

RavenTimes

**An update from
our wardens**

Page 2

**Community
noticeboard**

Page 4

**Moneywise –
ask us anything!**

Page 6

Timperley Cookery Club

– Funded by our Brighter Community Fund

Page 10

Welcome

In this final issue of 2024, our wardens share their updates from the last few months, including recent Diwali celebrations. We have some practical tips for reducing condensation to prevent mould in your home, and we've got some great stories from our communities - the Timperley Cookery club and the new lifts at Portland House. You'll also find advice on this year's Winter Fuel Payment criteria.

As we head towards the end of the year, however you celebrate the festive season and whatever it means to you, we hope you have an enjoyable time.

Please remember if you find this time of year difficult, support is available. On page 4 you can find a list of organisations that can offer support.

An update from our wardens

Celebrating Diwali

We were pleased to be involved with the Diwali event that took place at Belfry shopping centre in Redhill at the start of November. It was fantastic to see so many people enjoying the celebrations that were organised by the Asian Social Group. Our team led a lantern making craft activity and colouring for children to join in.



We keep these areas safe by carrying out regular inspections – there are weekly checks of the playgrounds and monthly inspections of the adventure trails. Some of our wardens have recently completed additional training, which allows them to do a more detailed inspection every three months.

Although we regularly inspect these play areas, we always appreciate extra eyes. So, if you notice any issues with the playgrounds or adventure trails, please let us know.

Using bin areas correctly

As we get closer to the festive season, we're already starting to notice an increase in rubbish in communal bin areas. It's important to use the bin areas correctly as otherwise the council may refuse to collect and empty the bins.

And messy, dirty bin areas can attract vermin, like mice and rats.

We work hard to keep the bin areas clean but need your help – it's important that you use the correct bins, and dispose of any furniture or bulky items through your local council or recycling centres.

Misuse of bin areas and fly-tipping is costly to clear. Where we are able to identify individuals who are responsible for misusing the bin areas, they will be charged to cover the cost of removal. If the problem continues without knowing who is responsible, we may need to issue a block recharge.



Please report any misuse of the bin areas to us through your MyRaven online account or by calling 0300 123 3399.



Keeping play areas safe

Did you know we have a mix of eight playgrounds and adventure trails that we own and maintain? It's important to us that these play areas are kept safe and fun for children in our communities to enjoy.

Preventing condensation in your home

As we transition to the colder months of winter, it's a good time to make sure your home is well-ventilated and you're doing what you can to prevent condensation, to avoid damp and mould appearing.

A build-up of moisture in your home can lead to mould growth, which could impact your health. We want to help you avoid this, so we've put together some simple tips for preventing condensation and keeping your home dry and healthy:

- Use pan lids when cooking and turn the heat down once the water has boiled.

- Don't overfill your pans with water when cooking food like vegetables, pasta, rice or potatoes.
- When filling the bath, start with cold water and then add hot, to reduce the amount of steam produced.
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators. Dry them outdoors where possible. If you do need to dry them indoors, place them in the bathroom on

- a drying rack with the window open or extractor fan on.
- Keep trickle vents on your windows open or leave a small window slightly open to allow air flow.
- Close the bathroom and kitchen doors when these rooms are being used, to contain moisture.
- Keep your rooms warm enough, this helps to prevent condensation from forming on cold surfaces.

Why ventilation is important

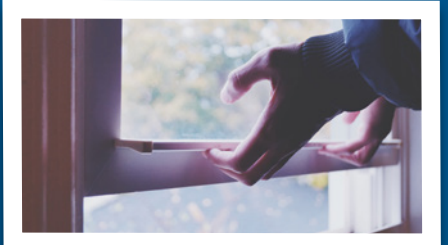
Good ventilation is key to preventing condensation, which occurs when warm, moist air meets a cooler surface. Condensation can lead to damp patches on walls, windows, and ceilings, providing the ideal conditions for mould to develop. Mould can cause respiratory issues, allergies, and other health problems, so it's essential to address condensation early.

