

Lewisham LIFE

Winter 2025 | lewisham.gov.uk

Join the cool cats

Dick Whittington and his Catford Cat bring panto to Broadway

- ❄️ Lose yourself in the magic of The Winter Gardens at Beckenham Place Park
- ❄️ Get behind Lewisham Donation Hub's winter appeal
- ❄️ Use our guide for cost of living support



FREE BOILER AND INSULATION

Welcome

SIGN UP to our weekly newsletter lewisham.gov.uk/signup

Message from the Mayor



Welcome to your winter 2025 edition of Lewisham Life

This issue aims to inspire you to get out and explore, connect with your community and enjoy our wonderful borough this festive season and beyond.

Inside, you'll find Council news and stories, ways to get involved locally, plus ideas and practical tips to brighten even the darkest winter days. Check out our top ten tips for discovering Lewisham, from carol singing to outdoor markets. We're excited to introduce The Winter Gardens, a new festival at Beckenham Place Park bringing seasonal magic for all ages.

Brenda Dacres OBE, Mayor of Lewisham

I hope you were able to catch SEEN festival in October, which returned for a second fantastic year and is a true celebration of Lewisham's creativity, while Black History Month delivered a rich programme honouring African and Caribbean heritage.

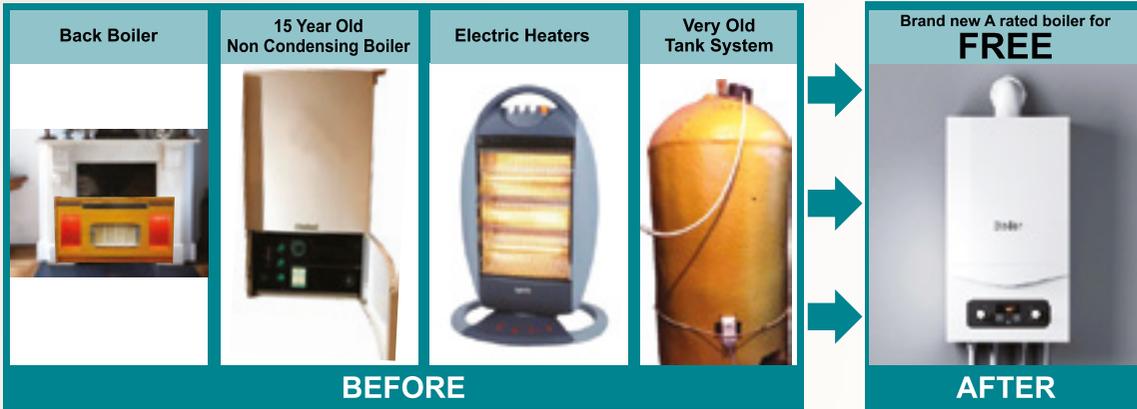
There's great news from our award-winning parks and green spaces as Lewisham Park scoops its first Green Flag. Head indoors to explore our amazing libraries, they offer free activities, including books, yoga sessions and more.

You'll also find details of support for the cost of living, because we know how challenging this time of year can be. Discover how we're turning empty properties into family homes to help with the housing shortage. Also, learn about the essential support our Family Hubs are providing parents and carers.

We've cut the cost of bulky waste collections to just £5, making it easier for us all to keep Lewisham clean. Plus, find out how you can support the Lewisham Donation Hub, my charity of the year, and help those most in need this winter.

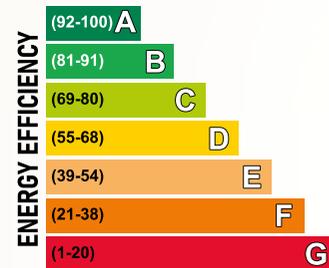
The festive season is traditionally a time to come together with family, friends and as a community. It's a time to think of others and to help and support one another so here's wishing you peace, joy and warmth. May your New Year be full of hope and possibility.

Brenda Dacres OBE, Mayor of Lewisham



Are you using a very old boiler?
Are you using electric heaters?
Do you live in a house with an EPC rating of E, F or G?

You can be eligible for a grant to upgrade your heating and insulation, and up to 100% funding for a heat pump at off gas properties, under the Government ECO4 Grant.



Criteria To Qualify

Anyone in a household needs to be in receipt of the following benefits

1. Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
2. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
3. Universal Credit (UC)
4. Pension Credit – guarantee or Savings Credit

OR If your household gross income is less than £31,000 per year.

