

# Homes & Gateway Services

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Deputy Leader, Alison Butler

#### January 2019

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## Latest News

### Cold weather provision

As a council we have a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which sets out how both we and our partners will respond to people in Croydon without shelter during periods of severe weather.

The aim of SWEP is to prevent loss of life and to reduce rough sleeping during extreme weather to as near zero as possible with the Croydon Reach outreach service seeking to engage all rough sleepers and refer them to shelter once SWEP is activated. The national expectation is that cold weather SWEP will be implemented when the temperature is forecast to fall to zero degrees centigrade or lower for three days or more. However, in London working with other London boroughs and the Mayor of London, Croydon will trigger SWEP on the first night of freezing temperatures.

SWEP arrangements operates outside the usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks and includes rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds, no local connection and those usually excluded from accommodation. SWEP accommodation is provided from a number of sources: Croydon Churches Floating Shelter, vacancies within commissioned supported accommodation projects and emergency accommodation.

Local SWEP provision is supplemented by Greater London Authority funded hubs, both No Second Night Out hubs which are available to new rough sleepers all year round and SWEP overflow hubs, opened up when the temperature is forecast to be below zero anywhere within London on that day.

The Severe Weather Emergency protocol can be found on the [Council website](#).

### Housing First

Croydon's Housing First scheme was launched on **1<sup>st</sup> October 2018**, to address the needs of some of the most chronically homeless Croydon residents, who have experienced repeated or extended periods of rough sleeping, combined with other

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support needs such as mental ill health or substance use. Housing First will provide 20 of the most chronic residents with stable accommodation within the community by March 2020. Thamesreach Charity have been commissioned to support individuals from the street into their new accommodation and to sustain it thereafter and by 10<sup>th</sup> December had been successful in **engaging four individuals** to access accommodation. The Housing First support team will work alongside them to establish themselves within their accommodation, and within their new communities, with the intention that this leads to long term tenancy sustainment.

Housing First is an internationally evidence-based approach, which uses independent, stable housing as a platform to enable individuals with multiple and complex needs to begin recovery and move away from homelessness. Evidence has shown that, through the provision of intensive, flexible and person-centred support, 70-90% of Housing First residents are able to remain housed. Having a place to call home also leads to improvements in health and wellbeing, and reduces ineffective contact with costly public services.

#### **Gateway community presence in Parchmore Community Centre in Thornton Heath**

From 14th January 2019, there will be a full time Gateway presence in the Parchmore Centre in Thornton Heath, to build upon the impressive community offering already provided from the Centre. This will support the second community Food Stop, following the resounding success of the New Addington/Fieldway Community Locality model.

Employment advice/workshops, budgeting, debt advice, welfare rights surgeries, healthy living are some of the offerings that Gateway will be providing.

The Food Stop will follow shortly thereafter, which will enable local residents to pay £3.50 a week and get around £20 of food, and as part of that offering, Gateway will provide them a personalised action plan to tackle any issues they have around debt, budgeting and supporting them into employment.

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#### Christmas Celebrations



The Community Development Team organised another really successful borough-wide resident event this year, arranging a Christmas lunch for residents across 26 sheltered schemes and estate based community groups.

80 residents attended the 10 Dec event at the Old Lodge Lane Baptist Church, the community hub for our residents on Croftleigh Estate with the Mayor of Croydon joining in the celebrations. Our second event attracted 82 residents on the 17 Dec at the Addington Community Association.

Both events were great successes, bringing residents together for a meal and entertainment, giving them the chance to meet other residents, and tackling social isolation and loneliness at the hardest time of year. Catering was provided by Guiding Hands, a local voluntary group and the singer, Jessica de Giudici, sang familiar songs spanning over 60 years.

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Staff from across the Council volunteered to help, including the Resident Involvement, Quality, Tenancy, Gateway and Leaseholders teams, and had conversations with the residents to see what activities/ support we can set up in their localities going forward. Voluntary groups such as AGE UK and local ward members also lent their support.

