

Southwark

Life

Spring 2021

Leaving lockdown and vaccines

We've got what you need to know

Budget 2021/2022

Spending money for a better future

Child support

Meet our wonderful foster carers

PLUS News and events across the borough

Your magazine from Southwark Council

Southwark
Council
southwark.gov.uk

CORONAVIRUS

“Getting tested is a really easy way to help keep my family and my workmates safe.”



PRATIK, RETAIL ASSISTANT

Get free, rapid tests if you have to leave home to work.

Get tested, even if you don't have symptoms.

Around 1 in 3 people who have Covid-19 don't have any symptoms and can spread it without knowing.

Test regularly – at least once a week.

REGULAR TESTING FOR SAFER WORKING IS HERE

Book free rapid tests in Southwark at www.southwark.gov.uk/rapidtest

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welcome...

Things are feeling a little more optimistic as we head into spring. The government's roadmap out of lockdown gives us a timeline out of restrictions so we can look forward to seeing our family and friends this summer. But it is so important that in the meantime we all continue to follow restrictions and continue to wash our hands, cover our faces and make space. I want to thank all our residents who have been sticking to the rules and staying home over the last few weeks. I know it hasn't been easy for a lot of people but we are nearly there so let's keep going.

The other key ingredient is the vaccine programme. I can assure you the vaccine is approved, safe and effective in offering protection against this terrible virus and I encourage everyone to take it when they get their offer. If you want more information we have a full feature on the roadmap and the vaccines in this edition.

COVID-19 has also had a significant impact on the council's budget over the last 12 months but that isn't stopping us working to make the borough a better place for the future. You can read all about how we are planning to spend our budget in the magazine, plus extra features on how we are already making Southwark a greener and safer place to live, work and visit.

Finally, don't forget there are two important dates coming up. Sunday 21 March is census day and it is so important everyone completes their form to get the most accurate picture of our population and its needs. Then Thursday 6 May is election day for the Greater London Assembly and for the London Mayor, for which you may want to consider a postal vote.

Cllr Kieron Williams
Leader of Southwark Council



Contact us

Do you have something to say about Southwark Life?
email southwark.life@southwark.gov.uk

Our front cover star is Community Ambassador Carole Haynes. Read her interview on page 21.

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Keep in touch

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[facebook.com/southwarkcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/southwarkcouncil)
[@lb_southwark](https://twitter.com/lb_southwark)
[Instagram.com/southwarkcouncil](https://www.instagram.com/southwarkcouncil)

Need to know...

Southwark is the borough that never stops, even during lockdown. There are still plenty of things going on and we've rounded up some of the best news from across the borough this season.

For news and events follow us on social media or find out more at [southwark.gov.uk/news](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news)

 Follow us on Facebook facebook.com/southwarkcouncil

 Follow us on Twitter @lb_southwark

 Follow us on Instagram Instagram.com/southwarkcouncil

Career-focused adult learning courses now available online



We are running a variety of courses online, ideal if you're self-isolating or prefer distance learning, and are looking for career-focused learning to help you find work, find a better job, study at a higher level or to go to university.

We offer free ESOL (subject to conditions), free English and maths Functional Skills from Entry 1 to Level 2 and Computing Skills at Entry 2 and Entry 3.

We also have a number of CACHE courses available, from beginners to Level 1 and 2. CACHE courses prepare you to work in either a childcare or school setting and include: Diploma for early years practitioners, Certificate in supporting teaching and learning in schools, Preparing to work in schools, and Paediatric First Aid. Courses are also run in Food Safety and Hygiene.

Please see work-related courses and the Basic Skills section of our web page: www.southwark.gov.uk/schools-and-education/adult-learning or call **07394410750** or **07394410749** for more information.

A new café-kiosk for north Bermondsey

The council has begun work on a new café-kiosk, set within a lush garden courtyard on Holyrood Street.

Flanked by a stunning green wall, the kiosk will be run by Malfatti Projects and The Connection, a social enterprise which works with homeless people. The project will enliven this small street, tucked away behind London Bridge station, and will help draw visitors to north Bermondsey and the emerging Low Line.

We are pleased to be working in partnership with local Business Improvement Districts Team London Bridge, The Blue Bermondsey and Better Bankside to deliver the scheme. The project is part of a wider Low Line vision and is jointly funded by the Mayor's Good Growth Fund, Team London Bridge and the council.

The café-kiosk will open later this spring, see www.southwark.gov.uk/holyrood



Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library

A new heritage centre for Southwark, combined with a new library, will open soon on Walworth Road.

This brand new council facility, built as part of the regeneration of Elephant and Castle, will combine a new local library for Walworth with a new heritage centre for the borough, telling the story of Southwark, past and present.

The centre will include 20,000 new books, 13 public computers and 22 study spaces. There will be two spaces for exhibitions, meetings, events and activities and more than 300 artworks and artefacts on display including items from the Cuming Collection.

Find out more about the new heritage centre and library at www.southwark.gov.uk/shc&wl

Southwark Council's plans to strengthen protections for private renters

The council's ambitions to support and protect residents who rent their homes privately are underway with plans for new private rented property licensing schemes across the borough.

Your feedback and suggestions can be given by reading the supporting documents and completing a short survey at www.southwark.gov.uk/propertylicensing2021

Paper copies can also be requested by emailing propertylicensing@southwark.gov.uk or leaving a message at **020 7525 5140**.

Changes to Windrush Compensation Scheme

The Windrush Compensation Scheme was launched in April 2019 to compensate members of the Windrush generation and their families for the losses and impacts they have suffered as a result of not being able to demonstrate their lawful immigration status.

Following feedback from the Windrush Cross-Government Working Group; members of the Windrush generation; community leaders and those affected; the government is making improvements to the scheme including raising the minimum award to £10,000 and raising the maximum award to £100,000.

They are also making changes to the rules in the Loss of Access to Employment category including removing the 12-month cap on payments in all circumstances.

For full details visit the www.windrush.campaign.gov.uk

Census 2021 is in full swing in Southwark

Households across Southwark will soon be asked to take part in the nationwide survey of housing and the population. Information from the digital-first census will help decide how services are planned and funded in your local area.

Census 2021 letters, with your unique access codes, have all gone out and responses are already coming in.

Operating in line with the Government's latest COVID-19 guidance, field officers will be deployed across the country to contact those who have not responded. They will offer help and advice to those who need it. They will also remind people that their census response is required by law.

To complete your census, and find out how you can get help, visit census.gov.uk or call **0800 141 2021**.

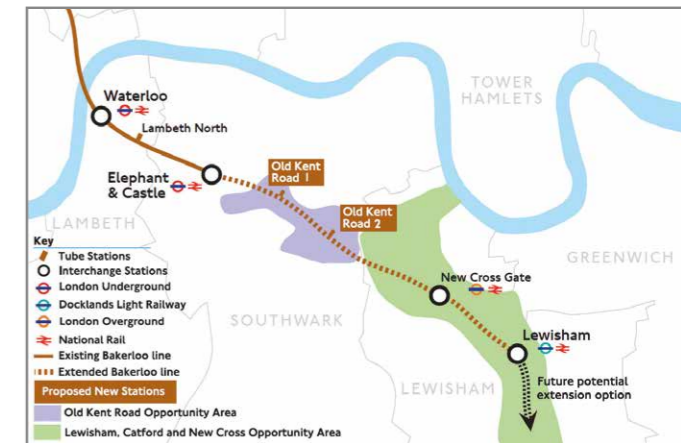
census2021

Back the Bakerloo campaign celebrates latest victory

In December 2020, Ministers approved Transport for London's plan to proceed with statutory safeguarding of the route for the Bakerloo Line extension – running from Elephant & Castle to Lewisham. Once confirmed, this will protect the land required for the tunnels, alongside new stations along the Old Kent Road, at New Cross Gate and Lewisham, as well as key operational infrastructure and construction sites.

Southwark Council has been leading the campaign to extend the Bakerloo Line for several years – a project that will deliver thousands of affordable homes for Southwark residents and support tens of thousands of jobs across the capital.

Respondents to the 2019 public consultation on the extension showed overwhelming public support for the scheme but we need your backing to help secure the future for this vital project for our borough. Visit www.backthebakerloo.org.uk to show your support. You can also spread this news on social media using **#BackTheBakerloo**.



