



Culture, Leisure and Sport Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Oliver Lewis October 2020

LATEST NEWS

Fairfield Halls

Since August 2020, whilst Fairfield Halls (like all venues up and down the country) has been in hibernation there has been some limited cultural activity going on in the building. It is keeping Croydon's reputation for culture alive as well as supporting local organisations and artists. During August, Agudo Dance Company were rehearsing their next production, Carmen in The Recreational. This production has been co-produced by Fairfield Halls and Croydon Council. You can watch some of the footage of the rehearsals [here](#).

As of September 2020, Savvy Theatre Company, one of the resident organisations of Fairfield Halls and one of the leading inclusive theatre companies in the country, have returned to their office and studio space. They are due to start their weekly programme of Covid-19 safe workshops and rehearsals from week beginning 13 Sept.

London Mozart Players, another resident organisation, will be doing a live recording from the Concert Hall on Saturday 3 October in partnership with Scala Radio. This will be with a very limited audience, to start to prepare their audiences to return to visiting performance spaces. The event will be broadcast on 10 October.



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Culture Relief Fund

At the beginning of April, Croydon Council launched the Culture Relief Fund in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Cultural organisations were hit early by the economic impact of the lockdown, with creative activities, theatres and other entertainment venues among the first to close their doors.

The £135,000 Cultural Relief Fund, allocated to 38 organisations over three rounds, has provided programme funding for cultural activity and also emergency funding to support cultural organisations in danger of closing as a result of the health crisis. Grants ranging from £1500 to £7500, averaging £3,401 were awarded to various organisations.

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/community/advice/tsfunding/funding/croydon-culture-relief-fund/culture-relief-fund>

Libraries

Culture Relief Fund Libraries offering browsing and IT services

Five Croydon Libraries are now offering in-person browsing and IT access: Ashburton, Central, New Addington, Selsdon, and Thornton Heath. With everyone's safety as a top priority, customers will be asked to sign in and sanitise their hands, face coverings will be required, unless otherwise exempt. Visits will be time-limited, and there is no seating available for reading and studying. To keep customers safe, scheduled appointments will be required for computer sessions, and will last for 45 minutes to give time for cleaning.

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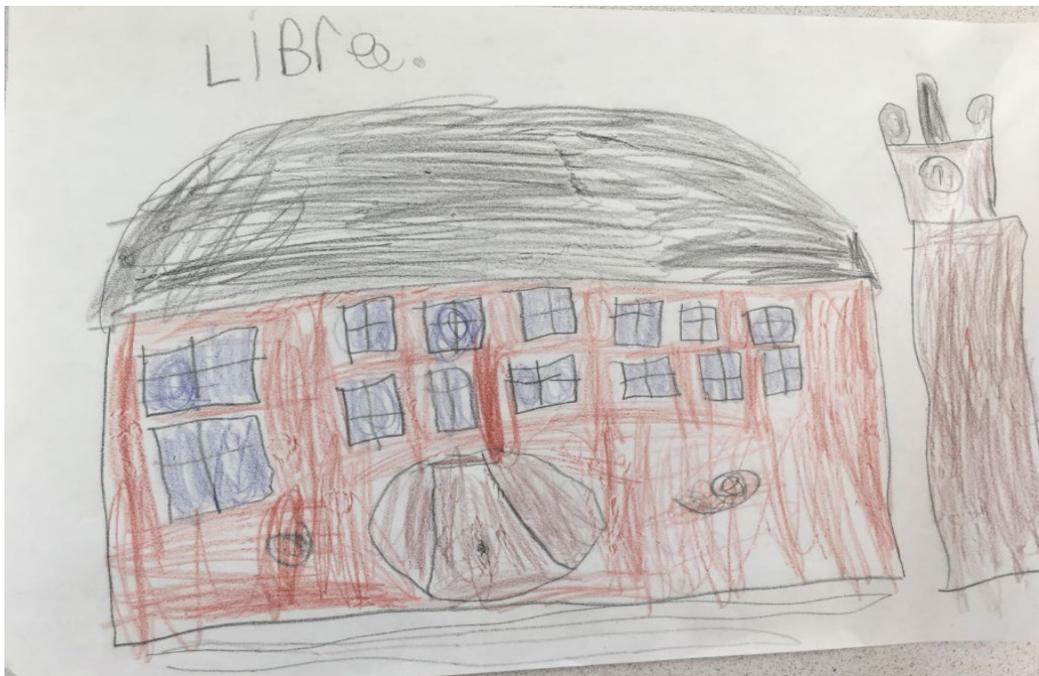
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Nine libraries continue offering Select & Collect service, allowing customers to choose desired titles online, or request books by telephone, choosing specific titles or asking libraries to choose by author/genre or age group.

