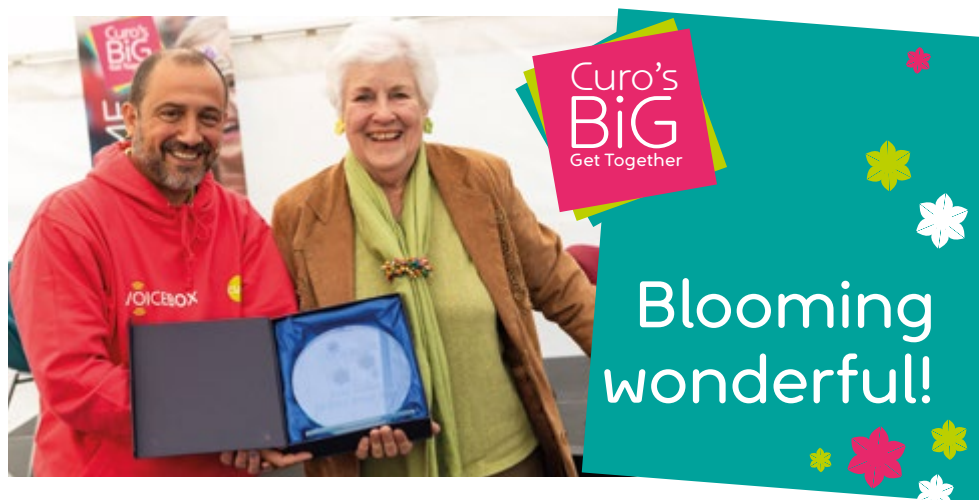


Prime Time News

Winter 2024



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



Fay Wright (pictured with Victor da Cunha) was one of the residents who picked up a Curo in Bloom prize at Curo's annual awards.

Keynsham resident Len Griffin won the Community Hero of the Year award at this year's Curo Awards for the kindness and support he shows to his neighbours.

"Len is so helpful, his cheerfulness is brilliant," said one nomination. "He's a special person."

Victor da Cunha, Curo's Chief Executive, presented the awards at this year's Big Get Together, Curo's annual residents' event, which took place at Mulberry Park, Bath, on Saturday 14 September. More than 700 people attended the event.

Ian Carter accepted the Community of the Year Award on behalf of Toynbee Road and Samuel Barnett Close, Bristol. He said: "In our community, we are people of different backgrounds,

but we've all come together to look after each other. I have never felt this sense of belonging before, and I know it's good for our health and wellbeing."

Residents Dawn Neale, Fay Wright and Patricia Dennis picked up Curo in Bloom awards – recognising the time and effort they put into their gardens and balconies – while Wellgarth Court, Bristol, won Community Garden of the Year.

Victor said: "Curo's annual awards are a chance to recognise the fantastic work of residents in the communities we serve. It was a real privilege to meet Len and Ian and hear how they make a difference in their communities. Congratulations as well to all the Curo in Bloom winners, who are making their communities brighter and more beautiful places to live."

Design Curo's Christmas CARD COMPETITION 2024

It's time to enter our annual Christmas Card competition! Simply draw your festive masterpiece on a blank piece of paper or card. You can then give your design to your Independent Living, Sheltered Housing or Livewell Officer, who will be able to pass it onto us. Or you can send it to Christmas Card Competition, Freepost CURO.

Each winning designer gets £50 in Love2shop vouchers, just in time for Christmas. Plus, we'll use our favourite designs for the official 2024 Curo Christmas cards.

The closing date is Sunday 24 November 2024, so get creative!



Curo's Vision and Strategy 2024-34

Find out all
about Curo's
new 10-year
Strategy and
Vision, which
we launched
at the Big Get
Together in
September.

Customers have been at the centre of creating our 10-year Vision: Everyone Feels Proud about the Quality of our Homes. Our Strategy is called: What Good Looks Like in 2034.

To make this vision a reality, colleagues will work together to focus on five strategic objectives: Quality Homes, Purposeful Culture, Trusted Customer Services, Collaboration & Growth and Solid Foundations. These objectives are each underpinned by three key goals. Read on to find out more about each strategic objective.