Virtual surgeries with your local councillors

Councillors are now running monthly surgeries for residents in their wards via Zoom.

Days and times of monthly virtual surgeries for each ward can be found at www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-mps/your-councillors

In order to book a virtual surgery appointment with your local councillors, please email them in advance of the surgery to request an appointment (email addresses can be found on the council website via the web address above). Your councillors will send you the log-in details for the Zoom surgery.

Surgeries are an important opportunity for residents to talk through a range of issues (e.g. related to housing, social care, the local area) with their local councillor and help us keep residents safe and healthy, especially during these difficult times. Surgeries are normally in person but the pandemic has meant we have had to explore alternative options to ensure residents can still meet with councillors.



Home sweet home

Hundreds of new council homes have been announced, started or completed over the last few months.

William Cuffay House residents delighted with their new homes

Residents moved into Walworth's brand new block of 17 council flats at the beginning of February, and are already enjoying the experience of living in their new homes. One of these residents, Jessica Smith, moved into her three-bedroom council flat in William Cuffay House with her husband and three sons on 1 February.

Jessica said, "I'm really glad to be living here, the flat is really nice and so much better than where I was living before. It's really spacious and it means that my oldest son can now have his own room so he's much happier. We're all much happier living here."

"I just want to say thank you to Southwark Council for the opportunity to live in this flat and make it my new home. I know our family will be very happy living here".



The block is named after William Cuffay, the son of a former slave who was a leading figure in the Kennington Chartist movement in the 1800s. The Chartist movement was the first mass popular political movement in British history and campaigned for workers' rights and universal suffrage.

Over 500 new council homes to be created on Aylesbury Estate

A total of 581 brand new council homes are the next homes set to be delivered on the Aylesbury Estate footprint after Southwark Council agreed to fund their delivery.

These new high quality council homes, on Westmoreland Road and Bradenham Close, will be a range of different-sized flats and houses. Southwark Council is also funding an Extra Care facility and homes for people with learning disabilities on the same site.

This new agreement will help create social housing more quickly, increase the number of social rented homes across the regeneration area and speed up the rehousing of residents on the estate, as part of one of the largest housing regeneration sites in the country.

Works on the Thurlow Street site are also progressing well, delivering new community facilities including a new library, health centre, early years facility and a new public square.



New homes on St Saviours Estate

Forty new council homes and three new play areas planned for Bermondsey

Forty new council homes and three new play areas are set to be built on St Saviours Estate, Bermondsey, after gaining planning approval from the council. The new homes will be five-storey buildings made up of flats and duplexes, ranging from one-bedroom to four-bedroom properties.

Both developments will be part of the St Saviours Estate and will provide three new children's play areas that cater to all ages, enhancing the well-being of families already living on the estate as well as those moving into the new homes.

The developments, at Maltby Street and Fendall Street, are expected to complete in winter 2022.



Artist impression of Peckham Garages site

Peckham garages set to be transformed into new council homes

A set of garages in Peckham will become the site of five brand new council homes for Southwark residents, after Southwark's Planning Committee gave the go ahead for the development in January.

The new homes, in Fenham Road, Peckham, will be offered to local council tenants who need to move because their existing home is unsuitable for them and their family. The development will be a two-part three-storey building made up of two one-bedroom flats and three two-bedroom flats, with the capacity to house fifteen people.

The new homes are expected to be finished by autumn 2022.

These developments are part of Southwark Council's New Homes programme, which aims to build 11,000 new council homes across the borough by 2043. To meet this ambitious target, the council is looking at new and innovative ways to build new council homes.

The council works with residents to shape the way they design and build new council homes, helping to make local communities stronger, safer, and more rewarding places to live.

Roadmap out of lockdown

The Government has announced its Roadmap out of national COVID-19 restrictions; but there is still plenty for us to do.

We know the last few weeks in lockdown have been difficult for many, but with the days getting lighter, vaccine numbers increasing and a plan of how we are going to come out of lockdown restrictions, there are reasons to be optimistic.

But we all still have a part to play. It is vital we continue to follow the government guidelines as restrictions change, and Southwark Council will do everything it can to keep you updated on the changes as they come in.

It is also really important that through the next few months we continue to wash hands, wear a mask when required and keep our

distance. People are also encouraged to open windows to ventilate their homes regularly – and especially if they have had someone from outside their household or bubble in their home, like an emergency plumber or care provider for example.

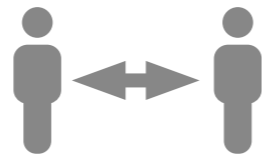
Also, for the time being, travel is restricted and people should only be making essential journeys and working from home if possible.



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

THE ROADMAP

The Government has outlined several steps leading up to the summer that will ease lockdown restrictions across the country. There will be at least five weeks between each step and dates given are all advisory and subject to review; but if all goes well and people continue to stick to the rules and infection rates remain low – then things could soon start getting back to some form of normal.

Rimi Ali
student nurse

“Quick, little to no pain and simple”



STEP 1

The first step – Step 1(a) was from Monday 8 March with the government allowing the re-opening of non-essential retail, places like zoos, self-contained holiday venues and outside hospitality venues and the council will be starting to re-open libraries and leisure centres.

From Monday 29 March we will hopefully be moving forward with Step 1(b). This is when we will be back to the Rule of Six where up to six people, or two households, can meet outside (including private gardens). This is also when we can start looking at re-opening outdoor sports and leisure sites.

STEP 2

Step 2 is planned to begin Monday 12 April with the re-opening of non-essential retail, libraries, leisure centres, zoos, self-contained holiday venues and outside hospitality venues.

STEP 3

Step 3 is planned from Monday 17 May and will see an easing of limits on visiting friends and family as the Rule of Six will now be for indoor visits, and cinemas, hotels and some larger venues can re-open.

STEP 4

Finally Step 4 will be around Monday 21 June with the removal of all legal restrictions, although this – like the other steps – is subject to review and dependent on people continuing to take up the vaccine and keep infection rates low.



VACCINES

The vaccine is the best way to protect people from COVID-19 and will save thousands of lives. Following extensive safety trials and authorisation by the independent regulator, the MHRA, effective COVID-19 vaccines are available in the UK for free. These vaccines have had three stages of clinical trials and have been tested on tens of thousands of people around the world. The trial phases were run in parallel, speeding up the overall time of vaccine production, but not the critical research time.

Vaccines were tested on both men and women, on people from different ethnic backgrounds, representative of the UK population and of all ages between 18 and 84. Both of the vaccines being used in the UK provide a high degree of protection after the first dose.

It is essential that everyone continues to stay at home if possible, whether they have had the vaccine or not, to protect the NHS and save lives. It's important to note that vaccines are not 100% effective. Some people may still get ill having had the vaccine but it will greatly reduce the chance of you getting severe symptoms.

We want every eligible person to benefit from a free vaccine. It could save your life.

Answering your questions on the vaccine

We've heard from communities across Southwark who have concerns and questions about the vaccine. Here we have put questions from Southwark faith communities and resident associations to a local Southwark GP, Dr Emily Gibbs.

Is the vaccine safe? Yes, I have had my vaccination. As you can see elsewhere on this page, the vaccines have been through strict safety checks and we are lucky as the UK has some of the highest safety standards in the world.

Each batch of the vaccine is also tested to make sure it is safe before being sent to us to use for vaccinating people. This is the same for all the vaccines in the UK; all are safe and will give you good protection from COVID-19.

Can I get Covid from the vaccines? No. The vaccines work by getting your body to recognise a part of the virus. They do not contain the virus itself and cannot give you the COVID-19 infection. Two doses will really reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill.

Are there any side effects? Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. You may find that your arm is sore or that you feel tired, but if you feel well you should be able to carry on with your day as usual. I personally had a sore arm and went to bed early with some paracetamol on the night after my vaccination after feeling tired and grumpy.

Do the vaccines affect fertility? Good question and one which I know is an important concern for lots of people.

There is no evidence that the vaccines affect fertility in men or women, and there is nothing in the vaccines which could affect fertility.

Vaccines are not tested in people who are pregnant, but we know that the vaccine is not live and so is available for those who are pregnant. With pregnancy we know COVID-19 can be a risk to anyone who is pregnant with an underlying condition.

