

Prime Time News



Spring 2024

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



Carol and Roz



Janet and Clare

We visited Curo's Community Room in Keynsham, where residents are joining together to share their skills.

Bag decorating, crochet and needle felting are just some of the crafts residents have sampled at a crafting club at Curo's Community Room in Keynsham.

The club takes place each Friday at 12-4 pm and was started by Livewell Officer Clare Pollock as a way to bring the community together. The club helps to prevent older residents from feeling isolated, says Clare. "They're making friends and trying something new," she says.

At the club on 9 February, Margery Leever (pictured below, right) was sharing her bag-making skills with fellow Curo resident Faye Wright.

"We all have different abilities and everyone is friendly," says Margery. "If someone is alone, I'd say give this a try. We'll give them a cup of tea, a slice of cake and a warm welcome."

Roz Stute, who was teaching Carol Allsop how to crochet at the club, says: "Crochet helps me unwind. This is a chance to share that."

Janet Durk was having a go at needle felting, taught by Clare Hudson. Janet is partially sighted, but said she didn't want it to be a barrier. "You have to keep on doing things," she says. "Trying this has been extremely satisfying and has made me happy."

Clare says that the group is planning to try new crafts in the future, including dry clay modelling and woodwork. "I got a £500 grant from the Travis Perkins community funding pot. We're spending it on craft supplies, including magnifying lights and tabletop easels to make painting more accessible."

Clare's advice for would-be crafters

- Don't be afraid to give something new a try – and work with someone who can help.
- Try lots of crafts: if one doesn't stick another one will.
- Take inspiration from everything around you – I get ideas from nature when I'm out on dog walks.



GET INVOLVED

If you have an idea for a club in your local Community Room, we can help you set one up. Get in touch with Livewell Officer Tasia Talbot on 07773 059244.



A place of sanctuary

We asked Support Worker Allison Stephens to tell us about Wellbeing House, which offers respite in beautiful surroundings.



Who can stay at Wellbeing House?

Anyone aged over 18 who lives in, or is registered with a GP in, B&NES can stay. We can help people who are struggling with their mental health or provide respite for carers. It's a place for pre-crisis support, offering breathing space and connecting residents with other organisations.

What can people expect when they stay there?

A peaceful, calm and tranquil location. Residents can take part in arts and crafts activities if they wish, but participation is optional. There's no pressure to join activities; we prioritise what's best for the individual. Many residents just want to rest for the first few days, and then gradually become more involved. It's a space to regroup and recharge.

How long can people stay?

Stays are typically one to two weeks, from Monday to Monday. At any given time there are five residents.

What are the facilities like?

There are three rooms with en-suite facilities and two rooms that share a bathroom. Each resident has their own share of a kitchen, with their own sink and fridge. The house features a large garden, an art room and a lounge, stocked with DVDs, books, craft materials and musical instruments.

What support do you offer?

While we don't provide counselling, we offer a non-judgmental space and can help residents to make plans for managing their wellbeing after their stay. We can also direct them to charities and support groups. It's a chance for residents to prioritise themselves for once.

How can people get in touch?

They can call us to chat. If they meet the criteria, we'll offer them a stay. We can accommodate women-only weeks if needed. No visitors are allowed except for professionals. We're a safe, secure and quiet space. If we're not suitable for someone, we'll suggest alternatives like a GP or Bath Mind. We're friendly and open, willing to provide information or even arrange a visit or activity.

➔ Professionals can refer on your behalf, or colleagues from Wellbeing House can call you if needed. Call them on 01225 310748 or visit: www.curo-group.co.uk/wellbeing

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Right: Allison
Stephens; Wellbeing
House



Update on digital alarms



We're currently in the process of upgrading the alarms in your homes. The project is progressing well and we're on course to finish it by the switchover deadline.

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.

We're working in close partnership with our alarm provider Appello to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible.

After each installation we ask residents to complete a questionnaire reviewing their experience. To date we have received 330 post-installation questionnaires and the average satisfaction score is 8.5 out of 10.

Here's some of feedback we've received so far:

- "The engineers were very polite. They are credit to Curo."
- "Very happy, everything done nicely."
- "Everything is great, I like the option to wear it on my wrist."

- "Lovely neat job, I'm very pleased. I think it's fantastic"

This work is essential for your safety as it will upgrade your fire alarm system. When your scheme comes up for upgrade, please do co-operate with us by responding to requests for appointments.

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'll receive a letter from us with more information. If you have any questions about the new alarms, please call our dedicated Digital Co-ordinator Izzy Coltherd on 07974 983006.