Books are quarantined and provided in bags which are collected at one of these branches. Since 20th July when the service started, customers have collected over 1,000 bags with their selection of books.

Selected comments from customers:

- Very pleased to be able to browse the shelves
- I want to choose some new books for my children, they've been bored with the same books at home
- It's so nice to see you open, and it's another bit of normality in life.
- We are so delighted you can provide the select and collect service for us. We tend to go every Saturday morning to read and do crafts. We miss this a lot, so having this service helps us a ton. Thanks so much! Here's a picture my daughter drew during lockdown missing her library





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Digital 24/7 Library

Since March, over 1,428 residents have joined the library online to take advantage of our free digital library. In the last 6 months, our usage statistics are up on last year:

- eBook issues +256%
- eAudio issues +173%
- eNewspapers +1,192%
- eMagazines +19%

Home Library Service

The Home Library resumed book deliveries in late July, and have now visited the 200+ customers who find it difficult to visit the library.

Library Activities Online and Social Media



Croydon Libraries have been using our social media accounts to engage with our audiences.

Online events were something new for us, but we were keen to share something of our regular events with our audience online. We discovered that many of our frontline library staff had wonderful creative ideas using materials that are readily available at home.

Since lockdown started Croydon Libraries have posted 24 staff produced videos on our Facebook page which reached 12,554 and had over 2000 engagements. We continue to develop our regular online events as a new. We now have 856 followers on Facebook, 1,005 followers on Instagram and 1,539 on Twitter.

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Summer Reading Challenge: Silly Squad 2020



This year the Summer Reading Challenge went online with “Silly Squad,” celebrating funny books, happiness and laughter, featuring bespoke artwork from award-winning children's illustrator, Laura Ellen Anderson.

Children who joined online could choose an avatar, unlock new characters, discover games and upload badges for each book read. Croydon readers aged 4 – 11 were challenged to finish six books before mid-September.

Croydon Libraries promoted the online summer reading challenge throughout the summer, and distributed over 1,000 physical packs to children without digital access through our libraries, schools, charities, and at the Mayor's Reading Roadshow.

Virtual activities included:

- A retelling of Roald Dahl's *The Twits* by performer John Kirk
- Storytelling with local children's author included Ciara Flood who shared two of her books and crafts



- Storyteller Richard Neville held a series of creative writing workshops, *A planet with Its Own Mind*



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- Jenny Lockyer, local storyteller, was commissioned to write 2 poems inspired by the Silly Squad characters created by illustrator Laura Ellen Anderson. You can view them here <https://youtu.be/LXWLxqhZFil> Jenny's website www.jennylockyer.co.uk/silly-squad Children have the opportunity to draw pictures inspired by the poems Jenny has written.
- Croydon Libraries partnered with Bounce theatre to offer young people the chance to be part of an exciting digital art project with their workshops Imagine... Art and Things to do in a Blackout

Silly Tales Competition

Croydon Libraries is running a Silly Tales Competition based on the Silly Squad characters created by illustrator Laura Ellen Anderson for the Summer Reading Challenge.

The Silly Squad are a crew of fun-loving animals who enjoy exploring funny books which make them happy and laugh out loud!

Children across the borough are invited to get creative and share their stories featuring some or all of the Silly Squad characters! They can write a story, poem or silly rhyme, draw a comic strip or create a short animation with toys or Lego!

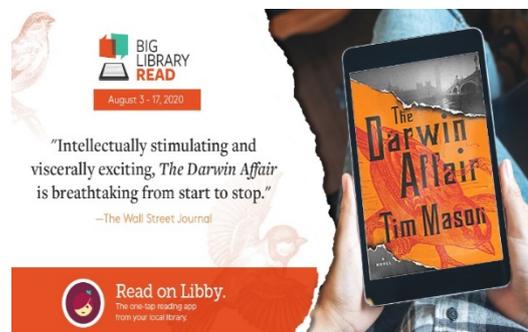
For children aged 4-11 years. Send entries in to librarycompetitions@croydon.gov.uk by 30 September 2020



Big Library Read

Croydon promoted the Big Library Read, the world's largest digital book club, featuring *The Darwin Affair* by Tim Mason.