Feedback from the residents included “Staff were very helpful. Nothing was too much trouble. “Please, please could we have it again next year. Lovely get together”. Many shared that this was such a joy as they never get the chance to get out.

We will now build on the initial conversations and feedback from both events to set up a programme of local activities and events.

### Capital Letters

In November Cabinet approved a report for the Council to join Capital Letters.

Capital Letters’ purpose is to procure accommodation for homeless households and those at risk of homelessness. It will provide this service on behalf of its member boroughs and will undertake the management of the accommodation.

Capital Letters will procure accommodation across London. All London boroughs currently procure accommodation outside their own borough. Competition over the limited supply of accommodation drives up prices.

Capital Letters therefore aims to introduce more cooperation, using the collective market power of the boroughs to encourage landlords to shift their accommodation away from the more expensive and less secure nightly paid accommodation and towards more settled leased and private rented accommodation. It will also provide a framework for enabling boroughs to place households closer to home.

The anticipated key benefits of Capital Letters are:

- an increase in the supply of private sector accommodation to prevent and relieve homelessness in London
- provision of stable, suitable accommodation and a shift away from short-term, expensive, and often unsuitable nightly paid accommodation

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- allocating properties as locally as possible to avoid moving households far away from their home area
- Achieving better value for money by pooling resources, sharing expertise, and reducing competition for accommodation between London's boroughs.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has allocated £37.8 million to support the Capital Letters programme over three years.

The establishment of Capital Letters is coordinated by the London Housing Directors' Group and London Councils, the umbrella group representing all 32 boroughs and the City of London.

During the initial launch phase, the Capital Letters steering group of which Croydon a member is overseeing the key decisions required for the programme. This steering group is chaired by the chair of the London Housing Directors' Group. All key partners (including MHCLG) are represented at the steering group.

Capital Letters is being set up as a Company Limited by Guarantee, wholly owned by member boroughs. A board of directors will be appointed by the members.

It is anticipated that Croydon like many boroughs will benefit from cost savings from this pan London Initiative. The Housing Initiatives Team in the Housing Solutions and Assessment Team will be taking this forward on behalf of the Council.

### **CRISIS at Christmas in Croydon**

For the first time, CRISIS the national homelessness charity ran one of its Christmas residential services for rough sleepers here in Croydon. The centre provided people with food, healthcare and advice on housing and employment as well as a range of things to do, people to talk to and most of all, a safe space.

The centre had between 100 and 110 guests each night and many more attended to take part in activities during the day. The council would like to extend its thanks to CRISIS and to the many volunteers who made this happen.

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#### Brick by Brick

It was a privilege to attend, along with the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Humayun Kabir, the topping out ceremony at the previous Cheriton House in Chipstead Avenue, Thornton Heath. This new Brick by Brick development comprises of 27 affordable homes (24 shared ownership flats and three affordable rented flats) due for completion early summer 2019. Works are progressing well with framing, windows and roofs installed on both blocks. Work will soon start on all the internal carpentry and electrical works. The development will be named Flora Court after First World War soldier and Thornton Heath local resident, Flora Sandes.



#### Taberner House

There is further good news on affordable housing for Croydon residents on the Taberner House site. The redevelopment comprises of the erection of four buildings ranging in height from 13 to 35 storeys comprising 514 residential units and commercial space at ground floor level. The reworked 2017 planning permission secured a minimum 35% of units as affordable accommodation, with 50.2% of the

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provision proposed as affordable rent. This included a block of 90 affordable rent units to go to families on the councils housing waiting list.

Charitable housing association L&Q will now take on 172 of the properties providing a mixture of Shared Ownership and London Living Rent apartments in two blocks, increasing the overall level of Affordable Housing being provided across the Taberner House development to 50%.

Its fantastic news to hear more than half of the homes on the Taberner House site will be affordable, including the 90 social homes already going to families on the council's housing waiting list. This development is an important part of Croydon's regeneration and it's extremely pleasing to know more affordable properties will be in a prime location within the town centre, close to a number of important public transport routes.