

Prime Time News

Spring 2025



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



Right: Janis and Audrey

Fish, chips and togetherness

We visited Conygre Hall in Timsbury, where residents gather every Wednesday for a fish-and-chip lunch, encouraging community connections and combatting loneliness.

The group was set up over 10 years ago by Liz Craddock, one of Curo's Livewell Officers, after some customers suggested the idea. The monthly catch-ups encourage residents to get together.

Holly Reed, Livewell Officer, and Tricia Weisberg, Livewell Team Leader, arrive at the hall at 10.30am to meet some of the regulars, who like to get there early to help set up the tables with freshly ironed tablecloths and cutlery.

Beryl Maggs, local resident, says, "I've been coming here since my husband passed. It feels like I'm doing my bit for the community."

Pat Hooper, another resident, adds, "It gets you out the house – otherwise you're just sitting in doing nothing. Here you can talk and meet new people."

By 11.30am, the hall fills up with residents ready for a cuppa. Nancy, Janis and Audrey all met at a local bingo club, where they heard about the event.

"We go to several groups a week together," says Nancy. "Since we lost our husbands, we're trying to live life to the full and do them proud."

Janis adds, "They'll be looking down on us saying, 'Go on, girls!'"

It's clear this monthly get-together is vital in combatting loneliness – and that it's the residents who make it such a success. Each month, everyone brings in a raffle prize and the money raised helps toward the cost of hiring the hall.

Book a community room

Do you have an idea for a group?

If you'd like to get involved in running a group like the one at Conygre Hall in one of our community rooms, we can help you set one up.

Please speak to your Livewell Officer, Sheltered Housing Officer or Independent Living Service Officer.

Our community rooms are free to hire for Curo customers.

Below: Beryl and
friend Lynn



A passion for community

Meet Femi Robinson, Curo's new Head of Specialist Housing. She tells us about her career in housing and her hopes for the role.

Why did you want to work for Curo?

I've always wanted to work for Curo! I've spent my entire career in housing, and Curo has always seemed ahead of the game in terms of its culture and the way it connects with communities. From Curo's website, I could see many examples of how it brings communities together and makes a tangible contribution.

What did you do before joining?

I've worked in housing for 25 years, most recently at the housing, care and support charity Brunelcare. I started out as a trainee housing officer with Bristol City Council. Since then, I've worked in a variety of areas, including general needs, supported housing and mental health. Working with people and communities is incredibly fulfilling. I grew up in social housing in inner-city Bristol, which makes me passionate about keeping communities together.

What are you most looking forward to in your role?

I'm excited to build on existing relationships with commissioners in B&NES and Bristol, while also building new ones. I'm also most looking forward to getting out into the communities we serve, working alongside colleagues and meeting our customers.

I plan to shadow the teams – having previously been a Housing Officer and Support Worker myself, I can relate to colleagues in these roles.

What would you like to achieve?

The recent review of Curo's support services means that colleagues have been through a period of uncertainty. I'd like to bring stability and reassurance while also building on the support we offer to communities.

What are your hobbies and interests outside work?

I love powerlifting – I train at the gym four times a week and can deadlift 140kg. It's a form of meditation for me. In my spare time, you'll also find me gardening, doing yoga, walking, and cooking and enjoying good food. I'm also a grandma, which keeps me busy!

““””

Femi Robinson



HELP WITH RESEARCH

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is carrying out research to understand more about people's experiences of claiming Pension Credit and Housing Benefit.

"We want to understand more about the challenges people may face and how they engage and interact with services with the DWP and their local authority," says Sarah Webster, one of the researchers.

"This research is essential in helping to shape improvements to how services are delivered."

➔ If you'd like to be involved, please email Sarah at: Sarah.Webster3@dwp.gov.uk. Ask your Livewell Officer, Independent Living Service Officer or Sheltered Housing Officer for help getting online.

"The research is essential in helping to shape improvements"

“It’s the right time for new leadership”



After a decade with Curo, Director of Specialist Housing & Support, **Jack Bailey**, is saying goodbye.

Why have you decided to leave?

I’ve worked at Curo for 10 years and have had the privilege of leading my team through significant changes. As I approach retirement age, I feel it’s the right time to bring in new leadership to introduce fresh energy and momentum, building on the solid foundations we’ve established.