Readers were invited to 'set up your own digital book group and join the discussion'. The book and an interview with the author were all available on Libby, by OverDrive, as well as thousands of titles, all available free with your Croydon library card!



Libby app is available for download here: <https://www.overdrive.com/apps/libby/>

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The Mayor's Reading Roadshow

The Mayor's Reading Roadshow toured Croydon Parks late August, including Park Hill Recreation Ground, Grange Park, Ashburton Park and Norbury Park on Sunday 30th August.

The Mayor, Councilor Maddie Henson, invited families with young children to celebrate reading, also highlighting the early years support available from Council services and her chosen charity Home Start. Library staff enjoyed meeting parents and young children at the Roadshow, the first outreach opportunity all summer.

Local authors/storytellers shared their books: Lorna Liverpool read ***A Dance to Remember*** and Akitoye Sunday read ***Tiana Eat Up***. A highlight was the Mayor reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and handing out our Summer Reading Challenge packs to the audience.

FareShare Food distribution at New Addington Library



New Addington Library stepped in to manage the FareShare Food delivery while the New Addington Family Centre was closed.

The Fareshare van delivered 750 kilos of food to New Addington Library which was sorted on library trolleys for onward distribution by local charities to New Addington residents in need.



Start-ups in London Libraries (British Library)



Croydon's Start-ups in London Libraries programme, funded by ERDF in partnership with the British Library Business & IP Centre, continues to run a successful online programme, and Project Champion, Sophie White, has supported many new Croydon businesses with one to one sessions and workshops.





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Follow us on our social media pages:

Facebook www.facebook.com/croydonlibraries

Instagram www.instagram.com/croydonlibraries

Twitter www.twitter.com/croydonlibraries

Visit our website www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure/libraries

Leisure Services

Communication and Engagement plan

The Leisure Services team have been busy with their Communications and Engagement plan to reach and support as many of the community as possible from a health and wellbeing aspect. The team have particularly worked closely with GLL to ensure an effective communication strategy was in place developing relevant content and messaging around reopening and relaunch of services.

Furthermore, the Leisure Services team have partnered with London Sport, Sport England and local sport providers to offer support to local clubs/facilities on areas ranging from Best Covid practices at club level to government/governing body grants.

Since its launch in May, key highlights include:

- 2,226 Followers (+439)
- [1994](#) Likes
- 52,818 Total reach (+2.3k average per week)

Messaging and content for August has been centred on a number of campaigns including:

- GLL relaunch
- RAP Scheme relaunch
- National Allotments week
- National Health Week
- Cycle to Work Day

A decision was made at cabinet on 21st September that no council facilities not already open would remain closed this financial year. This put a halt to the gradual reopening of leisure facilities. Those facilities that had already reopened were those that contributed most financially to the partnership. Facilities that have not yet reopened will not reopen before the end of this financial year.

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CEZ

Over the summer months the **CEZ** has continued to support local creative businesses adversely affected by COVID – 19. In addition to the previous £35k of CEZ funding provided to the Croydon Culture Relief Fund, a further £25,000 was established and awarded in to assist 40 creative freelancers with small grants and access to training to help them adapt their business models and access funding.

The CEZ's website, a year in the making, has now been "soft launched". The "Croydon Creative Directory" (www.croydoncreativedirectory.com), provides an online home for the borough's creative business and cultural sector organisations and is geared to help them work together, access resources and promote their work – all for free.

Croydon Music City

Despite our music ecosystem being hit hard by Covid-19 **Croydon Music City** has been working with a range of organisations throughout the summer, with the Music Industry Steering Group approving grant funding to enable a range of activities to take place. This includes, £10,000 to Croydon FM, enabling them to equip their training suite and [create the next generation of broadcasters](#), £5000 to the [Stanley Halls](#) to upgrade their audio equipment, £4000 to [South Norwood Community Festival](#) in support of their September programme and £2500 to the Mula Cake Community Hub in Thornton Heath for their podcasting facilities.

