

Prime Time News

Winter 2023



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

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY SPIRIT



The winners of this year's annual Community and Curo in Bloom Awards were announced on Saturday 16 September at Curo's resident event the BIG Get Together, at The Hub, Mulberry Park, Bath.

Curo's Community Awards recognise the fantastic work of residents. Steve Hartley (*pictured above with Curo Chief Executive Victor da Cunha*) won this year's Community Hero Award. Neighbour Elizabeth Jackson, who nominated Steve, says, "Since moving to Tiledown Close, Bath, Steve has helped older residents with their gardens, done minor repairs and given advice."

St Johns Close, Peasedown St John (*above, left*), won Community of the Year. "Since lockdown residents have revived activities at the local community room," said a nomination.

The Curo in Bloom Awards highlight the beautiful outdoor

spaces and gardening talent of residents. Strong entries across the categories made picking 1st place prizes a tough task. The winners were: Balcony & baskets: Malgorzata Burzynska; Small Garden: Viv Fear; Large Garden: Debra Smith; Community Garden: Phoenix House.

Phoenix House resident Matthew Brimley created the garden in memory of his late partner, Jen. It features a heart-shaped border and vibrant planting. "It's a peaceful place where we sit and remember Jen," says Matthew.

Get your voice heard



We're reviewing our older persons' services to make sure they meet your needs. We want to give you different ways to tell us what's important to you.

We've spoken with customers to redesign our Resident Engagement Group. The group is a great chance for customers to get together, give back to their community and learn what's happening in Curo. We meet every two months at Curo's offices in Bath, sheltered community rooms or other locations.

"This is an important way for us to listen to customers. It's also a way for people to connect and have fun," says Cathy Issacs, Service Manager.

If you'd like to find out more about joining our group, please call **01225 366135** or ask one of our support colleagues.

We'd love to welcome more customers to all of our Resident Engagement Groups, including our Disability Action Group. If you're interested, call us on **01225 366135**.



www.curo-group.co.uk

Curo's vision for 2034

We've developed our new vision in consultation and collaboration with customers, says Jay Hine, Assistant Director Strategy and Insight at Curo.

You said you wanted us to...

- Improve our repairs service so that we can get to you quickly, do a great job and make sure you're happy with it.
- Focus on the quality of homes as the most important thing.
- Deliver on our promises, get it right first time and care about what we do for residents.
- Be a great landlord.
- Listen and act on what you have to say.
- Increase our communication within teams.
- Support your neighbourhoods in the most effective way.
- Build more affordable homes for local people.
- Work effectively with the other services that you use.
- Make good decisions and long-term plans.
- Use the data and information we have effectively.
- Make us easy to interact with however you choose to do it.

So, working with you we created our new vision for Curo in 2034:

Everyone feels proud about the quality of our homes. “ ”

Our plan to make this come to life will be delivered through our new strategy, which will be launched in 2024:

- 1 To ensure all homes are of a high standard, well looked after, energy efficient and inspire pride.**
 - 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, reduce waste and protect the planet.
- 2 To create a high-performing and engaged organisation which attracts, develops and retains diverse, talented people.**
 - Recruit great talent because of our outstanding workplace benefits, clear social purpose and empowering and inspiring leaders.
 - Create a vibrant, inclusive work environment where every colleague feels valued, invested in and chooses to stay.
 - Celebrate a culture where high performance delivers exceptional outcomes for customers.
- 3 To deliver high-quality, reliable services that meet the needs of our customers and communities.**
 - 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.
- 4 To build new homes and work with others to maximise social value and commercial revenues.**
 - Build more of 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.
- 5 To build an effective, sustainable and innovative organisation with strong business services that support continuous improvement.**
 - Invest in strategic planning and governance to ensure value for money and the long-term success of the organisation.
 - Implement user-friendly and efficient IT systems that help us provide excellent homes and services for customers.
 - Understand and use data effectively, prioritise learning and constantly seek new ideas for improvement.

If you'd like to give feedback on the strategy, please email: jay.hine@curo-group.co.uk or write to us using the Freepost address: **Vision 2024 feedback, Freepost CURO**

Moving to digital alarms



Andy Russell, Service Support Manager, gives an update on our project to upgrade the alarms in your homes.

You may already know that the Government plans to stop using copper telephone lines – or analogue technology – by 2025. The move means we need to upgrade the alarms across our sheltered accommodation to a new digital system. This is the same for all sheltered housing across the UK.

The new alarm system uses a SIM card, similar to a mobile phone, to place calls digitally over the internet. This ensures continued coverage after the analogue lines are switched off. The equipment we've chosen is provided by Appello.

We're now carrying out the work to fit the new digital alarms and push-button pendant systems, which we're aiming to finish by April 2024. It will take longer to fit the alarms in our Extra Care accommodation. However, the work here will be completed by the 2025 deadline.

All pullcords will need to be removed from your homes, as they'll no longer be used by the new system. We'll remove the old equipment and install the new alarm, but we'll keep any disruption to a minimum and the work should take no longer than 90 minutes. You will have or will receive a letter from us with more information.