What have you enjoyed most about your work at Curo?

I’m particularly proud of bringing Curo’s support services closer to the rest of the organisation. It’s been incredibly fulfilling to make a meaningful difference in areas I’m passionate about, such as mental health and homelessness.

What has been your biggest achievement?

Leading a strategic review of Curo’s support services. I worked closely with colleagues throughout the process, ensuring their input was valued, and successfully secured Board approval for the plan. I’m also proud of the strong partnerships we’ve built with the NHS and police, which have allowed us to collaboratively focus

on promoting self-care and resilience within communities.

What will you miss most?

I’ll miss my hardworking colleagues, whose dedication to supporting communities is inspiring. I’ll also miss our customers – the real people with real stories from all walks of life who’ve made this work so meaningful.

“I’ll miss my hardworking colleagues, whose dedication to supporting communities is inspiring”

What’s next for you?

I’m looking forward to visiting places in the UK I’ve never been to before and taking my Cockerpoo Freddie on more walks. He’ll be happy to spend more time with me!

Update on digital alarms

We’re pleased to report that 95% of all Curo’s sheltered homes have now received a digital SmartLife alarm.

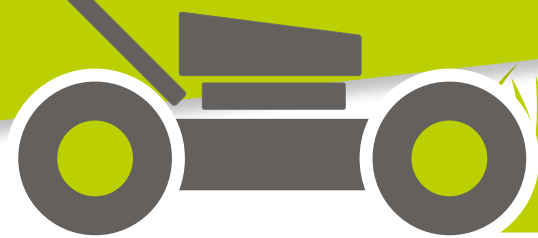
We’re now starting a project to test the alarms to confirm that they’re working properly. Digital alarms regularly receive system updates from the manufacturer. When an update happens, the SmartLife unit may emit a series of beeps and the lights might flash – this is normal and nothing to be concerned about.

→ If you have any questions please contact your local Sheltered Housing Officer or Sheltered Office – Peasedown, MSN and Radstock: **01225 366333**; Bath: **01225 366331**; Saltford and Keynsham: **01225 366334**.

Right: Appello SmartLife alarm



Estates update



Here's what to expect on ground maintenance as the sun comes out and we head into warmer weather.

As spring approaches, we conclude our winter maintenance programme across the estates we manage. This means our focus shifts from clearing leaves and trimming hedges to grass cutting, which takes place from March to October.

Here's how often you can expect grass cutting to be carried out. Please note that these schedules are weather-dependent and may be subject to change.

Communal grass: March to October

We aim to cut the grass in communal areas within a four-week cycle, depending on requirements and weather conditions. In late spring, warmer, wetter weather and longer days means grass grows rapidly. This means grass may be longer between cuts.

Sheltered accommodation: March to November

We aim to cut the grass every three weeks, weather permitting. As part of our new approach for sheltered schemes, our teams will carry out 16 visits per year, ensuring that key areas are maintained to keep the schemes safe and accessible.

During each visit, the team will prioritise essential tasks, such as grass cutting, clearing pathways and removing weeds. If necessary, they will also prune any shrubs that are obstructing walkways. This tailored approach allows us to focus on the most important areas in the available time.

Meadow grass, banks and slopes

To support biodiversity across our estates, areas such as banks, slopes, and woodland edges – where access is limited or specialist equipment is required – will be cut twice a year.

You can check whether a particular area of grass is our responsibility and see our planned approach by entering your postcode at the link below: curo-group.co.uk/estates



Please ask your Independent Living Officer, Livewell Officer or Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help to get online.

Meet the Damp and Mould Team

We know that damp and mould can be a problem in the colder months. At Curo, we're committed to tackling the issue so that everyone can feel proud about the quality of their home.

That's why we've created a new team (*pictured below*) entirely focused on dealing with damp, mould and condensation.

The ten-strong team includes a specialist surveyor, plumbers and skilled tradespeople, as well as an operational manager, team leader and office support. Colleagues visiting customers' homes have been equipped with hi-tech equipment such as thermal imaging cameras, to help them get to the root of the problem, and solve it more quickly.



STATE PENSIONS EXPLAINED

Are you approaching state pension age? Here's all you need to know to ensure you get what you're entitled to.