Museum of Croydon

The Museum of Croydon has continued its virtual and interactive offer with a variety of exhibition and activities for the whole family to enjoy.

We have continued the exhibition programme 'What's Your Croydon?' with the introduction of the Queer + Croydon project, working with contemporary artist Mark Goldby who is based at Conditions to establish a queer archive in Croydon and address the historic gap in the museum and archive collections.

The project comprises of an online exhibition exploring Mark's journey through the museum, his inspirational encounters with Ray Harvey-Amer and a revisit of his exhibition Bold which took place in the Clocktower last year. Accompanying this are guest blogs exploring further into LGBT+ history and experience in Croydon and also a contemporary collecting project where you can donate to the archive.

Malti Patel of Apsara Arts and Mela Rung Producer has launched 'My Home Is My Island' an opportunity for you to share your stories and experiences during the COVID-

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19 lockdown. Stories will be selected to become part of a virtual exhibition hosted by Museum of Croydon and archived to create a snapshot of life during this period.

Following the celebrations for VE Day on 8 May, we commemorated the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War on 15 August as Victory in Japan Day with additional films as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) supported project with Digital Drama.

Our volunteers have continued to research biographies as part of the Citizen project with the National Portrait Gallery and also transcribing our oral history collection with this role available to those based in and outside of Croydon! Our next focus will be on biographies of Mayors of Croydon.

We've been working on digital learning packs for the family to enjoy as part of our Museum from Home. Launching with our Anglo Saxon pack to coincide with the Festival of Archaeology, discover objects found around Croydon that belonged to our past residents. Look, learn and get hands on with activities from creating your own dig, naming the bones of the body to uniting the broken pieces with an ancient pot jigsaw.

Finally, we're continuing to provide access virtually to collections and answer enquiries remotely. It is important we as the Museum of Croydon respond to the ongoing pandemic but also in terms of social responsibility with regards to Black Lives Matter of which we have released a statement to stand in solidarity and in defiance of systemic racism which impacts our communities.

Parks and Greenspaces

We wanted to thank everyone who participated in Croydon's park and greenspaces survey which was live throughout August and September.

Our parks and greenspaces have been an important refuge and resource for many people during the COVID-19 pandemic and because of this, we wanted to hear your views to help inform the future planning for parks and greenspaces post COVID-19.

We had over 2000 responses and the results are being analysed. However, the initial findings are as follows:

- 60% of survey respondents explored new parks and greenspaces during COVID-19 lockdown (March 2020 to date)
- 59% of survey responses value their parks and greenspaces much more than before COVID-19.

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- 85% of survey respondents would be willing to support their local park and greenspace.



Listening to Nature with Croydon's new celebrity audio trail

The Friends of Farthing Downs and Happy Valley, in partnership with Croydon's Happy Valley Countryside Ranger, have revamped the nature trail through these delightful greenspaces.

They have updated the nature trail booklet and replaced the posts, as well as developing an exciting new celebrity audio trail. With their smart phone, visitors can scan the QR code at any of the 29 posts and listen to Joanna Lumley, Sir Tony Robinson and others explain why this area is outstanding in its nature and landscape history. (The area is so special it was declared a National Nature Reserve last year, only the 3rd in London!).



Thanks to the hard work of Dominic North, Countryside Warden, more than 16 local and national celebrities have lent their voices to bring the trail alive and make it even more accessible. The new audio trail and booklet will be launched online on 24 September as Covid-19 restrictions mean an in-situ launch is not possible.

To find out more and to get a copy of the new booklet email: paulinepayne@btinternet.com and visit <https://www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/>

The audio trail and overall trail refurbishment was kindly funded by a grant from City of London.

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Cricket comes to Norbury Park

In partnership with The England and Wales Cricket Board, London Cricket Trust and Surrey County Cricket Club the council have been awarded a facilities grant to install an artificial cricket pitch within Norbury Park.

The Active Lifestyles team have received £40k of investment into some of our parks and open spaces to support the development of cricket in Croydon over the last two years.

The pitch at Norbury Park was installed in early September and adds to the borough's growing portfolio of outdoor cricket facilities which included the installation of three new artificial pitches in the last twelve months.

The new pitch will also provide greater accessibility and higher quality provision in the north of the borough a key ambition for cricket in the borough's Sport & Physical Activity Facilities Strategy.