If you are pregnant and invited for a vaccination, I would recommend discussing it with your GP as they will be able to provide you with the information you need about it and answer your questions.

Are the vaccines vegan/vegetarian friendly? Both of the current vaccines do not contain any foetal or animal products, mercury or egg, and are suitable for vegetarians and vegans. All ingredients are published in healthcare information on the MHRA's website – the MHRA is the independent body in the UK which monitors and assesses all medicines and healthcare products.

The British Islamic Medical Association has also produced a helpful guide for the Muslim community on their website.

Where is there more information? We have got lots of questions and the answers to them on our website at <https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/what-we-do/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/>, please do have a look if you have any questions.





Bau Nguyen
(resident)

"I came with my wife and son-in-law, very easy and straightforward"

Beware of vaccine fraud

The vaccine is only available free from the NHS. At no point will a patient be asked to pay.

- The NHS **will never ask** you for your bank account or card details.
- The NHS **will never ask** you for your PIN or banking password.
- The NHS **will never arrive** unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine.
- The NHS **will never ask** you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport, driving license, bills or pay slips.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Thanks again to all our community groups, volunteers and donators who are continuing to offer services to help people through lockdown. The council is proud to have supported many of these groups with funding.

Elim House

Elim House Elderly Day Centre in Peckham has been reaching out to vulnerable people in the community by delivering hot lunches and food parcels three days a week across Southwark. The majority of people getting help are from the Caribbean community, however the centre has supported people from other community groups during the crisis. The meals on wheels project has been running since April 2020 and between 30 and 42 elderly people are now receiving a freshly cooked lunch, three days per week.



Laptops for kids

Schools across Southwark have received laptops to help their most disadvantaged pupils, thanks to an amazing outpouring of donations from the community which has raised over £130,000 and which the council is matchfunding up to £250,000. Thanks again to everyone who made a donation to this campaign.

Last month, Southwark Council revealed that over 2,500 pupils in the borough were at risk of falling behind at school during lockdown because they didn't have access to a laptop or internet connection.

To bridge this digital divide, the Laptops for Learning crowdfund was launched by London South Teaching School Alliance, with the council committing to match donations from the community.

Since then, hundreds of individual residents, charities and businesses in Southwark have been united by this cause, coming together to donate generously to the crowdfund and voicing their ardent support of the campaign's aim to help children in the borough achieve a bright future.

Art at Home

Stuck@HomeArt group is a digital art group taught every Wednesday and run by Paxton Green Time Bank. It was created on the first week of the first lockdown to support the mental health and wellbeing of their arty members, by giving them a weekly purpose. Each week a new drawing topic is given. Some people just enjoy the social side and prefer not to join in the art activities and this is welcomed. Most members keep drawing and submit their work each week and then individual and group feedback is given. To find out more email broker@pgtimebank.org or call 07591750027.



EGG-STRA FUN THIS EASTER

The kids may be going back to school, but it won't be long until the Easter holidays, and there are plenty of things to keep families active, educated and entertained.

The council's Stay at Home Library has a wide range of online events and activities that you can do in your own time, throughout the spring and Easter school holidays www.southwark.gov.uk/stayathomelibrary.

Our regular Southwark Presents page also features a range of events, workshops and other activities available online from local theatres, galleries, museums and organisations.

Keep an eye on the website at www.southwark.gov.uk/southwarkpresents for new activities every week.

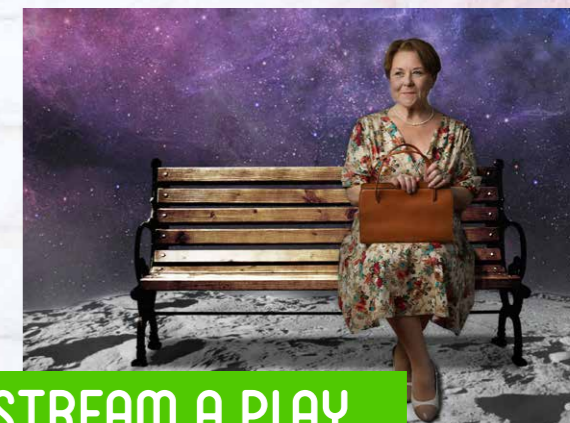
DULWICH GALLERY COLLECTION APP

Unlock the Gallery's Permanent Collection using their new mobile app. Explore the gallery's entire on-show collection, using the app's Art Recognition technology to reveal extra information beyond the labels for every painting.

Discover the Permanent Collection with an insider's knowledge using the app's Highlights Tour where curators will lead you through the Gallery, selecting their favourite works and spaces.

For more information or to download go to www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/app

The gallery is also hosting digital events inspired by their exhibitions. On 16 April, 6.30pm to 8.30pm, embrace the natural world and explore its impact on contemporary creativity at an alternative Gallery Late, hosted digitally and inspired by the major exhibition Uearthed: Photography's Roots. Visit www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/whats-on/digital-events/2021/april/uneearthed-at-home-an-evening-of-art-and-nature for more information.



STREAM A PLAY

Theatres are changing the way they show productions, with a mix of socially distanced in-person performances and live-streamed shows.

From 29 April to 22 May the Southwark Playhouse theatre will be showing You Are Here - the UK premiere of an intimate, hilarious and heart-breaking tour-de-force musical that will leave you cheering for the resilience of the human spirit.

This is an in-person performance running for four weeks (if government guidance allows), and there is also one designated live-streamed performance on Friday 7 May. If the theatre can't open for live performances, all performances will be live streamed.

To find out more visit www.southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/show-whats-on

Council budget 2021



Building a better future for Southwark

Southwark Council has approved its latest Annual Budget; find out what this means for our borough.

Before the pandemic, Southwark Council had seen its budget cut by two-thirds over ten years. The current crisis has hit our finances hard once more, but we have a plan to lead the borough forward and make sure that no-one is left behind. This year we focus on three of our key priorities: to ensure the best possible future for our young people, supporting our most vulnerable residents by protecting funding for social care

and public health and doing our bit to protect our planet for future generations.

We have done everything we can to make sure our money has been stretched further than ever before, but as a result of the pandemic the council's costs have increased by £57m. We have also seen our income decline significantly – by £43m in the last twelve months alone. This follows on from a decade of austerity, with our funding from central government reduced by 63p in every pound since 2010.

Therefore, like all other councils in London, we have had to make a difficult decision on council tax. On average this means an increase of 95p a week for residents in band A to C properties.

The council's finances have been hit by about £100m as a result of COVID-19 and the government has not covered all of it. We will be continuing to call on them to ensure that we are able to reclaim the money we have spent on supporting our residents through this difficult time.

“This budget aims to build a better future for the people of Southwark. It is a budget that protects the most vulnerable, invests in our young people, tackles the climate change emergency, and celebrates the diversity of our borough.”



Cllr Rebecca Lury,
Cabinet Member for Finance,
Business & Jobs

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES DURING CORONAVIRUS

At the start of the pandemic the council called over 20,000 older and vulnerable residents to ensure they had the support they needed. We delivered food parcels, and helped with prescriptions and bills. To ensure support was available across the community, we also supplied £1.2m to local community groups and charities. We have supported local businesses forced to close with rate relief of £88.8m and distributed grants totalling £89.9m, helping to protect thousands of jobs across our borough.

In this budget we are committing £500,000 to a Food Poverty programme, developing a sustainable approach to supporting those most in need. We have also worked with our schools to try and ensure no Southwark child goes hungry, funding free school meals for all eligible children during the holidays.

Also, to continue our work with vulnerable residents, we will be making a contribution of £100,000 to our Community Hub which will allow it to continue its brilliant work.



A GREEN FUTURE

We can only create a better future if we protect our planet. That is why we will keep the climate emergency at the forefront of every decision we make.

You can read about what measures are already in place to start to tackle the climate emergency on page 14, but in this budget we will set out how we intend to go further. We will review numerous contracts across the council which will contribute to these efforts, alongside the continued rollout of Controlled Parking Zones and our Low Traffic Southwark initiative.

We are also committed to a net-zero carbon operational estate. This means we will make all our buildings carbon neutral by updating insulation and glazing and introducing air source heat pumps and roof solar panels. We will deliver a net zero council fleet by investing £5m into switching our vehicles to electric alternatives and we are accelerating our 10-year programme to deliver electric vehicle charging points across the borough.