Your state pension age varies based on your date of birth. It's quick and easy to check your eligibility using the Government's online checker: gov.uk/check-state-pension

You'll receive a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) up to four months before your state pension age, inviting you to make a claim. Remember, payments won't start automatically – you need to apply. Start your claim online at gov.uk or you can call **0800 731 7898**.

If you currently receive benefits such as Universal Credit (UC), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Housing Benefit (HB), you'll need to actively claim your state pension – it isn't awarded automatically.

If you're still working and not claiming benefits, you can defer your state pension to increase your payments. For every five to nine weeks you defer, your pension grows by around 1%. Check the details here: gov.uk/deferring-state-pension/what-you-get

Find out how much state pension you'll receive by visiting gov.uk/check-state-pension. You'll need to register for access.

Your entitlement depends on your National Insurance record, which includes contributions made during employment and credits awarded while claiming benefits like child benefit or UC.

If you're a widow or widower and your marriage started before 6 April 2016, you may qualify for an inherited pension based on your late spouse's National Insurance contributions. This applies if they reached state pension age or died before 6 April 2016. To claim, contact the Pension Service directly – it's not automatic.

➔ If you need any help with money matters, please ask your Livewell Officer, Sheltered Housing Officer or Independent Living Service Officer. You can also email customeraccountshelp@curo-group.co.uk, or call **01225 366345** to speak to a Curo Benefits Advisor or your Customer Accounts Manager.

Pension Credit

If your total weekly income, including your state pension, is below £218.15 (for a single person) or £332.95 (for a couple), or slightly higher if you claim disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment, you could be eligible for Pension Credit.

Pension Credit is a benefit for people over state pension age, which tops up their income. Around £1.7 billion in Pension Credit goes unclaimed each year. The Government has changed the rules so that you must now claim Pension Credit to get the Winter Fuel Payment.

You can apply online at gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim or call **0800 991 234**.

➔ Please ask your Independent Living Officer, Livewell Officer or Sheltered Housing Officer if you need help to get online.





I feel safe
here

Resident Wayne Button tells us about his community and the benefits of having a Livewell Officer.

Wayne Button, an ex-mechanic and welder from the Bath area, has found peace and safety living in his sheltered home, after spending time living in a van. Wayne lives in one of Curo's sheltered homes schemes in Peasedown St John.

What brought you to this home?

"I used to live in my van, but during the winter I got very cold and I needed help from the local mental health team. They put me in touch with Curo. It was such a relief."

What's your favourite thing about living here?

"It's really nice and peaceful, I feel safe here. I didn't feel safe in my van."

What does your Livewell Officer, Sue Harvey, help you with?

"Sue is great, she's so nice. She always helps me with paperwork and bills. Sometimes she helps get me to the doctors when I need to go. She's at the other end of the phone if I'm having a bad day."

"When I first moved in two winters ago, she knew I was struggling badly. Without hesitation, she went up to the shop and bought me some food to help me out. She's such a kind lady."

Have you noticed any positive changes in your wellbeing since living here?

"Definitely. I can control my environment here. I suffer with breathing problems, and living here means I can have everything how I like it. It's made a big difference to my health."

"It's made a big difference to my health"

What's your community like?

"The neighbours are friendly. It's nice to know you're not alone and there's always someone pottering about to say hello to."

Would you recommend Curo's sheltered housing to others?

"Yes, absolutely. I love living here, it's given me more stability and confidence knowing I can reach out to my Livewell Officer if I need to."

What is our Livewell service?

Livewell is the service Curo provides for customers living in our sheltered housing in Bath and North East Somerset, who receive Housing Benefit, Pension Credit or Universal Credit.

Livewell Officers are available to provide tailored support with practical tasks and household administration.

Our service includes support with: budgeting; practical advice on repairs; care assessments and occupational therapy referrals; maintaining mental and physical wellbeing; applying for benefits; attending medical appointments; and accessing specialist services.

Livewell Officers can help with paperwork





No two days are the same



Kim Tanner tells
us more about her
rewarding role as a
Livewell Officer.

What drew you to your role?

I previously worked in a community support role, where I often worked with Livewell Officers. One day, I bumped into Cathy Isaacs, Service Support Manager, who told me that a Livewell Officer role was available. It sounded fast-paced and rewarding – so I applied and got the job!

Tell us a bit about your role...

It's full-on and can be challenging, but at the same time it's fulfilling.