You'll need to wear the alarm at all times. As well as a cord to wear around your neck, the alarm now has the option to be worn on a wristband.

➔ If you have any questions about the new alarms, please call Izzy Coltherd on **07974 983006** or Tory Oldfield on **07816 486507**.

Andy Russell

REVIEW OF CURO'S SERVICES

As part of our new ten-year vision (see *facing page*) we're looking at how we can make sure that our support services are meeting the needs of customers.

Curo's support services include our older persons services, Extra Care, younger persons' services (including emergency accommodation), Work Wise employability service, Community Connect, Stepdown from hospital accommodation, temporary accommodation and Wellbeing House, a retreat for people who are experiencing mental health issues.

We're asking the customers who use these services: What do we do well? What could we improve on? And what could we offer that we don't currently?

As a customer of our older persons services, we'd love to get your feedback. Please talk to your Independent Living Officer, Sheltered Housing Officer or Livewell Officer, who will be able to relay your ideas to us and will keep you informed on how the review is progressing. Or ring us on **01225 366135** and arrange for one of our team to call you back.



PENSION CREDIT

Lots of people are missing out on this benefit. Are you eligible?

Pension Credit could give you more income in retirement. If you're on a low income, you might be missing out on more than £3,300 a year.

It's easy to check if you're entitled to Pension Credit, simply visit www.curo-group.co.uk/calc. Ask your Independent Living Officer, Sheltered Housing Officer or Livewell Officer if you need support to get online and to apply.

You can claim Pension Credit whether you're still working or have retired. You can also claim if you have other income, savings or own your home.

Pension Credit tops up:

- your weekly income to £182.60 if you're single
- your joint weekly income to £278.70 if you have a partner

If your income is higher, you might still be eligible if you have a disability; you care for someone; you have savings up to £10k; or you have housing costs.

Severe disability

You could get another £69.40, if you get:

- Attendance Allowance
- The middle or highest rate from the care component of Disability Living Allowance
- The daily living component of Adult Disability Payment at the standard or enhanced rate

If you care for another adult and get Carer's Allowance, you could get an extra £38.85.

If you have savings or a second pension, you could get the 'Savings Credit' part of Pension Credit if both of the following apply:

- you reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016
- you saved some money for retirement, for example a personal or workplace pension.

Affordable broadband

Did you know you could save money with your current broadband provider or get a good deal under a social tariff?

Social tariffs are low-cost broadband packages for people who receive certain state benefits such as Universal Credit or Pension Credit. They are cheaper than standard tariffs. People who get other benefits like Attendance Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance may also be eligible. Visit Ofcom for a list of providers which offer social tariffs: tinyurl.com/ofgemsocialtariffs

If you're struggling to pay broadband bills, contact your existing provider to see if you can move to a social tariff or cheaper package. If you need help to do this, speak to your Independent Living Officer, Sheltered Housing Officer or Livewell Officer when they next visit.



Money advice

If you need money advice or help with benefits, speak to your Independent Living Officer, Sheltered Housing Officer or Livewell Officer. They're here to help.



Foodbank for rural customers

Curo has opened a foodbank in Midsomer Norton to support people living in rural communities.

The Pantry is open to all Curo customers – from young carers, to families and older people – who can get a few bags of food shopping for £3.

The Pantry opened on 1 August with a launch event to welcome the local community. “The Pantry is bringing residents together after Covid,” says Curo resident Caroline Laver (*pictured above*), who was at the event. “Lots of older people in this area feel isolated in their homes. We’ve lost two bus routes and elderly people can struggle to do their shopping. This is a way to help them access food, as well as getting them back together socially.”

“I’ve been working on The Pantry project for several years so I was very excited to finally launch it,” says Emma Newman, Regional Accounts Manager, who organised the project. “The idea was sparked when we realised how hard it is for some of our customers in rural areas to access help. We wanted to

bring support to their doorsteps. As well as offering supplies to restock their kitchen cupboards, Curo colleagues are on hand at The Pantry to offer practical advice on money matters.”

Martyn Piper, Account Manager at Travis Perkins, which is supporting the project, says The Pantry has a dual function. “Many people are suffering from food poverty because of rising costs and it helps to ease that. But there’s also the social aspect. I met a gentleman at the launch event who told me he hadn’t seen another person for weeks. The Pantry is helping to bring young and older people together as a community.”



The Pantry is open at Curo’s Community Room in Welton Vale, Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Somerset, BA3 2BG, 10am-1pm every Tuesday.

Design Curo’s Christmas card for 2023 competition

The competition has four age categories: 0-4; 5-9; 10-16; and 17+. Each winning designer gets £50 in Love2shop vouchers, just in time for Christmas. Plus, we’ll use our favourite designs for the official 2023 Curo Christmas cards.

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

The closing date is Sunday 26 November 2023, so get creative!