OR Anyone in the household identified by a doctor or GP with any one of the below health conditions:

- A. Cardiovascular
- B. Respiratory
- C. Immunosuppressed
- D. Limited mobility



External wall insulation Grant & 100% free internal wall insulation



Greenland Energy Services Ltd

102 Brockley Rise, London SE23 1LN
info@greenlandenergy.co.uk
www.greenlandenergy.co.uk

0208 314 1028



scan me for more info

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Family hubs

New 100% affordable housing development

The Council has appointed Higgins as the delivery partner for 102 new affordable homes at Ladywell Park Gardens – a significant step towards tackling the borough’s housing crisis.

The scheme, on the former Ladywell Leisure Centre site, will offer 47 social rent homes, 55 shared ownership properties, wheelchair-accessible homes and a landscaped public garden with a play area. The front of the site will continue to host PLACE/Ladywell, with Lewisham Donation Hub remaining in its current space until July 2026 – the new homes will be built at the rear.

Higgins plans to launch a



Artist's drawing of the new housing development at Ladywell Park Gardens

construction skills hub in 2026, offering jobs and training for local people while the

development will deliver secure, high-quality homes for families from across Lewisham.

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Sign up to the Lewisham Life newsletter. Keep up to date with local news and information about Council services every week. Go to lewisham.gov.uk/signup

lewisham.gov.uk
 the home for all your local information

- » Get information about your neighbourhood, what's on and how to get involved
- » Find activities for you and all the family
- » Live in a controlled parking zone? Apply for your permit online

If you cannot contact us online, you can call 020 8314 6000

Useful contacts:

- Housing Services**
0800 028 2028
housingenquiries@lewisham.gov.uk
- Local health service**
nhs.uk or NHS 111
- Police (non-emergency)** 101
- Thames Water**
0845 920 0800 (customer services)
0800 714 614 (24-hour leakline)
- Gas emergencies** 0800 111 999



New waste and recycling guidance

Our new service standards outline how we can all best keep Lewisham clean and safe and reduce contamination by following some simple steps. These new rules start in December 2025. They cover issues like putting out kerbside bins, recycling, DIY waste, garden and food waste, damaged bins, missed collections, estates and communal bins.
lewisham.gov.uk/recycling



Arts and culture

Discover local arts, creative and cultural events on the We Are Lewisham website. Looking for workshops, live music, dance, theatre, festivals, exhibitions or classes? Find out what's on by visiting wearelewisham.com

Lunar New Year

Join us on Saturday 7 February 2026, from 11am to 2pm at Zhulin Hidden Village, Lewisham High Street to welcome the Year of the Horse. Enjoy lion and dragon dances, Tai Chi, music, workshops and traditional treats. This celebration is free to attend.

Stay HIV free

Lewisham residents can now access HIV prevention medication (PrEP) directly from St John's Medical Centre, in partnership with Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust. We are also working with local community groups to educate and empower residents, ensuring they feel fully informed when accessing PrEP.

PrEP is a highly effective pill prescribed to people who are

HIV-negative but at risk of infection. The Council is working with The Lewisham Care Partnership to deliver this ground-breaking initiative. The aim is to boost PrEP uptake, tackle HIV stigma and improve access for groups often underserved by traditional services, including heterosexual and Black African and Caribbean communities.

Lewisham residents can get PrEP at St John's Medical Centre, 56-60 Loampit Hill, SE13 7SX. To book, call 020 8692 1354 or visit thelewishamcarepartnership.co.uk/prep-services

REGISTRATIONS NOW OPEN!

Spring Term 2026 Starts January 2026

ASPIRING YOUNG MUSICIANS (AYM)

Classes for 11-16s at only £70 per term. Learn Ableton Music Production, **BRAND NEW Singing Workshop** and Keyboard Skills for Songwriting. Classes start on 15th January 2026

CREBTIV® SHORT COURSES

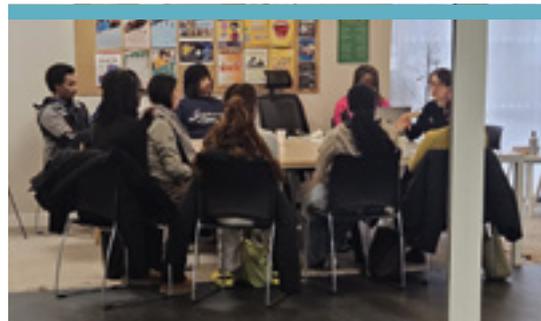
Music Production and DJ Skills are 10 week courses for 16+ from £70 concs - £140 per term. Classes start on w/c 12th January 2026.

77 WATTS: PODCAST PROJECT

If you are 16+ and want to get into podcast creation, register for 77 Watts, our **FREE Podcast Project**, starting 14th January 2026.

For more info contact us on:
 T: 0208 694 6093 M: 0798 415 8554
 The Midi Music Company
 77 Watsons Street, Deptford, London, SE8 4AU





Elevate 100 is making waves in Downham

In the last nine months, Elevate 100 at Downham Leisure Centre has supported 127 young people with training, employment and wellbeing opportunities. Designed by young people for young people, it offers co-working spaces, creative studios and workshops to build confidence and skills.

