

Prime Time News



Summer 2023

Welcome to *Prime Time News*, the newsletter for Curo sheltered housing customers and older residents in the prime of life.

Come to a
Community
Catch-up with
Jamie and
Michelle



This summer we'll be driving to communities across the South West to hear your views.

Our Resident Engagement team will be out and about in the communities we work in throughout the summer. Jamie Nicholson-Ruther and Michelle Sage (pictured) are looking forward to meeting residents face to face, answering your questions and helping you to get more involved with Curo.

From Bath to Frome, Trowbridge to Bristol, South Gloucestershire to rural communities, Michelle and Jamie will be hitting the road in their van, bringing resident engagement to your doorstep.



For a full list of dates and locations see, www.curo-group.co.uk/communitycatchup. If you'd like more information, please email voicebox@curo-group.co.uk. Ask your Independent Living Officer or Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help getting online.

Curo grants support local projects

Over the past year, Curo has given out 22 Communities Grants totalling £10,010 to support local projects. These have ranged from a memorial garden, to children's football teams and breaks for children with disabilities.

A Communities Grant funded a Jubilee tea party in Odd Down, Bath, last year. "The event brought elderly residents together after the lockdowns of the pandemic," said resident Viv Fear, who applied for the grant.



Could your community benefit from a grant? If so, get in touch with us at VoiceBox@curo-group.co.uk or see www.curo-group.co.uk/grants. Ask your Independent Living Officer or Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help getting online.

www.curo-group.co.uk





Hat trick

Bringing our bonnet-making workshop to you.

In March this year, our Resident Engagement team visited Greenacres Court, St John's Court and Hawthorn Court to put on Easter bonnet-making workshops for residents.

"I decorated two bonnets for my great grandchildren, aged eight and three," said resident Mari Maher (pictured with Curo's Communications and Media Manager Marianne Rawlins), who crafted at the Greenacres Court workshop. "They'll get a lovely surprise when they see them!"

Michelle Sage, Resident Engagement Co-ordinator, says: "We didn't want residents in sheltered housing to miss out on our Easter bonnet competition, so we brought the crafting to them."

Congratulations to our overall competition winners! Olivia from Keynsham won the 0-8 category – we love her addition of chocolate eggs and a chick! Erin, from Bath, won our 9-15 category with a beautiful bunny-adorned creation, while Bethany, also in Bath, won the 16s and over category with her gorgeously detailed bonnet, topped with flowers.



Have your say at SHOP

Do you want to get your voice heard on the services Curo provide? If so, we'd love to see you at Curo's Sheltered Housing for Older People (SHOP) Group.

The groups are chaired by elected customer Keith Bridges, with Curo colleagues dropping in to give updates and answer questions. All policies affecting Curo's Older Persons Service must be tabled at SHOP before they're approved.

Keith says: "We'd love more residents to join SHOP. We're a friendly bunch who meet every six weeks - meeting next on Wednesday 12 July."

To join give us a call on 01225 366135 or email shop@curo-group.co.uk. Ask your Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help getting online.

Calling all gardeners!

This year, our Curo in Bloom competition has four categories: Community Garden; Large Garden; Small Garden; and Pots, Balconies and Hanging Baskets.

To enter, log on to VoiceBox, look for the category you want and upload pictures of your green space.

If you need help, email VoiceBox@curo-group.co.uk. Ask Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help getting online.

STAY SAFE AT HOME

Curo's Independent Living Service is a lifeline for Keynsham resident, Wendy Gordon (pictured, right).

Our Independent Living Service (ILS) provides an experienced and dedicated support worker to help customers with everything from applying for benefits to doing the weekly shop – and much more.

Through the service, Wendy Gordon's ILS Worker, Caron Mills (pictured, left), gives practical and emotional support to Wendy. She's helped get adaptations made to Wendy's home, such as an accessible shower and a wider path. These small changes have made a big difference, allowing Wendy to feel safe at home.

A listening ear

Caron is also a friendly ear for Wendy, helping her with admin tasks that she finds frustrating or overwhelming.

"I can talk to caron and she really listens to what i'm saying," says wendy.

Your Corination celebrations

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Different levels of support are personalised to the customer's needs, from just £4.70 a week.

Wendy suffers from health problems, including a broken neck and PTSD, and has found it difficult to trust people in the past. "But Caron always has a smile," says Wendy. "There are some people you automatically know you can rely on and Caron is one of them."