We know there is much more to do and this year we will launch our climate emergency strategy, setting out a pathway to a carbon-neutral borough by 2030.



THE NEW YOUTH DEAL

We must ensure that our young people have all the opportunities they need to emerge from this crisis and build bright futures.

In Southwark, more than 200 young people have accessed our new free mental health drop in service for children and young people, The Nest, since it opened its doors in August



2020. We have also continued to support young people into work with our scholarships, internships and other youth service programmes.

In order to help build a brighter future for our children and young people, this budget will see the launch of our New Youth Deal that will see us investing in a full range of activities and support for young people who have been hit particularly hard by the fall out of this pandemic. We will continue to protect our current network of support while investing in additional activities. The council will contribute £1m to youth and play plus an additional £400,000 to the existing Southwark Youth Services budget, including; £100,000 for the creation of a Youth Parliament, £100,000 to carry out recommendations of our Youth Review and £200,000 to expand The Nest mental health service to schools.

This will bring together ongoing programmes, such as the £390,000 we spend through Southwark Works to support young people into employment, the £1 million Southwark Scholars programme to help young people into higher education and the £500,000 Positive Future Fund to provide inspiring opportunities for young people that divert them away from crime.

TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY



Southwark Council has already acted to reduce its carbon footprint and air pollution, but we know we need to do more to address this challenge.



Climate change is the greatest threat to society. Its effects can be seen everywhere from the melting of the polar ice caps, to the devastating forest fires in Australia, to the floods that have ravaged communities here in the UK and the air pollution that impacts thousands every year including here in Southwark.

Tackling the climate emergency requires international co-operation, but it is also dependent on radical

local action. With our refreshed Borough Plan, the council is putting the environment at the heart of everything it does. We are improving energy efficiency in our council homes, planting thousands more new trees, and promoting walking, cycling and public transport over private car use. The climate emergency has been brought into sharper focus during the coronavirus pandemic. It has demonstrated the need for places and communities to become more resilient. It has also highlighted

the major impact human activity has on air quality and carbon emissions. There is now a window of opportunity to ensure our recovery from this pandemic is rooted in addressing these immense environmental challenges, one that is matched by our commitment to reduce inequalities.

Here are some of the things we have recently announced to tackle the climate emergency – but there is plenty more to come.

GREEN ENERGY

Southwark Council has confirmed that all of the electricity in its offices and buildings, from the Town Hall to day centres and park huts, now comes from renewable energy sources. In addition, all of its street lighting is now powered by 100 per cent renewable energy.

Electricity in communal spaces across the council's housing stock will also all be powered by renewable energy, from September next year. This includes all of the electricity that powers lighting in stairwells, lifts and other shared spaces, along with the power needed to run equipment for heating systems, and more.

Southwark Council is also working on renewable energy options for its schools and will be saying more about this in a few months' time.



The council has no control over electricity suppliers for anyone's home or business, but would encourage people to look at moving to a renewable supplier, using websites such as Uswitch.



10,000 TREES

One important element of Southwark's plans to be carbon neutral by 2030, is our commitment to planting 10,000 trees across the borough by 2022.

The ambitious programme, which is among the biggest in London, will see the number of trees in Southwark increase by 13 per cent. Over ten years our £5m ecological project plan will make sure the trees are planted, cared for and replaced as necessary.

The council is already responsible for the care of 82,500 trees in Southwark. Each tree is mapped and logged and given a check-up every three years – two years for those on council school grounds. Some of the new trees will replace historic losses.

In addition to the 10,000 new trees, the council has identified areas that would benefit from woodland expansion, hedgerow creation and increased areas of natural habitat.

The council hopes to bring together the people of Southwark in the summer; to help decide where to plant the trees, how to care for them and how to monitor the success of the project.

OVER £100M PLEDGED FOR GREEN PROJECTS



Southwark Council has backed its commitment to the Climate Emergency and environment sustainability with a new commitment of £100m in funding. This investment opens the door to further creative and impactful measures, that will improve air quality and bring the council closer to hitting its target of carbon neutrality by 2030.

The long-term commitment puts the environment front and centre, and illustrates a shift in direction for the council.

Plans for the £101m include making all operational council buildings carbon neutral by updating insulation and glazing and introducing air source heat pumps and solar panels. It will also help to switch the council's vehicles to electric alternatives and accelerate a 10-year programme to deliver electric vehicle charging points across the borough.

Further detail will be unveiled in the council's new Climate Emergency strategy, which will show how the council hopes the borough can become carbon neutral by 2030.

GROW YOUR OWN

Southwark Council is giving green-fingered residents the chance to create new community gardening and food growing spaces with the launch of its Allotment Expansion Guarantee. This new initiative will empower residents to create their own community gardening spaces on council land.

The council's Community Gardening Coordinators will support groups of residents to set up new growing spaces on council-owned land across the borough, where there is local support and suitable growing sites available. The council hopes to create over 100 new growing plots under this initiative by next spring.



Get in touch
If you would like to find out more about the council's climate work and how we can involve you or your community, please email climateemergency@southwark.gov.uk

Get Street Smart

Let's all make our streets healthier, safer and greener

Lockdown has given us all a glimpse of what our local streets could feel like, with cleaner air and calmer roads. The restrictions meant we all appreciated our parks and open spaces in a way perhaps we hadn't before. Working with residents, the council wants to create more pleasant outdoor spaces, and greener streets where we can all relax and enjoy our surroundings. We want to make it easier, safer, and more enjoyable

for local people to travel on foot or by bike, and make sure people have the option to 'go green' if cars are needed, with more electric charging points locally. If we all work together to make our local areas as appealing as they can be, more people will choose to stay local for shopping and leisure, and help our town centres flourish. A greener Southwark is a better Southwark, and here we have set out some of the ways we can all help make this happen.

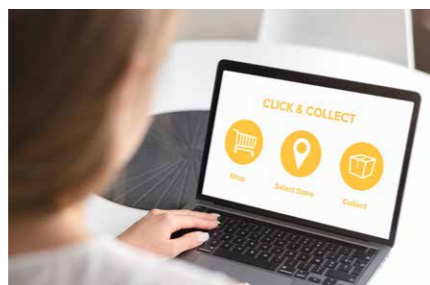
Walking

For many of us, our daily exercise during lockdown became a real highlight, and offered a break from the monotony of staying at home. Families and individuals have pounded the streets, really got to know their local area, and got a bit fitter in the process. As the weather improves, why not keep walking, maybe to visit some of our many, excellent local shops, cafés and restaurants as they reopen, and continue to feel the benefits of your lockdown routine.



Click and collect

If you've been having deliveries brought to your home throughout the lockdown, we do understand. However, these deliveries result in a lot of vehicles on our roads. So when we feel comfortable, let's move back to walkable Click and Collect points, turning many local vehicle journeys into one.



Parks

You will likely have become familiar with most, if not all of your local parks and green spaces this last year. We have more than 300 of them, including seven nature reserves. We care for more than 82,000 trees on public land and have welcomed bats, Stag beetles and Peregrines back to make their homes in Southwark again. You can use our wildlife mapping tool to tell us about sightings and photos of wildlife on your travels.



Did you know?

- A third of car journeys in Southwark are less than 2km – a distance that most people could walk or cycle.
- Less than half the households in Southwark have access to car.
- Most long car journeys in Southwark are journeys that neither start nor end in Southwark.
- Road transport is the single biggest source of some of the most dangerous air pollutants in London. Road transport accounts for 51.9% of the boroughs' NOx emissions.
- Southwark's streets support over a quarter of a million motor vehicle trips every day. This includes trips for commuting, business, deliveries, waste collection, work, education and leisure.
- Around 88% of traffic on our streets is cars and taxis, with the remaining 12% being buses, vans and larger vehicles.

Cycling

We've invested should be £800,000 in cycle hangers (we'd like everyone in Southwark to have access to one) and if demand for cycle hangers is anything to go by a number of you have tried cycling. Perhaps you had a go when the roads were quieter back in the summer, maybe you've ridden on some of the 30+ kilometres of cycleway in Southwark. But if you have, you'll know that as the fastest, free means of covering a fair amount of ground, cycling cannot be beaten and at rush hour in central London, it's almost always quicker than taking a bus, or driving a car.