If you notice any signs of damp or mould in your home, please let us know by raising a repair through your **MyRaven** account or giving us a call on **0300 123 3399**.

Please use a mould remover cleaning product to wipe away the mould and take photographs to show us.

We're here to help ensure your home stays safe and comfortable.

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



Community noticeboard

If there's something that you'd like to see included in the community noticeboard in the next issue then email us - raventimes@ravenht.org.uk.



Warm Welcome Spaces

There are some community spaces across Surrey where you can go to stay warm, socialise, enjoy a free hot drink and get advice on energy saving. These hubs are open now and will remain open throughout the winter months, until March. These Warm Spaces are run in partnership with Surrey County Council and local venues can be found online - www.surreycc.gov.uk/health-and-welfare/support/welfare-support/everyday-living/warm-welcome-venues or call 0300 200 1008.

Y Bus– supporting young people

YMCA East Surrey's group of qualified youth workers has a new mobile youth service called Y Bus. The bus takes activities and support to young people in Redhill centre and Whitebushes. The Y Bus is kitted out with a games console, iPad, TV and free WiFi. It's a great place for young people to spend time together and have the chance to get advice on issues like staying safe, peer pressure and mental wellbeing. **Find out more here -** www.ymcaeast Surrey.org.uk/children/youth-family-services/street-talk



Looking after your wellbeing during the festive season

For many, December is a time of joy, celebration, and gathering with friends and family. Whether it's Christmas festivities or Hanukkah traditions, this season often brings moments of connection and happiness. However, it's also important to acknowledge that for some, the festive period can feel lonely, overwhelming, or stressful.

If you're finding this time of year difficult, please know that you aren't alone. There are many support groups and helplines available to provide guidance and a listening ear. Reaching out for help when you're struggling is a brave and important step toward improving your wellbeing.

Where to find support

If you're feeling low or concerned about your mental health, consider speaking to your GP as soon as possible. They can offer professional advice and support tailored to your situation.

In situations where you need immediate help and can't access your GP, your local A&E department is there to support you in crisis. You can also reach out to the NHS 111 Helpline for advice in times of mental health emergencies.

It's okay to ask for help. By prioritising your mental health, you can take positive steps towards feeling better, even during what might be a challenging season.

For more information and guidance on dealing with mental health crises, please visit the NHS website www.nhs.uk/mental-health or contact **NHS 111**.

Samaritans -
Telephone: **116 123** (24 hours a day, free to call) Website: www.samaritans.org

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

ChildLine -
Telephone: **0800 1111**
Website: www.childline.org.uk

'Nice and quick' - new lifts at Portland House

Our residents at Portland House, a sheltered housing scheme, in Merstham are delighted with new lifts we've put into the building this year. Portland House has five floors with 41 flats for customers over the age of 55.

The block, which was built in 1970, previously had two lifts that each stopped on alternate floors. Due to their age, and despite ongoing maintenance, there were ongoing issues with the reliability of the lifts.

"You get in and you feel safe, I'm not worried these will break like the old ones." – Ann



This year we invested in two new lifts for Portland House, both of which now stop at all floors making it easier for residents to move around the building. The new lifts are also more accessible – wider to allow for easier access and large enough to fit mobility aids in.

During the process, which included major building works to widen doors and add doors to each floor, our team of Support Co-ordinators were on hand to give extra support to residents.

The new lifts are part of ongoing works at Portland House to make sure the building meets the needs of the residents who live there.

"It's lovely having two lifts that do all floors as we don't have to wait so long. They're nice and quick and so much quieter."

– Elaine





#BeLikeBetty

Be like Betty - manage your repairs on the go, 24/7. Book a repair, pay your rent, check your account and more using MyRaven.

MyRaven
Register here:
myraven.ravenht.org.uk



Moneywise – ask us anything!

Send your questions to our Moneywise team for expert advice answered here in this new regular feature.

If you have a money question for the next issue, email it to raventimes@ravenht.org.uk.