Through the ILS, Wendy also gets an Appello alarm. This life-saving pendant alarm service is monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. "It's a confidence boost," says Wendy. "I know I only have to press the alarm and I've got support. It's so easy to use and brings me great peace of mind." chance," says Jack.

GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED AT HOME

If you or a loved one need support to stay living independently at home, Curo's ILS is here to help. It can be used by anyone who needs support who is over the age of 18, if they live in Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire or North Somerset.

To find out more call Curo on 01225 366135 or email ILS@curo-group.co.uk and find out how the service can help.

Quote discount code **ILSPRIM** to get two weeks free of charge. This offer is valid until the end of June 2023.





“The Money Advice Service is a godsend”



Curo customer Brigid Nolan (pictured) describes how our Money Advice Service, helped to transform her finances.

Brigid says: “I’m so grateful to Curo’s Money Advice service. I was struggling with my rent and had fallen into arrears, when an advisor from the service contacted me to see if she could help.

“We made an appointment for her to visit me at home to talk about my finances. Together we went through my income and outgoings. We looked at the benefits I might be missing out on and how I could minimise my debt.

“My income is quite good, but I’d started to buy things online and it had all got out of hand. My health issues make it hard to leave the house and I’d started spending because I felt so isolated.

“My online spending meant I’d stopped paying my water bill. The advisor called Wessex Water and arranged a repayment plan. It’s a weight off my mind.”

Getting free support

“I’d thought I wasn’t entitled to Housing Benefit, but the advisor found out that, in fact, I was eligible for a small amount and helped me to apply. It was only £1.23 a week, but it means that I’m eligible for free support from Curo’s Livewell service. The advisor referred me and a Livewell Officer now visits regularly. They help me with paperwork, including applying for a Blue Badge disabled parking permit.

“I was receiving the standard Personal Independent Payment rate, but the advisor helped me to apply for the higher rate, boosting my income. We’ve also set up a direct debit to pay my rent and my rent arrears.

“It’s a godsend that the advisor has managed my finances. I’ve told her that I’ve never felt so supported in my life. It makes me feel so good that someone cared enough to help me.”

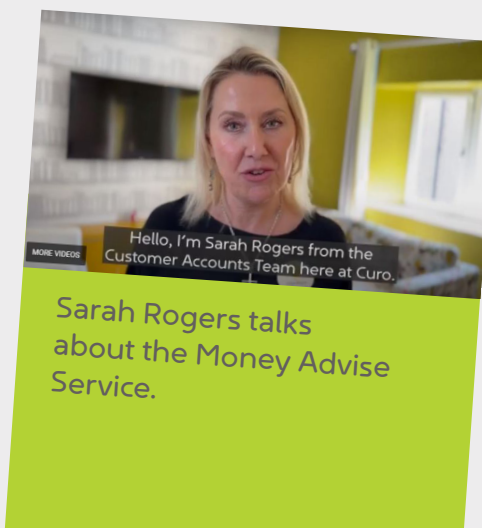
Do you need money advice?



Our Money Advice colleagues are ready to share their knowledge and expertise with you.

Take a look at Sarah Rogers from our Customer Accounts team talk about the Money advice Service in a short video. Head over to www.curo-group.co.uk/moneyadvice. to watch the video - If you need help getting online contact your Sheltered Housing Officer.

Contact us either by phone on 01225 366000, or by email: customeraccountshelp@curo-group.co.uk. We really want to help.



“I love that I can change people’s lives”



Curo’s Money Advisor Sam Saye explains how her team is here to help residents with money worries.

Tell us a bit about your role as Money Advisor at Curo?

I look into our customers’ finances and leave no stone unturned in helping to ease their money worries. I do this by maximising their benefits; helping with budgeting; offering advice on reducing expenditure; and explaining anything they don’t understand about the benefits system.

What do you like most about your job?

The ability I have to change people’s lives through my knowledge of money and the benefits system.

What’s the most common financial worry that customers have and how can you help them?

Some customers have buried their heads in the sand for so long that they can’t see a way out. I listen to their problems and provide support with anything they’re dealing with. It’s heartbreaking that some customers are struggling to find money to eat or heat their home.

How can you help older customers in particular?

Some older people don’t know about the benefits they can claim. For example, around £1.7 billion in Pension Credit goes unclaimed each year. It’s a benefit for people over State Pension age which tops up your income. You’re eligible if either you or your partner have both reached State Pension age and one of you is getting Housing Benefit. Also, if a customer over pension age has disabilities, there are benefits that can help fund day-to-day care – and these could unlock further benefit entitlements.