CURO'S NEW CHARITY PARTNER

Every year Curo colleagues nominate and vote for a local charity they would like to support. In 2024, colleagues have chosen to support Young Lives vs Cancer. The charity, established in 2005, provides essential support services for children, young people and families affected by cancer throughout the UK.

Throughout the year, Curo colleagues will take on fundraising activities to support the charity.

Below: Curo's charity of the year van.





Important information about Universal Credit

Universal Credit normally pays for 52 weeks of rent per year. In 2024/25 rents will be payable 53 times.

There are 52 weeks in a normal year, meaning 52 weekly charges. But every five to six years, there are 53 Mondays in a year instead. 2024/25 is one of those years.

However, Universal Credit payments only recognise 52 weeks of rent. We're joining with the National Housing Federation, which represents housing associations, in calling for the Government to pay this shortfall. You can also play a part by writing to your local MP. Ask your Sheltered Housing Officers, Livewell Officers and Independent Living Service Officers if you need help to contact your local MP.

Unless the Government changes this rule, customers on Universal Credit will need to pay for this extra week in March 2025.

To prepare for this, please get in touch with Curo's Customer Accounts team on 01225 366000.

They will be able to adjust your rent payments by a small amount each week this year to pay for the extra week. For example, for a customer paying our average weekly rent of £115, increasing this by £2 per week would cover the shortfall. If you pay by direct debit the team will calculate this extra week for you and it will be included in your payments over the year.

ENDING A TENANCY

We know circumstances can change as we get older. This may mean considering moving into accommodation that better suits your changing needs.

We're here to help if this is something that you're thinking of. We can make the process of ending your tenancy as smooth as possible.

You'll need to give us either four weeks' notice or two months' notice, depending on the type of tenancy agreement that you have. If you're unsure about what you need to do please give us a call on 01225 366000 or email Tenancy.Management@curo-group.co.uk

You can also talk to your Curo ILSO, SHO or LO. They'll be able to give advice on moving out and talk about your rent account.

If you need to help a friend or family member to end their tenancy call or email our friendly Tenancy Management team on the contact details above.

■ 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.



➔ If you want a third party or someone else to have permission to talk to us about your tenancy please call us on 01225 366000 and we can send out the relevant form.

HERE TO HELP

Our colleagues are here to support you with managing your money.



Above: Sheena Archer

Curo's Sheltered Housing Officers, Livewell Officers and Independent Living Service Officers are trained in helping customers manage their money.

"A lot of the work I do is around increasing our customers' income," says Sheena Archer, Livewell Officer. "As part of this, I'll often help them to apply for benefits such as Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance and anything else that's relevant."

Support with energy bills

"For example, in January this year, Bath & North East Somerset Council opened an Energy Support Fund to applications. In just one week I helped 31 customers apply. The money they received ranged from £150-250. But so many of them weren't aware that such a fund existed."

One of the issues, says Sheena, is that many of her customers don't regularly go online. "The Energy Support Fund was publicised on social media, but many of our customers don't

have it, so they didn't find out about the fund. I've had loads of people say to me: 'Sheena, no one ever tells these things to us apart from you and your colleagues.'"

A lack of online access can also mean that customers don't have up-to-date information about their bills. "A lot of customers have been frightened to put their heating on due to the high cost of energy," explains Sheena. "But when we've looked at their energy account together, they're in credit – sometimes by hundreds of pounds. They haven't realised because they don't go online."

Another way the team can help is by looking into the grant and charity payments available. "We can get extra funds for customers, for example, discretionary housing payments, food bank vouchers and grants towards paying for white goods such as fridges," says Sheena.

→ If you need support with any money matters, please remember that your Sheltered Housing Officer, Livewell Officer or Independent Living Service Officers are there to help.

Did you know?

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.

→ Ask your Sheltered Housing Officer, Livewell Officer or Independent Living Service Officer if you need help to claim.





I'm part of
a fantastic
team

Helping customers is all in a day's
work for SHO Caroline Heslop.

Why were you drawn to the role of Sheltered Housing Officer (SHO)?

It's a diverse role covering a variety of housing management tasks, but also with lots of customer involvement. I help customers to resolve issues using the skills and knowledge I have acquired over the years to support them to live as independently as possible.

I've worked in various roles supporting older people for more than 30 years, including as a warden for Somer Community Housing Trust back in the day. I also previously worked for Curo as a SHO at a scheme in Bath. And I was Curo's first Dementia Advisor, setting up a Memory Café at Hawthorns Extra Care in Keynsham.

What's a typical day like for you?

I start work at 8am, check any Careline alerts and let the relevant SHOs and Livewell Officers know of any issues they need to follow up.