Quality Homes

To ensure all homes are well looked after, energy efficient, meet modern day standards and inspire pride. We will:

- Invest in homes and shared spaces to make them comfortable, safe, energy-efficient and welcoming for everyone.
- Provide top-notch repairs, maintenance and home improvements that are timely, efficient and valued by customers.
- Use innovative technology that helps us take care of homes, reduces waste and protects the planet.

Purposeful Culture

To create a high-performing and engaged organisation which attracts, develops and retains diverse, talented people. We will:

- Recruit great talent because of our outstanding employer offer and clear social purpose.
- Create a vibrant, inclusive work environment where skilled leaders ensure every colleague feels valued and invested in.
- Celebrate our culture, where high performance delivers exceptional outcomes for customers.

Trusted Customer Services

To deliver high-quality, reliable services that meet the needs of our customers and communities. We will:

- Always keep our promises – customers trust us to deliver and to understand their unique needs.

- Really listen to customers, value their feedback and support, and act on what we hear.
- Support customers with the resources and skills they need to build strong, happy and self-sustaining communities.

Collaboration & Growth

To build new homes and work with others to maximise social value and commercial revenues. We will:

- Build more homes – the high-quality, energy-efficient and affordable homes that our region needs.
- Work with partners to offer services that make customers' lives happier and healthier.
- Consider opportunities for growth and new income that can help us deliver more and better.

Solid Foundations

To build an effective, sustainable and innovative organisation with strong business services that support continuous improvement. We will:

- Invest in strategic planning and governance to ensure value for money and the long-term success of the organisation, including our journey to net zero.
- Implement user-friendly and efficient IT systems that help us provide excellent homes and services for customers.
- Prioritise learning and improvement using high-quality data.

We'll make
our Vision
come to life
through five
strategic
objectives.

“ ”

FIND OUT MORE

There's more information about Curo's 10-year strategy online - visit:

[curo-group.co.uk/
ourtenyearstrategy](https://curo-group.co.uk/ourtenyearstrategy)

Ask your Independent Living, Livewell or Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help getting online.

A SHARED VISION

At the Big Get Together, Curo customers got a chance to directly ask members of our leadership team about Curo's new Strategy and Vision.

1. Darius Jean asked Victor da Cunha, Chief Executive: "Your new Vision is Everyone Feels Proud about the Quality of our Homes. Why is quality important?"

Victor said: "It's a vision that residents and Curo have put together. And it's got the word 'our' because of that – it's a shared vision of what we've heard from residents is important. They've said to us, when all things are said and done, the most important thing is the quality of my home. That's the most important thing a housing association should focus on. It doesn't sound all that world shattering, but it's absolutely important that we're clear what customers really want us to focus on. That's what we put at the heart of our Vision. That's what we want to achieve in the next ten years."

2. Paul Roles asked Ticki Toogood, Director of Organisational Development: "How will having a high-performing and engaged workforce lead to real improvements in the quality of our homes?"

Ticki said: "Having highly skilled teams who are invested in means that people are more

engaged and motivated in their work. This leads to colleagues working to a higher standard, which in turn creates high-performing teams. So ultimately, by investing in our colleagues, we're investing in the quality of our homes."

3. Zhoe Mitchell asked Julie Evans, Chief Customer Officer: "It's a 10-year strategy; what are the first steps you're going to be taking to improve the quality of our homes?"

Julie said: "So the first step is to understand from our customers what quality means to them. We've had feedback from around 500 of our customers who've told us that they want to make sure that they're living in a home that's safe, warm and affordable to heat. From this feedback, we're currently working on a proposed home standard, which will set out what type of Curo home would make our customers proud. We'll then be creating some example homes, getting feedback from customers on those and looking at potential costs."

4. Ian Carter asked Andrew Snee, Director of Tenancy Management and Compliance: "Trusted Customer Services means that you'll always keep your promises – how are you going to guarantee this?"

Andrew said: "We need to build relationships with our customers, so that we're working more closely together with them. I'm a real believer that colleagues should get out of the office and into our communities. We need to be going out and giving customers opportunities to influence our services and to look at what we should be delivering in the future. Our Community Catch-ups are a



Above: customers interview leadership team members

good example of this. So those conversations are happening, and we're hearing from people in their communities about the issues that really do matter to them. And I think we then move from consultation into a world of co-creation, where we started to create things together, to improve the lives of all of our customers."