Remember, all customers - whether you're a rented tenant or homeowner - can receive **FREE** personalised Moneywise support. Raise an enquiry on **MyRaven** or call **0300 123 3399** for an initial chat.



Q I'm worried about how I might be affected by the Government's announcement that the Winter Fuel Payment is means tested this year. What does it mean for me?

A You're not alone in feeling concerned as the eligibility for receiving Winter Fuel Payment has changed. To be eligible for the payment you'll need to have been born before 23 September 1958 and you must have been receiving one of the following means tested benefits during the week of 16-22 September 2024: Pension Credit, Universal Credit, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit.

If you meet these requirements, you should still receive the Winter Fuel Payment as usual. However, if you don't meet the criteria or if you were in a care home for more than 13 weeks by 22 September 2024 then you won't be eligible this year.

What to do if you're not eligible for Winter Fuel Payment

If you don't qualify this year, there may still be options to help you manage the cost of energy this winter. Some utility companies offer grants and other support to people on low incomes, especially those who would have depended on the Winter Fuel Payment in the past. There are also a number of local charities who can offer grants and help if you're struggling with heating costs. Our Moneywise team is here to help you work out what grants you might qualify for.

It's also worth looking at the Warm Welcome Spaces website for a list of community centres, libraries and other public spaces that are open as warm hubs during the winter. These places are free for anyone to go to as a warm place to relax to save on heating bills at home.

Be aware of scams

We've been made aware of scam emails, phone calls and texts asking you to enter personal details to claim grants. Please be very cautious to protect your information and use trusted teams, like our Moneywise team, to help you claim grants.

Energy saving tips

- Lowering your thermostat by just 1 degree will reduce energy costs
- Batch cook and freeze, reducing energy use by not cooking so often
- Switch to energy saving lightbulbs

You can use LEAP's (Local Energy Advice Partnership) free energy advice service to find more ways to save money. **Find out more at** – www.applyforleap.org.uk.



We Hear You – making improvements to our services

We appreciate the time you take to share your feedback with us – both the positives and the things we can improve. We listen to what you tell us through complaints and other feedback and use it to make our services better.

Here are some recent examples:

You said: You wanted the opportunity to give feedback on repairs carried out on your home so any issues can be quickly resolved.

We did: We've introduced repairs satisfaction texts that are sent before a repairs case is closed, allowing us to quickly identify any dissatisfaction and put it right.

You said: You wanted to know how to raise a complaint and understand what happens if you do.

We did: We have reviewed our complaints information on our website making it clear what happens if you raise a formal complaint with us and the support that is available during the process.

You said: Some communal areas have had grounds maintenance missed, and you wanted more inspections on the quality of work carried out.

We did: We've revised the areas on our mapping system to ensure they are up to date and our Grounds Maintenance Contract Manager is carrying out regular checks on our estates.

You said: It wasn't clear on repair responsibility when a disabled adaptation was carried out by a third party contractor.

We did: When we're told about a disabled adaptation we're recording this on our system and if a repair is required, we can easily identify who needs to carry this out.

How to provide feedback

MyRaven: use your online account to make a complaint or raise an enquiry
Call us: **0300 123 3399** or Email: raven@ravenht.org.uk



How we're performing

We're busy working towards our Delivering What Matters three year plan and part of this is making sure we're open, trustworthy and transparent with how we're getting on.

You can find the latest information, including figures from July – September 2024 on our website – www.ravenht.org.uk/delivering-what-matters-performance.

These figures are our way to check whether the improvements we're making are in fact delivering what matters, and improving our services to you as a customer.



Policy updates

Recent policy updates

Recently, we asked for your help to update our Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Allocations Policy. We reviewed these policies with your input through surveys, and we're grateful for your honest and valuable feedback.

You can see these updated policies and others on our website – www.ravenht.org.uk/our-policies/customer-policies

Banstead couple champions swift conservation with Raven's help

Since moving to their Raven flat in Banstead in 2017, Annie and Barry have found new purpose in protecting local swifts. Originally avid birdwatchers in Cornwall, they shifted focus from choughs to swifts after spotting a few of these remarkable migratory birds circling their neighbourhood.