I then call customers to check their welfare and write up any notes. Next, I'll go out on visits. For example, today I collected a customer who feels isolated. I helped her do some shopping and then took her to a local café to have some lunch, a coffee and

a good chat. She said, "Thank you so much, it was lovely to get out."

I then completed two alarm inspections and reported any faults to Appello, our alarm provider.

Throughout the day I'll take calls about repair issues and report the outcome back to customers.

What do you like about your job?

I love being part of a fantastic team which delivers such an important service for the older people in our communities. I take pride in being able to deliver excellent outcomes for them.

How did it feel to win an award for supporting customers at Curo's annual colleague awards last year?

I was surprised and absolutely thrilled to be nominated by my colleagues. It was a very proud moment in my life to receive the award and lovely to be recognised for all my hard work.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy meeting up with family and friends, walking, keeping fit, reading and socialising.

All about the Independent Living Service

Curo's 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.

Below: ILS customer Norman with Support Worker Kate





Feeding the community

We find out more about the Thursday Night Dinner project in Twerton

Having the opportunity to go out for a three-course meal is a bit of a luxury. But a community project in Twerton is giving everyone the opportunity to enjoy a restaurant-standard meal every Thursday night – completely free of charge.

The Thursday Night Dinner started in December last year, and is run by the Bath Community Kitchen, and has been supported by a £500 Curo Community Grant. Rob Lewis, one of the co-founders and Directors of the Bath Community Kitchen, says, “We wanted to create an opportunity for people to be able to go out together and eat together, and enjoy a delicious and nutritious meal – but also something that isn’t exclusive and isn’t expensive.

“We use surplus food that otherwise would have been thrown away by shops and supermarkets, so not only are we helping to tackle food poverty, but also food waste.”

The Thursday night dinner takes place each week at the Lighthouse Centre at 6.30pm. There’s no need to book, and everyone is welcome.

“We’re finding that there are certain barriers that are stopping people from coming along,” says Rob. “They don’t trust us and think there must be a religious

element or something like that, or they think there is some stigma to coming to a free event. But there’s really no need to be suspicious, or to feel that way. This really is just a way of helping to bring a community together, and to prevent food waste.

“We usually have around 20 or 30 guests, and it’s a real mix of people, from families, to older members of the community, which I think is really important.

“In a world where people have become very polarised it’s good to sit and talk to people that you might not otherwise come into contact with, whether that’s because they come from a different background to you, or have different opinions on politics or religion, or for any other reason. These meals are a really good forum for that to take place.”

➔ You can find out more about the Bath Community Kitchen at www.bathcommunitykitchen.org.uk

Curo Community Grants

Curo Community Grants support projects and activities that benefit Curo customers and help the communities that we support to thrive.

There are grants up to £250 available for those who need a small amount of money to help make their activity a success – such as funding a shed to house garden equipment.

Larger grants of up to £500 can help run larger projects, including community fun days, sports activities for young people, and the Bath Community Kitchen’s Thursday Night Dinners.

➔ To find out more about Curo grants and to fill out an application form visit our website: www.curo-group.co.uk/grants

Grants support community events such as Western and Newbridge gala



Easter tea-break teaser

Congratulations to Mrs P Moore who won £50 in Love2shop vouchers in our winter 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 Easter-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 all sorts of information, such as repairs you've reported and your rent balance, and to make payments to your account, all in a safe and secure environment. You can also send us an enquiry or join our Livechat service 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 Easter 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 April, and we'll pick one lucky winner.



Mini eggs cookies

These teatime treats are perfect with a cuppa.

Ingredients

- 120g butter
- 75g light brown sugar
- 75g caster sugar
- 1 medium eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 180g plain flour
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 160g chocolate mini eggs

Method

- Heat your oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4.
- Line two baking sheets with baking paper.
- Chop half of the chocolate mini eggs in half. Reserve the remaining eggs.
- Cream the butter and sugars together until light and fluffy, then beat in the egg and vanilla.
- Once combined, stir in the flour and bicarb. Add the chopped mini eggs and stir again.
- Scoop 10 large tbsps of the mixture onto the trays, leaving enough space between each to allow the cookies to spread.
- Press two of the reserved mini eggs into the top of each cookie. Bake for 10-12 mins. Leave to cool before serving.

How many Easter words can you find?

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

APRIL
BASKET
BONNET
BOUQUET
CHICK
CHOCOLATE
CRUCIFIXION
DECORATE
EASTER
LENT
PARADE
RABBIT
RESURRECTION
SACRIFICE
TRADITION

Name:

Telephone:

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