5. Julia Hawkins asked Paul Harris, Chief Customer Officer:

"There's a huge shortage of housing for families in the South West, with more than 5,500 families on the council's waiting list. What are you doing to build more homes?"

Paul said: "In a good year, we might build 300 homes. We have to sell two-thirds of those homes on the open market – the profits from these sales cover the cost of building the other third. We also buy affordable homes from other developers. When developers build a large estate, they have to sell 30% of those homes as affordable – we buy about 300 homes a year this way. So we are adding more affordable homes. What else we can do is try to influence Government, local MPs and

councils, because the housing crisis is not a problem that we can solve on our own – but we're trying to play our part."

6. Ella Hanson asked Jane Smith, Chief People Officer:

"Solid Foundations means that Curo colleagues will have the technology to do their jobs efficiently. How will this mean a quicker service for customers?"

Jane said: "Right now, even though our colleagues aim to provide excellent service, the systems and information they use behind the scenes aren't as user-friendly as they could be. So, we're planning to improve our systems, but it will take some time. Technology plays a crucial role in the world today and this improvement will reflect that. For example, these new systems will have customer-focused workflows and more automation. One of the biggest frustrations for customers right now is around communication. With this new technology, much of that communication will be automated, so customers won't have to rely solely on colleagues for updates. This will make customers feel less frustrated and more informed."

"Solid Foundations means that Curo colleagues will have the technology to do their jobs efficiently. How will this mean a quicker service for customers?"



Watch online

You can watch videos of these interviews online: curo-group.co.uk/strategyquestions

Ask your Independent Living, Livewell or Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help getting online.



Are you eligible?

Pensioners no longer automatically get the Winter Fuel Payment, but we can help you check if you still qualify for it.

Who used to get the Winter Fuel Payment?

Previously, anyone aged over 66 received the Winter Fuel Payment, paid directly into their bank or building society to help with the cost of energy bills.

Who's eligible now?

You must now be claiming Pension Credit to receive the Winter Fuel Payment. Pension Credit is a benefit for people over State Pension age, which tops up their income. To get the benefit,

your income must be below a certain threshold. Around £1.7 billion in Pension Credit goes unclaimed each year.

How do I know if I'm eligible?

It's straightforward to check online. Your Sheltered Housing, Independent Living or Livewell Officer are specially trained to help check your eligibility for benefits and support you to claim. Please do ask them for help.

Peace of mind

Miss Green* lives in a Curo sheltered bungalow. When she reached pension age, Kim Tanner, Livewell Officer, visited and helped her apply for her State Pension. When the Department for Work and Pensions told Miss Green her weekly pension would be £151, Kim advised that she would be eligible for Pension Credit and helped her to apply.

Kim then supported Miss Green in reapplying for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. They

found that she was due a refund for Council Tax Support.

Miss Green has also received further support from Kim to successfully apply for additional funding from the Bath & North East Somerset Household Support Fund on two occasions. This has been a huge help to Miss Green.

During a recent chat, Kim reassured Miss Green that she would receive the Winter Fuel Allowance as she currently gets Pension Credit. This has given Miss Green great peace of mind.

**Not her real name*

Careline alarms

Curo recommends that customers who have a Careline alarm installed complete a test call once a week by pressing their pendant. This will ensure the alarm is connecting to the receiving centre. When your call is connected, simply tell the call handler that it's a test.

➔ If you have any concerns please contact Curo on 01225 336000.

Community Rooms

We're keen for communities and groups to come together and make full use of our communal spaces. We have many great community rooms across Bath, Keynsham and Peasedown, all with kitchen facilities, that are available 365 days a year. You can book through the resident Sheltered Housing Team:

Peasedown, MSN and Radstock: **01225366333**
Bath: **01225 366331**
Keynsham: **01225 366334**



Meet the
colleague

I have a passion for helping others

“ ”

Terri Underhill, Sheltered Housing Officer, on how she helps bring joy into customers' lives.

What drew you to your role?

I have a strong desire to make a difference to other people's lives and a passion for helping others maintain their independence and quality of life.

What did you do before?

I came to work for Curo when it was Somer Community Housing Trust back in 2007, so I've been in this role for a long time now. Before this, I studied for a degree in Occupational Therapy. I also used to work in a dental practice.