Swifts, now on the UK's Red List due to a 62% population drop between 1995 and 2021, are facing severe threats from habitat loss and climate change.

Inspired to help, Annie and Barry joined the Swift Local Network and national Swift Conservation group,

and set up the Swift Protection Association Banstead (SPAB) on Facebook. They also partnered with our Biodiversity Manager to support the local "Banstead Colony," now with six nesting sites.

In response to the couple's dedication, we've installed nine swift boxes, with plans for additional swift bricks next spring to promote colony growth. Annie said: "The boxes and bricks will definitely help the colony and hopefully mean it will be able to become much bigger in the future. As long as the swifts aren't impacted by climate change too much, The Banstead Colony will be here beyond my lifetime.

"I feel a lot happier now that our swift colony has people looking out for it. I've definitely seen more of them in the flying colony this year and an increase in active nests, which is largely due to Raven's commitment. I feel a lot more confident about their future."

Find out more about how to get involved in Banstead by emailing bansteadswifts@gmail.com or for other areas, you can report sightings through the RSPB.



Parashoot – supporting people facing homelessness or eviction

If you, or someone you know, is facing homelessness or the risk of eviction, then our Parashoot team is here to help. You don't need to be a Raven customer to access Parashoot support, you just need to live in the Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge or Epsom and Ewell areas.

Parashoot is a dedicated and experienced support team for individuals, couples and families. They help people navigate the benefits system, create a budget, and tackle complex paperwork. They also support with guidance of how to get a new tenancy and secure their current tenancy, if possible. The Parashoot team can also help with finding support with mental health issues and challenges relating to alcohol or drug dependency.

In the 2023-24 financial year, our Parashoot team received 218 referrals like this story from Miss S.

Helping Miss S build a new future

Miss S was living with her two children and her ex-partner, who was abusive and struggled with heavy drinking. She was the only working person in the home, trying to pay all the household bills. Miss S wanted a fresh start, by moving her family away and finding a safe new home where she could rebuild her life.

After being referred to Parashoot, the team worked closely with Miss S, initially helping her to access mental health support and guidance through East Surrey Domestic Abuse Service (ESDAS) and Talking Therapies. From there, the team helped her to apply to the local council's Housing Register and guided her to set up a private rental tenancy to quickly move her out of her current, unsafe home. Budgeting was key, and the team guided Miss S through creating manageable budgets to help her afford the move.

Parashoot also helped to simplify the benefits process for Miss S, making sure she accessed all the benefits she was entitled to, including Universal Credit. From helping her secure affordable broadband, to connecting her with local charities for home essentials, Parashoot provided the all-round support Miss S needed to find a safe new home, and make it comfortable.

Today, Miss S is pleased she has a safer, more secure future for her and her family.

Need help?

You can self-refer for Parashoot support or get a referral from a professional or agency such as a housing provider, social worker or GP.

Find out more on our website - www.ravenht.org.uk/parashoot.

Homeowner news

Thank you to everyone who attended our Homeowner Residents' Meeting in September. It was brilliant to see so many of you there and some useful, honest and open discussions were had.

From our Homeowner performance results www.ravenht.org.uk/homeowner-performance, we know there's room for improvement and we're committed to working with you to identify what we should focus on.

You've told us you want to see:

- More clarity on service charge estimates and reconciliation.
- Updated website pages for transparency and with useful information.
- More communication around communal repairs, for example where and when they will take place.
- Increase in estate and block inspections to pick up issues like lights not working.

This is all currently being worked on through the Homeowner Improvement Plan.

If you have any additional suggestions about what you'd like to see on the Homeowner website pages then please let us know by emailing homeownership@ravenht.org.uk.