Schools

We are working with a number of schools to develop travel plans that promote clean air, walking, cycling and safe streets for their children. We are committed to having 60 schools signed up to our school street closures by the end of next year. At present, there are 18 timed or "at any time" school street closures across the borough – four of which have been made permanent. The other 14 are currently trialling and we are hoping to make them permanent in the coming months. School street closures look to clear the street outside a school of moving motor traffic, at times when children are arriving at or leaving school. We invite you to talk to your local school to see if this is something they might be able to do too.

Low-traffic neighbourhoods

Over the summer of 2020 we introduced a number of measures with the aim of reducing commuter traffic in local neighbourhoods. We also worked to create more space at pinch points, so people could walk, queue, social distance, and ride a bike safely.

It is approaching time for reviews/consultations to begin. In order to get a clear picture from both motorist and non-car owners, but most importantly residents, we invite anyone living in an area that has low traffic measures in place, to look out for your local consultation.

Get involved

If you are looking to link up with other people who want to actively improve our shared space and help stay abreast of all the many green projects and schemes happening all over the borough you can sign up for our quarterly climate emergency newsletter, see page 15 for more information.

Tackling homelessness

Southwark Council has been working with Beam and residents to support people facing homelessness.

Southwark Council is working with local organisations to end homelessness in the borough. We have seen a 48% increase in people approaching the council for homelessness support since the end of March 2020. One of the organisations we have been working with throughout the pandemic is Beam.

Beam crowdfunds to remove the financial barriers to someone starting work or securing their own home. Funds raised go towards things like laptops,



training courses, childcare, travel, deposit and rent in advance. Since the partnership started, Beam has helped over 30 Southwark households to move on from or avoid homelessness, with over £160,000 donated towards Southwark residents using Beam.

Ojevwe became homeless in Southwark just before the pandemic started. Through Beam, 124 supporters raised over £3,000 for Ojevwe. Ojevwe used this money towards a deposit for a privately rented flat, so that he and his daughter could leave temporary accommodation. He has also used the money to complete a training course and has now started work. He advises people in a similar situation to him not to be afraid of asking for help. "Human beings can be proud, we don't want to be vulnerable," he says. "Reach out," he urges anyone at risk of homelessness.



Ojevwe

He also asks people to be kind to homeless people: "Being homeless comes with certain stigma." Ojevwe explains that we can all need help at different times in our life, but often this is just temporary. "I am living testimony that someone gave me the opportunity to get back on my feet."

To donate to help people like Ojevwe, or for more information on the partnership between Beam and Southwark Council, please visit beam.org/campaigns/partner/southwark

How can you help people facing homelessness?

Refer a rough sleeper to Streetlink

Streetlink is a national charity that works with our local outreach workers to offer support to rough sleepers. Call **0300 500 0914**, visit www.streetlink.london, or use the Streetlink App to report the regular night-time location of a rough sleeper. If you think the person is in immediate danger, needs urgent care, or is under 18, call the Emergency Services on **999**.

Rent your property to the council to house a family in need

If you own a property, the council may be able to house a local person or family who is at risk of homelessness in there. The council can guarantee you rental income and can manage the tenancy. For more information please call **020 7525 2947** or **020 7525 3730** or email HousingSupply@southwark.gov.uk.

Report an empty home

The council is taking action to reduce the number of empty homes in Southwark. If you know of an empty privately owned property in Southwark you can report it to the council's Empty Homes Team by emailing empty.homes@southwark.gov.uk.


Ending homelessness in Southwark

Here are just some of the other actions Southwark Council has taken to tackle homelessness since the start of the pandemic:

 **729** rough sleepers, or those at risk of sleeping rough, helped into long-term accommodation, **24%** of the total helped by all **33** councils in London.

35 COVID-secure winter hotel rooms for rough sleepers funded (15 of which were for people with No Recourse to Public Funds), run by local charity the Robes Project. Emergency cold weather beds for many more have also been secured.



 **£25,000** for an extra domestic abuse support worker and became the first council in England to give victims of domestic abuse priority need for social housing.

Continuing our partnerships with specialist organisations to help end homelessness. This includes Stonewall Housing, for homeless advice for people from the LGBT+ community, and Southwark Law Centre, who are helping rough sleepers to tackle the No Recourse to Public Funds rules that are trapping them on the streets.



Contact the council if you need help:

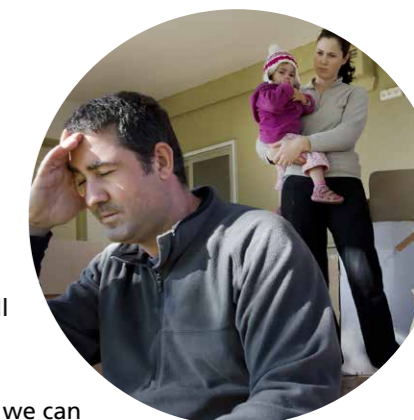
If you are worried about becoming homeless or you are homeless already, contact us as soon as possible for support.

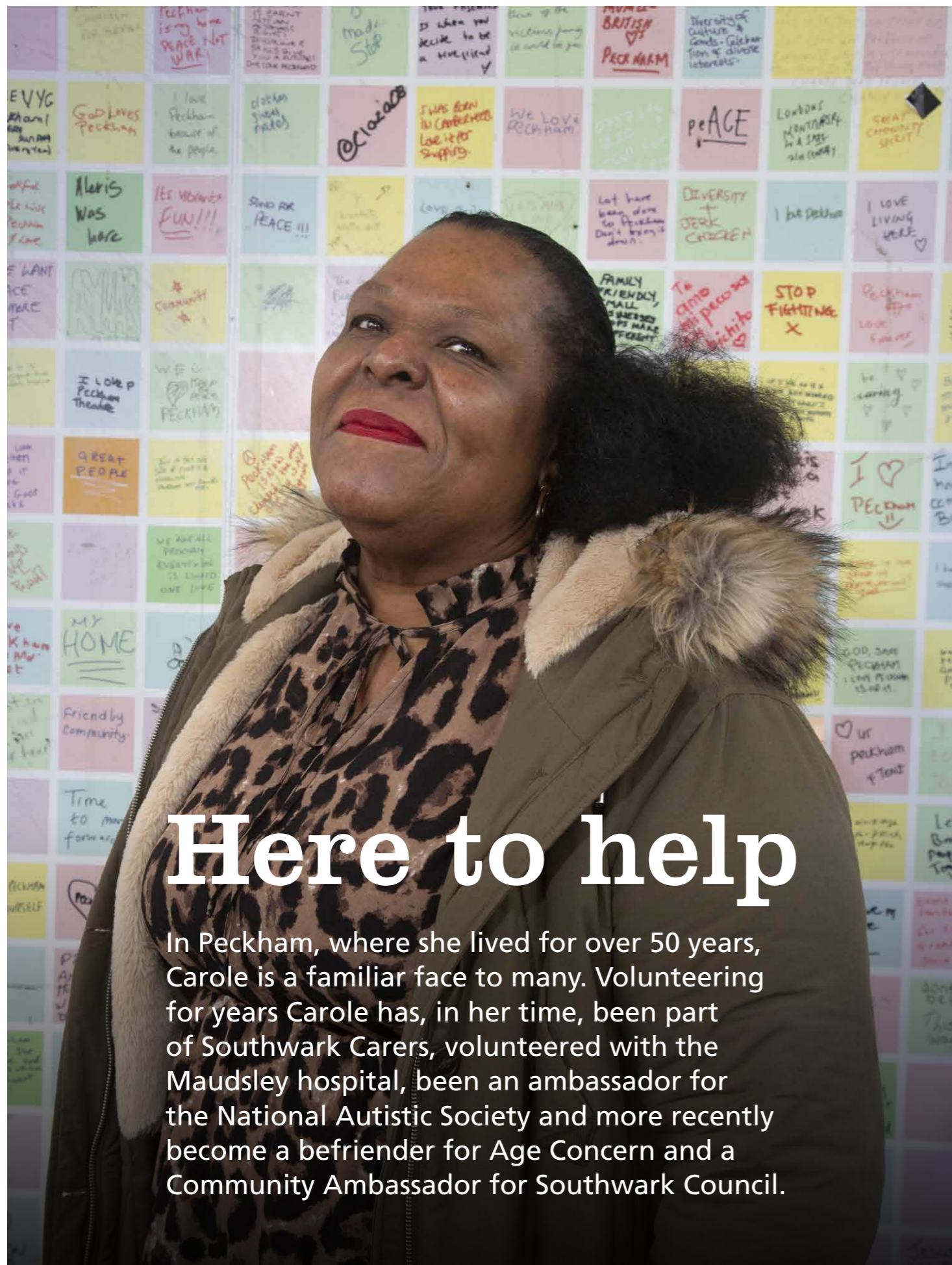
Fill in a form at www.southwark.gov.uk/hsgenquiry and someone will contact you or call **020 7525 4140** (Mon to Fri, 9am to 4pm, Weds 10am to 4pm).