What do you like about your job?

I enjoy providing support to older or more vulnerable customers. It's incredibly rewarding to see the impact of my work. I love building positive relationships with customers. Working alongside the care colleagues from Bath & North East Somerset Council, we make an excellent team in a dynamic and compassionate environment.

What does a typical day look like for you?

There's no such thing in Extra Care – every day is different! When I get into work, I check my emails. I then visit customers in

their flats. I monitor their health and wellbeing and liaise with GPs, nurses and other health professionals as needed. I might then help customers read their mail or apply for benefits. I also support them in getting adaptations and equipment, such as special recliner chairs, wheelchairs and grab rails. Or I'll be running errands – for example, buying emergency shopping or collecting prescriptions.

A lovely aspect of my job is helping to run social events for our customers. In the past, we've invited local school children to read with residents or do arts and crafts or singing. We've also put on afternoon cream teas and pancake and milkshake-tasting events. Plus, we hold regular coffee mornings and bingo sessions.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love going on caravan holidays with my family – which includes a naughty bulldog called Ted!

Right: Hawthorne Extra Care, Keynsham

All about Extra Care

Curo's Extra Care housing is designed for older people who need more support than sheltered housing offers, but who would still like to be independent.

Curo have three Extra Care schemes, at St John's Court in Bath, Greenacres in Midsomer Norton and Hawthorns in Keynsham.

Extra Care offers self-contained properties let on normal assured tenancies, a range of communal facilities, a restaurant, an assisted bathroom, guest suite, plus colleagues available on site 24 hours a day to provide care and support. Curo work in partnership with Bath & North East Somerset Council, which provides the care and restaurant facilities, while Curo provide support with social events, benefits and anything housing related.

All applications should be via a social worker who will complete a Care Act assessment to ensure customers meet the eligibility criteria.

If you would like to find out more about Extra Care, please call our Customer Link Officer on 01225 366135.



Winter tea-break teaser

Congratulations to Brian Burrows who won £50 in Love2shop vouchers in our summer wordsearch competition. Brian said: "Thank you! I've been unable to go out shopping for the past couple of months as I've damaged my knee, so when that heals I will have some retail therapy. My 80th birthday year is truly full of surprises."

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 the winter-themed words below in this issue's wordsearch.

MyCuro is a great way to get in touch with Curo online. You can use MyCuro to see the status of repair requests, check your rent balance, make payments to your account, all in a safe and secure environment. You can also send us an enquiry through Livechat, where you can speak to a colleague in our Contact team.

If you'd like to find out about MyCuro, ask your LO, SHO or ILSO 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. You'll just need your tenancy number to get started.

Find all the hidden festive words listed, and either 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 30 January, and we'll pick one lucky winner.

How many festive words can you find?

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

CAROLS
CHESTNUTS
CHIMNEY
ELVES
FRANKINCENSE
HOLLY
MERRY
MISTLETOE
REINDEER
ROBIN
RUDOLPH
SLEIGH
SNOWMAN
STOCKING
TINSEL

Name:

Telephone:

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

Chocolate Orange Shortbread

Why not make a tray of these for Boxing Day tea?

Ingredients

- 200g unsalted butter (room temperature)
- 100g caster sugar
- 250g plain flour
- 50g cornflour
- 1 orange
- 150g dark or milk chocolate
- Icing sugar for dusting

Method

- Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan).
- In the large mixing bowl, cream together the butter and sugar.
- Add the flour, cornflour and orange zest and work into mix by rubbing between fingertips until a crumb consistency, then bring together into a dough.
- Turn the dough out, flatten into a rectangle, wrap in cling film then freeze for 15 mins.
- While the dough is chilling, make the filling by melting the chocolate in the microwave. Combine with 75g of fresh juice squeezed from the orange. Set to one side.
- Once the dough is chilled, remove cling film and roll to a 5mm thickness on a lightly floured surface. Cut out rounds and place on lined baking tray.
- Cut stars out of the centres of half of the rounds, placing them on the baking tray in between the rounds.
- Bake for 12 mins, then cool.
- Once cooled, use a spoon to spread the chocolate filling on the base biscuits then sandwich with the star-centre top biscuits. Dust with icing sugar and serve.