People have an image of sheltered housing residents that isn't always accurate. Some of our customers require a great deal of support – they might have poor physical or mental wellbeing.

As a Livewell Officer, we help maximise customers' income and support them in maintaining their tenancies. We help customers to claim any benefits they might be missing out on.

I think there are misconceptions about what we do – we're not just sitting in an office. I have 150 customers, and I'm always on the road, visiting them. They're spread across Widcombe, Larkhall, Bathampton, and further afield.

What's a typical day like for you?

No two days are the same. In the morning, I might be making calls, then I'll be on the road

visiting customers. I work four days a week and see four customers a day. It's a complex role, as we often liaise with many different agencies – for example, social workers, the benefits system, or the adult safeguarding team.

What do you like about it?

Some customers struggle to trust others. It's an amazing feeling when you realise you've broken down the barriers they've put up and established a relationship. One customer told me the other day, "I know I can rely on you."

Some customers have no family, or the family they do have aren't interested in them. I've pushed to get them the support they need for medical concerns. When they finally receive the help they need, that's a great feeling.

What's your team like?

I love my team – we support each other. It's a demanding job, but we have fun too.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I have two grown-up children who still live at home. We do a lot of socialising – we love going to festivals, such as Glastonbury and Shindig. You'll also often find me going on long walks with my two dogs, Rudi and Lola.



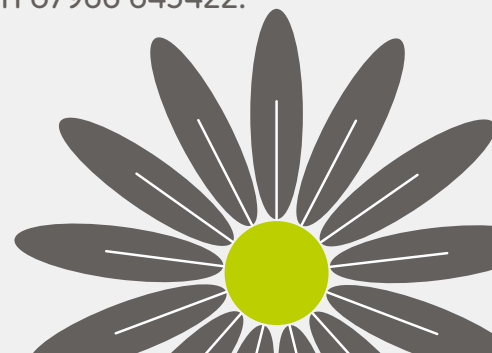
Celebrate VE day milestone with us!

Join us as we step back in time to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day with three street-style parties in Keynsham, Bath and Timsbury. There'll be Union Jack bunting, wartime music, food and refreshments and a lively community atmosphere.

Where and When?

- **Keynsham:** Hawthornes Court, Hawthornes Lane, BS31 1BX. 6 May, 12-2.30pm
- **Timsbury:** Conygre Hall, North Road, BA2 0JQ 7 May, 12-2.30pm
- **Bath:** Haviland Park Community Room, Weston, BA1 4HR 9 May, 12-2.30pm

Tickets cost £2. For more info and to book call Livewell Officer Holly Reed on 07779 981154 or Livewell Team Leader Sophie Robinson on 07966 645422.



Easter tea-break teaser

Congratulations to Janet Harding 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, find the spring-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 Livewell Officer, Sheltered Housing Officer or Independent Living 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. You'll just need your tenancy number to get started.

Find all the hidden spring-themed words listed, and either email your wordsearch to ils@curo-group.co.uk with **Prime Time Wordsearch** as subject, or to send by post just address it to: **Freepost CURO**, to arrive by 30 May and we'll pick one lucky winner.

How many spring-themed words can you find?

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

Name:

Telephone:

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



Hot Cross Biscuits

Enjoy a new take on hot cross buns over Easter.

Ingredients

Spiced biscuits:

- 100g wholemeal flour
- ¼ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- 75g butter
- 1 tsp grated lemon rind
- 75g dark brown sugar
- 25g currants
- 2 tbsp milk

Cross topping:

- 10g butter
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- 15g plain white flour
- 1 tsp milk

Method

- Preheat oven to 180°C (Fan 160°C) / 350°F / Gas 4.
- Combine flour, bicarbonate of soda and cinnamon in a bowl.
- In another bowl, mix cubed butter, grated lemon rind, dark brown sugar, and flour until crumbly. Stir in currants and milk to form a dough.
- Divide into 15 pieces, roll into balls and flatten into 5cm circles.
- To make the topping, mix cubed butter, caster sugar and flour until crumbly. Add milk to form a dough. Roll into a 15x5cm rectangle and cut into 10 thin strips.
- Brush biscuit tops with milk and place two strips in a cross pattern on each.
- Place biscuits on a baking tray and bake for 25–30 minutes.
- Cool for 5 minutes on the tray, then transfer to a wire rack.