Homeowner FAQs

We have a selection of Homeowner frequently asked questions on our website, which you can see here - www.ravenht.org.uk/homeowner-faqs



Timperley Cookery Club – Funded by our Brighter Community Fund

The Timperley Cookery Club is cooking up more than just delicious meals - it's a place for local mums to make friends, learn new skills and get support each week. Members of the club not only share budget-friendly recipe ideas but each session they also learn to cook a new meal which they take home for their family to enjoy.

This club brings together both confident home cooks and those who want to get better with their cooking skills. Clare, who co-ordinates the group, said: "Most members live locally in Timperley Gardens, but we're also delighted to partner with Redhill Food Club and St. Matthew's

Food Bank, welcoming referrals through these connections. Each session at Timperley Cookery Club celebrates food, friendship and the joy of sharing. We're deeply grateful to Raven for generously funding the group this year."

We're really pleased to be able to fund the club this year through our Brighter Community Fund, which supports local community projects and activities. The club is held at 7th Reigate Scout Hut, the meeting place for Timperley Church, part of Holy Trinity Church Redhill. The Timperley Cookery club is also supported by Eli Karlicka-Cook, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's Community Development Worker (Redhill West), Holy Trinity Church, Diocese of Southwark, and a team of volunteers from Holy Trinity Church.



Do you have a local community project that could be supported by the Brighter Community Fund?

Find out more about making an application to the Brighter Community Fund on our website - www.ravenht.org.uk/brighter-community-fund

"Cookery Club is special because it's welcoming to everyone. My favourite part is getting a good cup of coffee, chatting while we cook something delicious, and then going home with a meal for tea and a feeling of support from my community."

– Cookery Club member

"Cookery Club is amazing. I love that it brings people from the community together from all walks of life. Sharing recipes, tips, and tricks has helped me encourage my children to eat healthily and appreciate the value of cooking from scratch. My fondest memory of the club was one rough morning, I was running late, but the moment I walked in, the smells, the smiles, and the laughter lifted my mood."

– Katie, a Raven customer and Cookery Club member.

Go paperless for your rent statement

As part of our ongoing commitment to sustainability, we're inviting you to opt out of receiving your quarterly rent statements by post.

By opting out, you'll receive an email notification each quarter when your account is ready to view on your MyRaven online account.

How to opt out:

Call us on **0300 123 3399**

On the **'My accounts'** page of your **MyRaven** online account.



Do we have up to date information about you?

We recently sent you a form by post asking for up to date information about you and your family or other occupants.

If you haven't already, please take the time to complete this form and return it to us using the prepaid envelope provided. By telling us your first language, as well as letting us know about any impairments, physical health, mental health or neurodiversity information, we can make necessary adjustments and improve the service you receive from us.

If you'd prefer to, you can update this information through your **MyRaven** online account or call us on **0300 123 3399**.

Please log into **MyRaven**



Christmas Opening Hours

Christmas Eve	9am - 4pm
Christmas Day	Closed
Boxing Day	Closed
Friday 27 th December	9am-4pm
Monday 30 th December	9am-4pm
New Year's Eve	9am-4pm
New Year's Day	Closed

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

Provide feedback

We welcome your feedback about our services. We want to know what we're doing well and where you think we can improve.

Report it!:

if you have a repair that needs fixing or need to report anti-social behaviour then get in touch through your MyRaven online account, by calling **0300 123 3399** or emailing **raven@ravenht.org.uk**.



General feedback:

if you have an idea or suggestion about our services then please contact us on **0300 123 3399** or email **raven@ravenht.org.uk**.



I have a complaint:

call us on **0300 123 3399**, email **raven@ravenht.org.uk** or raise it through **MyRaven**.



Compliments:

if you have a compliment about a member of our team or our service then we'd love to hear from you. You can call us on **0300 123 3399** or email **raven@ravenht.org.uk**.

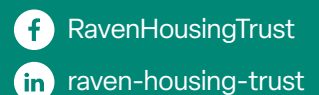


What do you want to see in Raven Times?

This is **your** quarterly magazine to show you what's going on at Raven and in our communities. We'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!

Follow us:



RavenHousingTrust

raven-housing-trust