If your landlord is threatening you with eviction, we can investigate and may be able to step in. For help, email our tenancy relations team at Tenancy.Relations@southwark.gov.uk or call **020 7525 4113** (Mon to Fri 9am to 4pm, Weds 10am to 4pm).

We also work with our partners Shelter, who can offer independent legal advice. Shelter can be contacted at southwark@shelter.org.uk or **0344 515 1540** (Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 6pm).

We contract independent charity Solace to provide support for anyone, regardless of gender, who is a victim of domestic abuse. This includes housing help and advice. To contact Solace please call **020 7593 1290** or email southwark@solacewomensaid.org.





Here to help

In Peckham, where she lived for over 50 years, Carole is a familiar face to many. Volunteering for years Carole has, in her time, been part of Southwark Carers, volunteered with the Maudsley hospital, been an ambassador for the National Autistic Society and more recently become a befriender for Age Concern and a Community Ambassador for Southwark Council.

What got you involved in volunteering work?

I was a carer for my son in Southwark. He is 26 now but was diagnosed with autism when he was 12. It was a shock but I had lots of help from the National Autistic Society where I eventually became a member and an ambassador. They were very helpful with advice around education and set up initiatives and workshops. I was able to both go to some and direct other parents who needed help.

It must be difficult caring for someone with autism, especially during lockdown?

If you have autism you are seen as high functioning, that's what they call it. Usually this means in one area like music or maths – lots of people think of the film Rain Man. But they don't see the lows, and that is what people need help with.

It makes people with autism more vulnerable. It is a hidden disability because it is behavioural. People with autism have a high tendency for anxiety. They are like a swan; they can seem calm and serene on the surface but underneath the flippers are going like crazy. They can be very literal, speak out of turn and can appear clumsy as their co-ordination might be bad. They can also be very spontaneous, dangerously so like suddenly running out into the road. Routine is very important to them so lockdown is especially difficult. It has been horrendous. In the group I am still part of I hear stories about homes and property being damaged because young people don't understand the change and are so frustrated at not being able to go out and have their usual routine, like visiting the centres they usually visit. And there are all the questions about why. You run out of answers. During all three lockdowns, it has been, and still is, very stressful for carers, some of who are getting on in age. The services and agencies that were in place before to support were suddenly almost non-existent.

Good-hearted people living in the community of Southwark stepped up and are helping others to source food, housing, heating and more. The people in Southwark are truly good-hearted people. Most are willing to chip in and help each other.

What have you been doing as a Community Ambassador?

We've been so busy. I have looked for and shared ways in which to keep people living in Southwark fed, signposting foodbanks, and where they can gain advice about their mental health. I've also signposted people who are being abused, to get help from pharmacies and other organisations that offer victim support.

Morale has been low and I have encouraged others to take one day at a time and not to put too much expectation on oneself. Have a 'Duvet day' sometimes! I virtually supported parents or carers of autistic people through phone calls and video calls.

We've kept in contact with phone calls to the elderly who have no family at hand, delivered shopping and 'adopted' many elderly people during this time, and encouraged people in the community to do the same. In particular I've shared information about support with disabled people who are feeling marginalised and forgotten during this pandemic; specially those with 'hidden disabilities' like autism.

With everything else going on what made you decide to become a Community Ambassador too?

I was reading Facebook posts and pages in and around Peckham and they were saying all these strange conspiracy theories like COVID-19 was caused by 5G and people shouldn't use their bank cards because they were being tracked.

When the news about the vaccines came out in particular I had my own concerns so I took part in a webinar through a disability group. There is a lot of concern about the long-term effects of vaccinations, but I think it is important carers, especially, arm themselves however they can against this illness. Having the background information from medical professionals I felt I was in a position to counteract the fake news that was going about, and I feel people need to have their questions answered. In the BAME community especially, they are getting a lot of this misinformation from people they trust like their families or even their pastor. Yet it is even more important people in BAME communities, where there are lots of medical problems like diabetes that can make people more open and less resilient to infections, have help to fight this virus.

As they say "if I had known may come too late". Get your vaccination now.

You did a video of your own vaccination, how was it?

I didn't sleep the night before. I was nervous and still had some concerns. When I was in the queue I was speaking to a lady who was nervous and very jittery. But we talked about why we were going to have it anyway. We are very privileged to have the NHS in this country and we have a duty not to put too much pressure on it. With the vaccine, some hope is better than no hope. This virus attacks your whole system so some defence is better than none at all. You need to arm yourself or you open yourself up to more chances of getting it.

We need more Community Health Ambassadors to continue to support local people to stay well and keep safe from COVID-19. If you are interested, go to www.communitysouthwark.org/community-health-ambassadors-network to find out more.

Time to care

The last year has given some of us the time to think about new opportunities or careers, and helping others.

Providing care for local young people is a wonderful and rewarding way to make a real positive difference in your community. As a foster carer you will be supported and guided by our team of dedicated professionals to develop your skills and knowledge. Our foster carers build long-lasting supportive relationships with each other and their local wider community.

If you enjoy looking after children and could find the time and space in your life to welcome a vulnerable child into your home and family then we would encourage you to come forward and make contact with one of our team. We will support you to explore the options further and consider whether now is the right time for you.

Children and young people in Southwark need single people and families of all ages and backgrounds who can offer fostering and short-break care.

If you would like to get involved supporting young people but you don't currently have the time or space to commit to full-time fostering then perhaps you could offer short-break care. Short-break carers support local families by offering one day, or a weekend a month of care, for a local young person with a disability.

We spoke to Southwark residents who changed career to support children and young people thrive.



Shelly

Foster carer Shelly worked for the Met Police before becoming a foster carer almost 11 years ago, and adapted the skills she used in the police to deal with conflict while staying calm and patient.

"I've probably looked after over 50 children; when I open my front door they become my extended family.

"When you understand some of the difficulties and trauma they've experienced, you want to help. You have to remember it can be daunting for a child first walking into a new home, but they start to trust you, and when you see that first smile or they reach out for a hug, that's when you know you've had a positive impact on their life.

"Skills you already have are transferable. You need patience and resilience – but there's training available and you're not alone. Fostering is brilliant – to see children smile is worth it."



Bryleigh

Bryleigh has recently been approved to foster with her partner after living in a fostering household growing up.

"I can't imagine not fostering after growing up in a full house. Lockdown gave me the chance to sit back and reflect. There's so much more to life, and now is my time, the right time for me to give back to the community.

"No one size fits all and every child is different so you have to be prepared to adapt to them. You have to put yourself in their shoes and try to be empathetic and understanding of what they've been through. Change is unsettling and can bring up suppressed emotions. I'm always 100% honest and transparent.

"It's different to having your own child, but becomes normal life quickly. You need to be flexible and open to change. Boundaries and routine are key, and great organisational skills really help. It helps to be non-judgemental, resilient and persistent. Expect the unexpected!"

Marie

Family link carers offer regular short breaks to children with a disability. Marie worked in administration and finance jobs before becoming a support for Ava* five years ago.



"A friend introduced me to Family Link after a Sunday spent together, with the child she cared for. We visited the local theatre, and although the little boy was not verbal we managed to communicate and had great fun. I thought I could help too. At the time I was in full-time education and could dedicate a day or weekend to looking after a child.

"Ava was 11 when I first met her. She stays one weekend a month and occasionally in school holidays. Ava has Cerebral Palsy, a severe form of autism, is non-verbal, and is a wheelchair user. She is totally dependent on a carer for most things.

"We enjoy discovering new places together and she forgets about her iPad! Saturdays are dedicated to outdoor activities – often going to Dulwich Park and renting a bike adapted for seating someone in front.