If a customer is worried about their finances but nervous about getting in touch, what would you say to them?

We can see you either face-to-face or talk over the phone. The sooner you ask for help, the sooner the light will appear at the end of the tunnel. Whatever your circumstances we will try our best to turn the situation around. Can us on 01225 366000.

Council Cash Machine Payments

A small number of residents pay their rent via the Council Cash Machine at their local council buildings.

Bath & North East Somerset are planning to withdraw this service, so from 1 September Curo will stop using this payment method. If you pay by this method, instead simply set up a Direct Debit to pay directly from your bank or building society account.

You can find out about other ways to pay your rent online: www.curo-group.co.uk/pay

Ask your Independent Living Officer or Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help setting up a payment.



Tenant Satisfaction Measures explained



Paul Harris, Executive Director of Customer Experience, explains why TSMs will give us a new way of listening to customers.

At some point in the year ahead you may be contacted by a specialist agency who'll be running a perception survey for us. If you have the time, we'd love you to give your thoughts and help us improve our services.

The survey, carried out by an independent company, will tell us what residents think about our services as part of the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

All housing associations will shortly be collecting data associated with the TSMs, which are part of stronger regulation in our sector. These have been developed over the past couple of years in consultation with residents, housing associations and Government. The TSMs will provide standard information on the areas we think are most important. These are:

- Keeping Properties in Good Repair
- Maintaining Building Safety
- Effective Handling of Complaints
- Respectful and Helpful Engagement
- Responsible Neighbourhood Management

We have to report to the Regulator next summer (in 2024) with the first year's data (from April 2023). You'll be able to see how we've performed, and compare this to other housing associations in the area.

While we've always collected data on our performance and our customers' perception of this, having a clearly focused set of measures like the TSMs will give Curo more opportunity to identify where we need to improve. We only have to supply the information to the Regulator annually, but we'll be reviewing it each month to check on progress, and will be discussing regularly with our customers to agree areas to focus on.

How can I see the results?

We'll share the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measure survey with our resident involvement groups and publish them in Prime Time News, as well as on our website and social media.

All about the Independent Living Service

The Independent Living Service is here to support people to live at home, independently, without the need to move into supported accommodation.

We offer a range of services to suit you or your loved one/s, with varying levels of support.

We support anyone over the age of 18, living in Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

When you contact us we'll arrange a visit from one of our experienced colleagues to answer any questions you have and explain the service and the kind of support we can provide.

➔ Give us a call on **01225 366135** or email **ILS@curo-group.co.uk** and let's see how we can help. Quote discount code **ILSPT** to get two weeks FREE. This offer is valid until the end of May 2023.

PEOPLE PERSON

Ricky Turner, Sheltered Housing Officer, tells us a bit about his role helping residents stay safe and supported.



Tell us a bit about your role...

It's very varied. I'm responsible for carrying out inspections, reporting repairs, testing alarms and checking that our customers' details are up to date. I also act as a mediator when there are any disagreements in our communities. I'm a good problem-solver and like to think I have great people skills, so mediation suits my personality.

What does a typical day look like for you?

No two days are the same! But usually when I get to Hillcrest, where I'm based, I'll have a coffee, read my emails, then make some calls to check on customers' wellbeing. After lunch, I'll drive to one of our other schemes to carry out health and safety checks and inspect for issues such as fly-tipping. Then it's back to the office to do more admin, including writing up my notes and uploading photos.

What do you love about your role?

It always keeps me on my toes! For example, I love that I can mediate between two groups – helping solve individuals' problems often brings the whole community together. I also get a lot of satisfaction

from getting repairs done to customers' homes. Recently when I helped get a customer's gate fixed, they phoned me up to thank me personally – it meant that much to them.

What did you do before joining Curo?

I worked in social care for 10 years from the age of 18, including roles at the Royal United Hospital, Bath, and for private care agencies. My current job means I'm not doing personal care anymore, but other aspects are similar – my job is still people centred and I'm promoting customers' independence.

If you could have any super-power, what would it be?

That's easy – flying! I love being in nature – I'm a real outdoors person. I have two Jack Russell Terriers, Ruby and Rosie, who are actually mother and daughter. They're always demanding I take them for walks!