Follow Elevate 100 on social media to see their fantastic work empowering Lewisham's young people. Search: Elevate 100 Downham.

At risk of HIV?

Get Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) on the NHS in Lewisham from our dedicated PrEP clinic

St John's Medical Centre SE13 7SX

You can also visit one of our sexual health clinics

- The Waldron Centre
- Hawstead Road Primary Care Centre

Anyone can access these services regardless of address or GP – including people under 16. The clinics are open six days a week and operate on a walk-in basis.

More information:

lewishamandgreenwich.nhs.uk/sexual-health-services

Online sexual health services

Sexual Health London: If you have no symptoms but want an STI or HIV test, you can order a free, confidential self-testing kit to your address. The e-service also offers contraception and the morning after pill online.
www.shl.uk

FindSexualHealth: The FindSexualHealth website connects you to free local and online services across southeast London to manage your sexual health and contraception needs.
findsexualhealth.org.uk



Have your say on Ladywell Playtower

We are launching a new process for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for Ladywell Playtower, after the last developer failed to deliver. An expression of interest is a way for developers to show they'd like to be involved, before formal plans or applications start. This Grade II listed gem deserves a proper comeback and we want your ideas to make it happen.

The first phase starts in December 2025, so sign up now for updates. Our new EOI process will have interactive tools and opportunities to collaborate, making it easier for you – residents, groups and businesses



– to share thoughts. This is your chance to shape a restoration that honours heritage, is sustainable and also community-focused. Visit lewisham.gov.uk/ladywell to stay in the loop.

SIGN UP to our weekly newsletter lewisham.gov.uk/signup

Get rapid sickle cell relief

The Acute Sickle Cell Unit (ASCU) at University Hospital Lewisham provides rapid support for adults experiencing sickle cell crises or other sickle cell related emergencies. It lets people bypass queues in emergency departments, aiming to provide pain relief within 30 minutes of arrival.

Led by a team of specialists, the ASCU is part of a wider programme improving sickle cell care across southeast London. Patients can be referred by ambulance or A&E staff or self-refer by calling 020 3192 6912.

Find out more about the ASCU lewishamandgreenwich.nhs.uk/sickle-cell-unit



Last chance to apply for climate funding

From cutting down on energy use and waste to fixing up second-hand items, growing food nearby and helping people save money – we're looking to fund projects that are making a positive difference in the community. There are two separate pots of money – the Community Energy

Fund is designed for local groups and the Repair, Reuse, Recycle Grants are for businesses.

Please apply before Monday 8 December 2025 to be considered – good luck! Visit lewisham.gov.uk/climate to learn more about the grants, see past funded projects and to apply.

Supporting residents to secure employment

We are happy to announce two new specialist programmes to support residents who face challenges in finding work – Full Potential Youth Trailblazer and Connect to Work. These initiatives provide tailored training, mentoring and practical support to help people gain the skills and confidence they need. We are working closely with partners to remove barriers and create pathways to meaningful, long-term employment, ensuring every Lewisham resident has a fair shot at the opportunities and the benefits of a decent job. Please email lewishamworks@lewisham.gov.uk for more details.

A burning issue

A roaring fire may feel festive but burning wood releases harmful particles that damage health and pollute our air. Linked to asthma, heart disease and cancer, wood smoke shortens lives. Lewisham is a smoke control area, so cleaner heating alternatives like electric heaters or blankets are safer choices this winter. Visit the air quality pages on our website for real-time information and to register for pollution alerts.

Let's protect our lungs and our community – choose warmth without the worry. Read our open fires guidelines lewisham.gov.uk/woodburning



Festive market at Brockley Rise

Brockley Rise Adult Education Centre, hosts a vibrant market on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 December, 10.30am–4pm. Discover handmade treasures – jewellery, pottery, artwork and seasonal cards – from local designers and learners.

Enjoy a Lewisham Libraries' pop-up on Saturday 13 December only, featuring storytelling and a cosy reading corner.

If you feel inspired by what you see there, check out what courses are on offer at lewisham.gov.uk/adultlearning

The foundation of good health

Give your child the strongest start in life – make sure their vaccinations are up to date.

Missed a jab yourself?
It's never too late.

Contact your GP or visit lewisham.gov.uk/vaccinations

The NHS offers additional free vaccines to pregnant women, protecting you and your baby.



Adult Learning Lewisham

DAY, EVENING AND WEEKEND COURSES

Apply now for free English and maths courses. Brush up your skills and gain qualifications for work and further education.