WIN

£50 Love2shop
vouchers (spend at
1,000s of shops)



“Supporting our customers is fulfilling”



Clare Pollock, Livewell Officer, tells us what she enjoys about her role.

► Tell us a bit about the service...

Livewell is the service Curo provides for customers living in our sheltered housing accommodation in Bath and North East Somerset, who get Housing Benefit, Pension Credit or Universal Credit. Livewell Officers can help customers with budgeting, booking repairs, care assessments and occupational therapy referrals, maintaining mental and physical wellbeing, applying for benefits, attending medical appointments and accessing specialist services.

► Why were you drawn to this role?

I was previously an accounts clerk for IVC Evidensia, a UK veterinary group. But I wanted to move into a job where I could come away at the end of the day feeling like I'd made a difference.

► What's a typical day like?

I start work at 8am, making wellbeing calls to check our customers are OK and if they have any dentist or doctor appointments. I'll then do admin, including writing reports. Next, I go out on my visits – I complete five visits a day and they're usually 15-45 minutes long, depending on what the customer needs. It's a task-based job – I might be helping customers with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments, doing online shopping or raising repairs.

The service is for anyone aged over 55 years. Customers may have mental health issues or disabilities, or just need help because they are older. No two days are ever the same as I'm helping people who have a variety of different needs.

► What do you like about the job?

Getting customers the support they're eligible for is fulfilling. I'm a patient person and a very good listener. It can sometimes be a frustrating process to get them the help they need. For example, when applying for PIP you often have to wait for up to eight weeks to hear an answer. If I wasn't here to support our customers lots of them would struggle with these tasks. I can ask the right questions and tailor my support according to individual needs.

► What do you like doing in your spare time?

I love gardening. At the moment, my garden is being landscaped to include raised beds where I'll grow tomatoes, courgettes, runner beans, sprouts and cabbages. It's great to fill the freezer! I'm also planting a sensory herb garden for my grandson, who's autistic. I'm an early riser so I get up at 5am and sit outside, have a coffee and enjoy the peace as the sun rises. I work full time and when I return home, I have a cup of tea outside in the early evening and relax. It's a brilliant stress buster.

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 and North East Somerset, and Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

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.

➔ Whether it's for you or one of your friends or family, give us a call on **01225 366135** or email **ils@curo-group.co.uk** and let's see how we can help.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you live in sheltered accommodation, you could be eligible for our Livewell Service – call **01225 366135** to find out more.



Festive tea-break teaser

Congratulations to Michael Johnson who won £50 in Love2shop vouchers in our summer 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 the festive-themed words below in this issue's wordsearch.

MyCuro is a handy tool if you want to get in touch with Curo. From letting us know about repairs to making a safe and secure payment, to sending us enquiries and connecting to Livechat where you can speak to a colleague in our Contact team.

If you'd like to find out 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 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 **12 December**, and we'll pick one lucky winner.

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



Lebkuchen

These festive German biscuits are spiced, soft and delicious.

Ingredients

- 200g plain flour, plus extra to dust
- 100g ground almonds
- 1 tsp ground cloves, nutmeg mixed spice, cinnamon and ginger
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tsp baking powder
- zest of ½ orange
- 200g runny honey
- 85g butter

For chocolate glaze

- 2 tbsp dark chocolate powder
- 100g icing sugar
- 2 tbsp boiling water

Method

Put the flour, almonds, spices, bicarbonate of soda, zest and baking powder into a bowl and mix together.

Melt the honey and butter in a medium pan over a low heat. Pour it into the dry mixture, and stir to form a stiff dough. Cover and chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/gas 4. Flatten golf ball-sized bits of dough onto two baking trays lined with baking paper. Bake for 15 mins.

Meanwhile, mix the icing sugar and chocolate powder with the water to make a slightly runny icing. Transfer the biscuits to a wire rack. Pour icing over them to cover completely.

Leave to cool. Dust with icing sugar and serve.

How many festive words can you find?

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

CAROLS
CHESTNUTS
ELVES
FRANKINCENSE
HOLLY
MISTLETOE
NATIVITY
PINECONE
PRESENTS
REINDEER
SNOWMAN
STOCKING
TINSEL
YULETIDE

Name:

Telephone:



Tickets
£3

Everyone who is over
55 is welcome and
you don't have to
live in Curo sheltered
housing to join us.

Celebrate WITH US!

Come to a Curo Christmas party to enjoy
good food, music, raffles and festive fun.
Dress in your best yuletide outfit.



BATH

**Tue 19 December,
12-3pm**

Southdown Church,
The Hollow
Bath BA2 1NJ

TIMSBURY

**Wed 6 December,
12-3pm**

Conygre Hall,
North Road,
Timsbury
Bath BA2 0JQ

KEYNSHAM

**Thu 14 December,
12-3pm**

Hawthorn Extra Care,
Keynsham
Bristol BS31 1BX

To book your tickets, contact Holly Reed on: **07779 981154**
You'll need to make your own way to the event. Let us know
if you need help arranging transport.

