

March 2024



Dear resident,

This is the time of year we write to let Lewisham residents know that the Council's 2024/25 Budget has been set and tell you about some of our priorities for the coming year. Like households across the country, we are facing rising inflation and energy costs, coupled with an increasing demand for Council services.

Like many councils, Lewisham Council will be increasing council tax by 4.99% this year. We make this decision reluctantly, so we can provide support for our most vulnerable residents, as well as continue the important services we all need and value, like community safety, parks, libraries, leisure centres, youth services, and keeping the streets clean.

The Greater London Authority will also be increasing its portion of council tax. This increase and the Council's increase means if you are living in a Band D property you will pay an extra £2.15 a week.

You may have seen in the news that a number of councils have effectively gone bankrupt. This has a huge impact on the services they can provide. With public resources so stretched, it is more important than ever that we make sure we balance our budget. We are doing everything we can to save money, make efficiencies and lobby the Government for a fairer deal for Lewisham, but without raising council tax we simply could not keep going.

Please remember that we have a Council Tax Reduction Scheme in place, to support low earners with a discount on their council tax of up to 75%.

We are seeing an increase in demand for Council services so have made sure that we are providing practical support to people, working with our partners to provide help with rent payments; support for people struggling with food and utility bills and free school meals during the holidays. We will also continue to fund 60 warm welcome spaces, financial advice and specialist support through our jobs and skills service, helping people into good jobs.

The housing crisis, with lack of supply and increased rents, has seen a worrying increase in families coming to the Council as they can no longer afford to rent in the private sector – our temporary accommodation costs have increased by £9.9m.

Children's Social Care is another area that needs special attention, with eight out of ten councils in England spending more than their budget allows in this area. This year, we are spending £41m on placements for children in care. This is why it is so important for us to find foster carers, to help support local children.

Despite this, we are optimistic about the future and are committed to:

- Delivering our £24m Lewisham Town Centre improvement programme
- Improving damp and mould repairs, having brought Lewisham Homes in house
- Building on our "GOOD" Ofsted result in Children's Social Care Services
- Investing in our social home building programme
- Tackling child hunger by providing funding to local schools.

You can find out about support and advice available – including information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme – by visiting [lewisham.gov.uk/support](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/support).

What does your council tax fund?



31,000 young people
in our 75 schools,

98%

are Good
or Outstanding



**17
million**
bins collected
(equivalent to 7,000
London buses)



4,500
adults supported
through
Adult Social Care



Maintenance
of our
48
parks and
green spaces



12 libraries with books,
employment support,
and digital access,
visited nearly

1 million

times in the year



Over
**1.3
million**
visits across
six leisure centres



Supporting
1,000
children in care
and care leavers



Nearly
**half a
million**
customer service
transactions

Help is available

If you are worried about being able to pay your council tax please get in touch to find out about the support you might be able to claim – [lewisham.gov.uk/support](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/support)

We are lucky to have an incredible network of community groups, charities and other local organisations that offer a wide range of support. If you need help and would like to talk to someone, there are drop-in sessions across the borough, in partnership with Citizens Advice Lewisham.

Clyde Family Hub SE8 5NH, every Tuesday, 1pm-5pm

Lewisham CommUNITY space,

Unit 17 Lewisham Shopping Centre SE13 7HB, every Tuesday 9.30am-12.30pm

St John the Baptist Church SE6 2RP, every Wednesday, 12 noon-2pm

Perry Rise Baptist Church SE23 2QL, every Thursday, 12 noon-2pm



We regularly share updates about support in our weekly newsletter, you can sign up by scanning the QR code, or visit [lewisham.gov.uk/signup](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/signup). It only takes a minute, and you will be kept up to date with news and events from the Council