"I'm still in contact with my friend who introduced me to Family Link and there's regular training with other carers. It's an opportunity to learn from each other. Organisation, time management and resourcefulness are useful attributes but also learning on the job and thinking on my feet; always adapting to new situations.

*name changed to protect her identity.

Family link 020 7525 5316 or visit www.southwark.gov.uk/familylink

CONTACTS

If you think you can help a local child or young person to live a full and happy life then please get in touch on email at fostering@southwark.gov.uk or call 0800 952 0707.

You can also have an informal chat with our officer online at one of our fostering events. The next one is 6pm on Tuesday 30 March. Call or email for more details.

Eggs-cellent fun for families this Easter

Southwark Council has received funding to provide school holiday food and activities for families needing more support this year.

During the school summer holidays in 2020, the council worked with partners across the borough to offer a series of activities and lunches for families who were struggling during the pandemic.

The programme was a success and as a result the council has received up to £1.5m to do it again for the main school holidays this year.

This year's programme will run through the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays and offer an exciting programme of food and activities for children and young people in our local communities.

The programme is targeted at children and young people aged five to 16 years old, and is designed to help eligible local families access free, healthy food and fun activities over school holidays.

Each programme will provide:

- free, nutritious and tasty food
- fun physical activity sessions
- a wide range of other enriching activities to suit different ages and personalities
- opportunities to learn more about food and nutrition for children and their families

The council is partnering with local community organisations to act as holiday hubs to deliver the programme. Holiday hubs include sports clubs, schools, youth clubs and faith settings and the council is working to increase the number of holiday hubs over the year, to run a much larger programme over the summer.

To keep you safe, all programmes will be delivered in line with government COVID-19 guidance. If we're not allowed to run them face-to-face, activities will be moved online and we will organise food collection points or deliver food supplies to families registered on the programme.

The programme is funded by the Department for Education.

"Burgess Sports has been an amazing support during these difficult times. The food parcels delivered during the lockdown, the food given during the summer, breakfast bags and the meals on Fridays, have been a great help for us" – Parent of a child attending Burgess Sports during Summer of Food and Fun 2020

"During lockdown we bought and made up activity packs, essentials food bags and once a week we delivered these packs to their homes. We called up our young people once a week, posted stuff on our Instagram page: videos and photos of activities and challenges, information on COVID-19 and links to other sources of help. We even went around and sang happy birthday on their birthdays (socially distanced of course!)." – Bede House

"Thank you so much for all you and your staff has done for me and my son. He has enjoyed making new friends at the club and enjoys the activities and homework given to do at home." Parent of child attending Peckham, Peckham Rye and Nunhead Children's Centre

"I found that the food was a great help. One less thing to think about" Parent of child attending Central Southwark Community Hub (CSCH)

Sign up now

The Easter of Food and Fun will run from Thursday 1 April to Friday 16 April, 2021. Visit www.southwark.gov.uk/foodandfun for more information.



Post your vote

We're working to make the elections on 6 May as safe as possible, but one of the safest and most secure ways to vote is by post.

The elections to the Greater London Assembly and for the London Mayor (the 'GLA elections') will take place on 6 May 2021. For more information visit the website at www.londonelects.org.uk

The circumstances around this year's elections are unusually challenging and as a result there may be a number of things to consider. There will be some changes to the polling stations including:

- Polling station staff will all wear masks
- Voters will be asked to queue, and entry into polling stations will be carefully managed to maintain social distancing
- Doors and windows will be open where possible to increase ventilation
- Voters will be asked to use hand sanitiser before entering the polling station
- Voters are encouraged to bring in their own pen or pencil to mark the ballot paper – black or blue so they are dark enough to be read by an electronic scanner
- Voters will be asked not to hand over their poll card to the polling station staff, but to give their address and name clearly
- Perspex screens will be in place, between the voter and the polling station staff

The safest and easiest way to vote is to apply NOW for a postal vote. Postal voting is easy, safe and secure. By signing up for a postal vote sooner rather than later you can be sure that you will receive your postal voting pack in plenty of time to complete and return it before polling day.

If you apply for a postal vote and later change your mind, you can vote in person at your allocated polling station if you cancel your postal vote before 5pm on Tuesday 20 April 2021.

Alternatively you can also request a proxy vote and arrange for someone you trust to go and cast your vote in your place. However please be aware that the person you appoint as your proxy must be a registered elector and they should probably live locally as they will be required to travel to your allocated polling station to vote on your behalf.

There will be provision for those who are self-isolating or in quarantine to apply for an emergency proxy vote but you should arrange your proxy vote sooner rather than later too.

You can read more or apply for a postal or proxy vote at www.southwark.gov.uk/postalvotes

Key dates

- MARCH 22** Dispatch of poll cards from 22 March 2021
- APRIL 19** Deadline for voter registration 19 April 2021
- APRIL 20** Deadline to apply for a postal vote 5pm on 20 April 2021
- APRIL 27** Deadline to apply for a proxy vote 5pm on 27 April 2021
- MAY 6** Deadline for emergency proxies (including anyone in quarantine or self-isolating) 5pm on 6 May 2021
- MAY 6** Polling day 6 May 2021

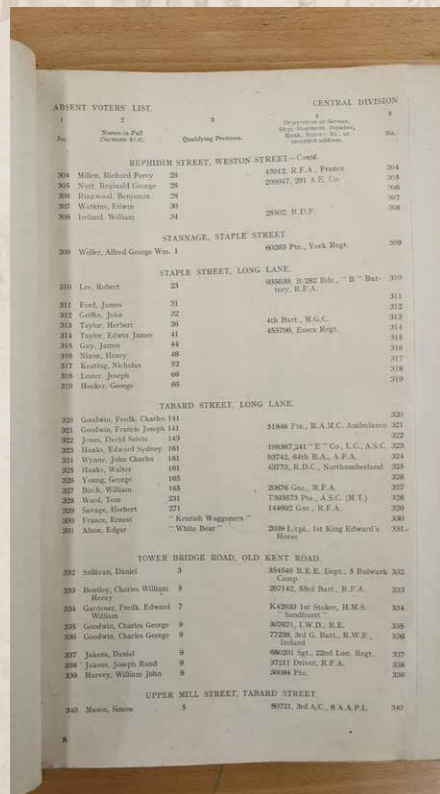
It's about our local schools
Census Day is 21 March. Visit www.census.gov.uk to find out more.

it's about us
census 2021

London has its say

NO MATTER WHAT

It has been announced that despite continuing restrictions, local elections, including the London Mayoral Election, will take place this May. But it won't be the first election held in unusually difficult circumstances.



Once again, Southwark is gearing up for an election, but one that looks a lot different than any election we've experienced: one where postal, rather than in-person, ballots, will take centre stage. While we take for granted that every citizen has the right to vote; that right is surprisingly new – and hard fought for.

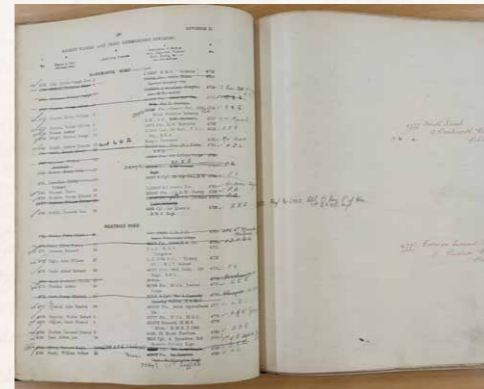
The City of London – the historic centre of the capital immediately across the Thames from Southwark – and its residents have enjoyed specific rights and privileges since before the Norman Conquest.

From the mid-1100s onward, cities in England gradually gained the right to run themselves; this self-government was usually in the form of a self-selecting group of prominent wealthy citizens – the aldermen – who chose one of their

number to be mayor. The City of London received the right to choose its mayor in 1189.

By the early 1300s, the City's administration was outpacing the aldermen: less prominent residents eventually took over most administration via the Court of Common Council by the late 1300s. Around the same period, the area around London Bridge came under the City's jurisdiction. This area was made the ward of Bridge Without in 1550, and although the City stopped having effective authority in Southwark by the Victorian period, it continued to exist on paper until 1978.