Book a Community Room

Curo Community Rooms are spaces to come together for activities and events, or even just a cuppa and catch-up. "You're never too far from a Community Room," says Ricky Turner, Sheltered Housing Officer.

Recently, Ricky's been helping get Curo Communities Grants to support Community Room events (see page 1). "I helped get a grant for Hillcrest residents to buy a bingo machine (pictured)," says Ricky. "Their regular bingo nights mean so much to them. At Odd Down residents put on Friday fish-and-chip suppers in their Community Room. Events like these bring people together."

Perhaps you'd like to use one of our Community Rooms to host your own activity such as a coffee morning, exercise or craft group? Booking is free for customers – just ask your Sheltered Housing Officer or call Curo's Customer Contact Team on 01225 366000.

Community Rooms near you...

- Bath: Bathampton (St Nicholas Court); Larkhall (Swainswick Gardens); Park House; Twerton (Quebec); Trinity Road; Weston (Chandler Close); Whiteway (Blagdon Park)
- Keynsham: Carpenter's Lane; Queens Rd
- Midsomer Norton: Pine Court; Welton Vale
- Peasedown St John: Hillcrest; St John's Close
- Saltford: Hinton and Iford
- Wellow: Manor Close



Tea-break teaser...

Congratulations to Audrey Clark from Bath who won £50 in Love2shop vouchers in our spring wordsearch competition.

This issue we're giving away £50 in Love2shop vouchers. For your chance to win, courtesy of MyCuro, Curo's secure online portal for residents, find words below in this issue's wordsearch.

MyCuro can be a handy tool to use if you want to get in touch with Curo. From letting us know of any repairs to making a safe and secure payment, to sending us enquiries and getting an easy connection to Livechat where you can speak to a colleague in our Contact Centre.

If you'd like to find out more about MyCuro, ask your Livewell

Officer to show you more, or if you have access to the internet have a go at registering yourself, by visiting my.curo-group.co.uk

Find all the hidden Easter words listed, and either post or email your wordsearch to ils@curo-group.co.uk with Prime Time Wordsearch as subject, or post to **Prime Time Wordsearch, Freepost CURO**, to arrive by **12 July**, and we'll pick one lucky winner.

Full T&Cs available on request or at www.curo-group.co.uk/competitions



How many Summer words can you find?

H	S	P	K	Q	F	A	H	F	E	C	S	T	B
G	T	A	A	I	Y	T	C	L	D	A	E	N	G
J	I	M	N	P	P	G	A	O	A	N	L	N	P
X	V	V	R	D	R	A	E	W	N	O	C	F	K
W	H	B	E	A	C	X	B	E	O	E	I	B	C
J	F	T	R	I	W	A	D	R	M	I	S	M	V
V	I	Z	N	G	C	V	S	S	E	N	P	Q	F
K	Y	C	C	R	V	X	V	T	L	G	O	J	X
C	I	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	L	L	P	A	E
P	G	A	R	D	E	N	I	N	G	E	L	Q	M
N	O	L	E	M	R	E	T	A	W	E	G	G	M
S	W	I	M	S	U	I	T	V	E	D	R	Y	M
L	S	E	S	S	A	L	G	N	U	S	U	T	K
T	A	W	F	V	T	B	C	C	U	P	R	B	O

BEACH
CANOEING
FLOWERS
GARDENING
HOLIDAY
KITE
LEMONADE
PICNIC
POPSICLES
RELAX
SANDCASTLE
SUNGLASSES
SWIMSUIT
WARMTH
WATERMELON

Name:

Telephone:

Choccy Banana Brownies



Perfect for picnics, these brownies-with-a-twist are a tasty way to use up overripe bananas.

Makes 24

Ingredients

- 200g light brown sugar
- 175g unsalted butter, diced
- 100g self-raising flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 3 medium eggs, beaten
- 2 medium ripe bananas, mashed

Method

Preheat oven to 180 °C, gas mark 4. Grease and line a 30x20 cm Swiss roll tin with baking parchment.

Melt the sugar, chocolate and butter in a bowl over a pan of simmering water. When melted, remove from the heat and mix well to combine the melted ingredients.

Sift the flour, cocoa and baking powder into a bowl. Add the chocolate mix, eggs and bananas and stir well to combine.

Pour into the tin and push the mixture into the edges. Bake for 25-30 minutes until just firm in the centre. Cool in the tin, then turn out and cut into 24 pieces.