will revolutionise how we

work and how your homes and estates look and operate over the next 30 years.

We started by analysing the carbon footprint of our own work. The vast majority of the carbon that Raven is responsible for comes from existing homes. We are focusing on this first but also have some other big challenges that we will be taking forward, including staff travel and how we run our offices. You can see our biggest targets below.

Work has already begun with

our first two electric vans now running, installing solar panels in many places and the first new heating projects underway.

You, our customers, have raised concerns about other important issues that affect you, such as recycling, improving energy efficiency in homes, re-wilding green spaces, reducing mileage and the installation of electric car charging points. We are working to address these matters too, for example by partnering with Reigate & Banstead Borough Council to improve recycling stores.

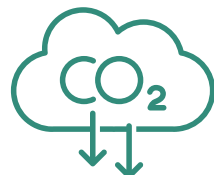
Raven's Sustainability targets

Energy

- 85% cut on CO2 emissions from 2019-2050 (electricity will become more green to deal with the other 15%)
- New homes that we build will be net zero carbon from 2021
- Fleet – 100% electric or hybrid from 2030

Operations

- 90% recycling by 2025
- Building in a more modern way
- Reduced pollutants
- Online blended working – less travel



Homes & estates

- Improved warmth and comfort
- Cheaper energy bills
- Improved biodiversity and 're-wilding' green space



How you can help

There are many ways that you can help (and save money too!). Take a look at this link <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/hub/quick-tips-to-save-energy/>.

Examples include turning off unnecessary lights and appliances, recycling, and walking, cycling or using public transport instead of a car.

The 12 saves of Christmas

The Christmas season will soon be upon us, an exciting time but also the most expensive time of the year. We don't want you to get caught out, so our Moneywise team have put together some useful tips to help you on your way to a debt-free Christmas.



Plan ahead

Make a list, not just of the presents you want to buy but also the other things you'll need, such as cards and wrapping paper.



Don't buy for everyone

Make a pact to buy just one gift or have a 'Secret Santa' where everyone buys a gift for one other person for a set amount.



Set a budget and stick to it

Nobody wants a post-Christmas debt hangover so work out what income you have coming in, what you spend on essentials like rent and utilities, and what you have left over spare for Christmas.



Shop early

Last minute shoppers often end up spending more so make the most of pre-Christmas offers. Check comparison websites to find the best deals or buy through cashback sites such as www.quidco.com or www.topcashback.co.uk.



Use free Christmas gift cheques

Presents don't have to be expensive, giving your time can be the best gift, such as breakfast in bed or cleaning someone's car. www.moneysavingexpert.com/shopping/xmas-gift-cheques



Be a practical Santa

Every child loves a bulging Christmas stocking so how about topping up with practical presents like socks, pyjamas or toiletries.





Be creative with wrapping

Don't spend a fortune on fancy wrapping paper. Recycle from old gifts, buy in bulk from discount stores or involve the kids by using parcel paper, paint and Christmas stamps.



Do it yourself

Feel the festive vibe with the kids by making Christmas cards, decorations and baking instead.



Save on the festive spread

Buy a smaller turkey and then go large on cheaper side dishes like roasties and carrots. Switch branded foods for cheaper alternatives or frozen food.



Share the load

If you're having lots of people for lunch, ask them each to bring a dish or food item. Make it fun by having a raffle with people pulling what they will bring out of a hat.



Check out local entertainment

Save money on festive outings by seeing what's on for free, such as a visit to see Santa at your nearest shopping centre, light displays, carol services at local churches or local treasure trails.

www.treasuretrails.co.uk




Plan ahead for next year

Try to buy Christmas gifts in the sales, especially toys. Bargains will cut the price of Christmas 2022.



Remember!

If you're struggling to manage your money or debts, please contact the Moneywise team on moneywise@ravenht.org.uk or **0300 123 3399!** And remember, we're here to support you!



Win £100 grocery voucher

Be sure you follow us on Facebook as towards the end of the month you'll have the chance to enter our competition to win a £100 grocery voucher. That's Christmas dinner sorted!

Universal Credit changes – have you been affected?



The government has now ended the £20 Universal Credit uplift which it had temporarily put in place during lockdown to help struggling families through the pandemic.

This extra income had become a lifeline for many and unfortunately the situation is out of Raven's control. However, we have a range of support and advice on offer for customers, as we outlined in this recent video we put together before the changes came into effect <https://bit.ly/ravenuc>

Help with managing your money – our dedicated Moneywise team are here to help. They have lots of information and advice on making your money go further, budgeting tips and checks to ensure you're getting the benefits you're entitled to. See our website to find out more or email the Moneywise team on moneywise@ravenht.org.uk.

Support with employment – our specialist team is here to help you on your journey back to work or into alternative employment. We run a number

of successful employment schemes and can provide practical help with CV writing and interview techniques. Email employment@ravenht.org.uk to find out what kind of support is available.

Remember – You are not alone!

Share any concerns you may have about paying rent with your income officer on **0300 123 3399** so we know what's going on and can provide you with any additional support you may need.

For more information

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

-  RavenHousingTrust
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