However, these were not the same councils we know today, because the vote was denied to all but a small slice of the country's population. The Parliamentary electorate in England and Wales in 1780 was 214,000 – just 3% of the total population.



Who was entitled to vote also varied widely between areas. In most cases, voters were wealthy landowners, but in some parts of the country, the male head of any household with a fireplace big enough to boil a pot in was entitled to vote. As well as these "potwolloper boroughs", there were also "rotten boroughs", de-populated places that had historically been eligible to send two burgesses to Parliament, and "pocket boroughs", where a single landowner controlled the majority of the votes, usually by buying the land and installing their own tenants.

The creation of the London Corresponding Society in 1791 marks a watershed. The Society – a reforming pressure group that called for annual parliaments and universal male suffrage – was one of the key drivers in the formation of working-class political consciousness.

That consciousness, and decades of political activism and repression that it spawned, led directly to the Representation of the People Act 1832 (better known as the Great Reform Act). It eliminated pocket boroughs and a number of rotten boroughs, created 130 new constituencies in England and Wales, started the voter registration system, and extended the vote to all male householders occupying property worth at least £10 (£900 today). However, the Great Reform Act did not give working-class men a vote, mandate secret ballots, or do anything to curb electoral bribery.

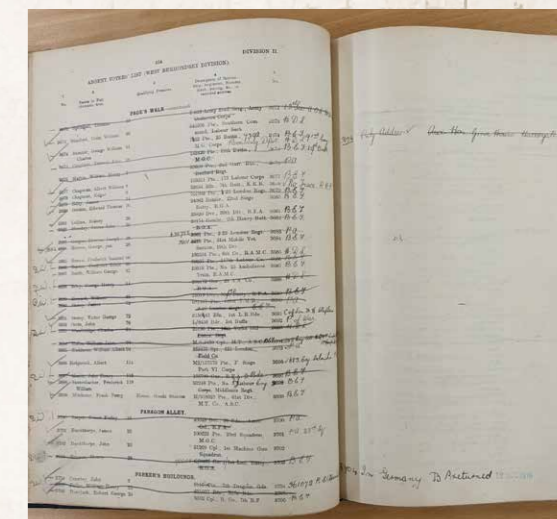
Local government became more democratic from 1869, when the Municipal Franchise Act gave unmarried women ratepayers the vote; although married women who paid local taxes couldn't vote

in local elections until nearly 30 years later. The creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works – the first London-wide administrative body, charged with building and maintaining major infrastructure – in 1855 and the London County Council in 1888 helped curb local government corruption; by the time the London Government Act 1899 created the metropolitan boroughs, women could stand for – and accept – elected office as councillors, aldermen, or mayor. It took longer for the election system we know today to develop, and for the national franchise to open. Secret ballots were only introduced with the Ballot Act 1872, and campaign spending limits introduced – and bribing voters outlawed – in 1883. Women also couldn't vote in Parliamentary elections; a variety of organisations and groups agitated for votes for women. Some groups, known as "suffragettes", were willing to use violence like window-breaking and arson to achieve their aims; two members of the Women's Freedom League even doused ballot boxes for the 1909 Bermondsey by-election (in which Alfred Salter stood for Labour) in corrosive liquid, causing a returning office to lose an eye. Other groups, the "suffragists", were strictly non-violent, instead using persuasion. The United Suffragists' club on Borough Road trained local women as suffrage speakers.

The next milestone was the Representation of the People Act 1918, brought in at the tail end of the First World War. It was meant to reward both the working-class men who had fought and the women's suffrage movement for halting their campaign for the duration of

the war. For the first time, all men over the age of 21 were eligible to vote (as well as men between 19 and 21 if they had turned 19 on active service), although conscientious objectors to the war lost the vote for five years. Women over 30 who met (or were married to someone who met) the property requirements or had attended university could also vote; these requirements tripled the voter rolls overnight. For the first time, the Treasury, not candidates, paid local returning officers' costs, and all elections were held on a fixed date.

The 1918 Act also allowed absentee voting by post or proxy for the first time, but only for service personnel who were unable to return home to vote; this special provision would be repeated for the 1945 election. Civilians only received the postal absentee vote in 1948, and only for limited reasons – if they were physically incapacitated or unable to reach their polling station by land. The allowable reasons for postal voting were extended in 1985.



The London Mayoral election is due to take place in May this year. Given the continuing pandemic and social distancing rules, we are keen to make sure everyone can vote in a COVID-safe and secure way.

That is why we are encouraging all residents to sign up now to vote by post. This way, we will send you your ballot paper and you can return it to us weeks before the election even takes place. It is free, safe and secure; and you can make your choice in the comfort of your own home.

Read more about postal or proxy voting on page 27

Help us with our plans to improve private renting

We want to transform private rented homes, to ensure all residents have access to safe, secure and good quality accommodation.

It's important that our plans for new licensing schemes work for everyone. That's why we want to hear from all residents, landlords and business owners across the borough.

Complete the online survey and share your views at:

www.southwark.gov.uk/propertylicensing2021

To request a paper copy of the survey, email:

propertylicensing@southwark.gov.uk

Or telephone **020 7525 5140**



BUSINESS FRIENDLY SOUTHWARK



After a difficult winter, many local businesses will be looking forward to opening up again this spring. We are here to help shops, bars, markets and events re-open safely, as and when restrictions lift, avoiding local outbreaks, while the vaccine rollout continues this year. As ever, we will be supporting Southwark businesses all the way.

RECOVER FASTER WITH SPECIALIST HELP

At the London Business Hub (www.businesshub.london) entrepreneurs can find specialist business support and advice covering the impacts of COVID-19 as well as support for growth and recovery. The Federation of Small Businesses website (www.fsb.org.uk) also provides up to date news and advice for small businesses during the pandemic.

If you are thinking about starting a new business, you can get 12 hours of free support from our small business champion through Startups in London Libraries, contact us at startups@southwark.gov.uk to find out more. If you have a tech-based business idea, the OneTech programme supports founders from under-represented groups to get their tech businesses off the ground. Sign up at www.stride.london/projects/onetech

REBUILD YOUR TEAM LOCALLY

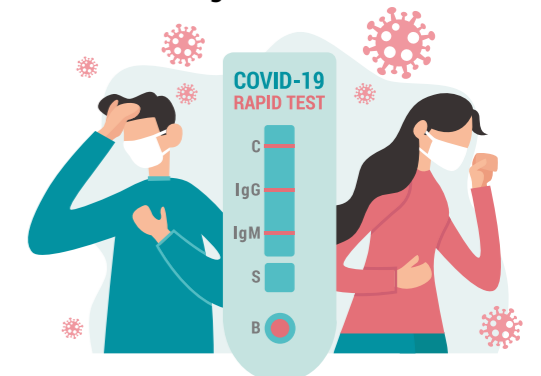


As business grows, employing local talent can boost retention, build strong teams and diversify your workforce. Southwark Works offers free local recruitment support to employers large and small. Visit www.southwarkworks.com/information-for-employers to contact the team.

If you are looking to create new jobs, apprenticeships or internships suitable for 18 to 25 year olds, you can work with our Next Step initiative to promote opportunities to local young people looking to get started on their career path. We can also advise on grants available to businesses to create new jobs and internships. Visit www.southwark.gov.uk/nextstep or email us at SouthwarkBusinessDesk@southwark.gov.uk to find out more.

ACCESS RAPID TESTING FOR YOUR STAFF

Fast lateral flow tests are available to Southwark businesses to test staff regularly who do not have symptoms, which can help pick up infections before they spread. Tests are free and available at the Damilola Taylor centre in Peckham and next to London Bridge station locations. To find your local testing centre visit www.maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk. Find out more about rapid testing at www.southwark.gov.uk/coronavirus



STAY UP TO DATE WITH THE LATEST ADVICE

For the latest guidance on the local regulations for businesses, advice on how to keep staff and customers safe and all the resources on offer to support your business, go to www.southwark.gov.uk/coronavirus and follow the links to the business pages. You can also email us at SouthwarkBusinessDesk@southwark.gov.uk and ask to join our mailing list for regular updates.

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective.
Keep yourself safe and protect the NHS by
getting the jab when it's your turn.



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Find out more at www.southwark.gov.uk/covidvaccine



South East London
Clinical Commissioning Group

Southwark
Council
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