- Part-time courses during the day, evenings and at weekends
 - Small class sizes
- Call 020 8314 3300 Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm to book a pre-course assessment for courses starting in January.



For more information visit: www.lewisham.gov.uk/adultlearning
Adult Learning Lewisham **ALL TOGETHER WE FLOURISH**



Advice Evening

Thursday 27 November
5.30pm to 7pm

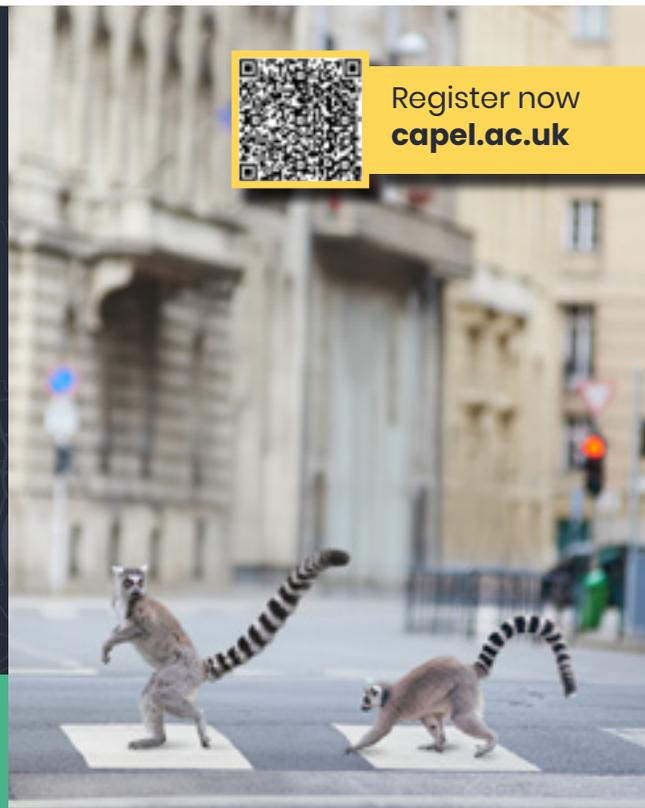
Courses for careers with animals, nature and the environment

Discover our range of full and part-time courses available for school leavers and adults.

Join us at our **Advice Evening** to discover how you could transform your passion into a successful career.



Register now
capel.ac.uk



Capel Manor College

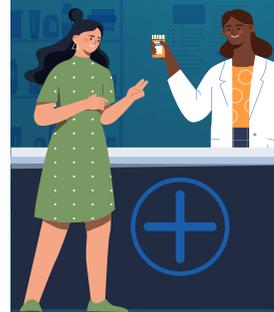


South East London

Stuffy nose, sore throat, earache?

Go to your pharmacy for expert advice and treatment. Your pharmacist can even offer prescription medicine (depending on your age) without you needing to see a GP first.

Find your local pharmacy on the **NHS app**. Think pharmacy first.



Find out how your pharmacy can help:



Catbytes Digital Drop-ins

Would you like help using a computer or smartphone, accessing the internet or filling in an online form?

Our digital drop-ins are free and open to everyone. They run all over Lewisham all week round.

020 8314 4702
info@catbytes.community
www.catbytes.community

Catbytes Digital Buddies

Could you help someone

- use their smartphone
- set up email
- fill in an online form?

100% of buddies report their work has a positive impact and rate the experience as good or excellent.

020 8314 4702
info@catbytes.community
www.catbytes.community



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Lewisham's businesses take the spotlight

Local businesses took centre stage at the Mayor of Lewisham Business Awards ceremony, held at the historic Broadway Theatre in Catford on Wednesday 19 November. The event brought together hundreds of businesses, partners and sponsors for an evening of celebration, entertainment and networking.

Ten winners were announced from a shortlist of 100 fantastic finalists including Lydia Florist in Brockley which scooped Best Online Business, Good Food (stores in Catford and Sydenham) which won Best Sustainable Business and Mind Yoga and Pilates in Forest Hill which



Brenda Dacres OBE, Mayor of Lewisham at the Business Awards ceremony

picked up Best New Business. This year's award broke records, with nearly 9,000 public votes and over 2,200 nominations,

making it one of the biggest yet. Congratulations to all winners and finalists – find the results on our website.

Mentoring for 16-24 year olds

Our adult learning service is working in partnership with Lewisham Works to deliver Jumpstart to Success – a free programme for young people aged 16-24 who are currently not in education, employment, or training. The programme provides one-to-one mentoring to support people into training or employment, with a focus on personal development, boosting self-confidence and improving the skills needed for work. Participants have access to job and work placement vacancies and the opportunity to meet representatives from various industries.

There are three ways to register your interest:

Email your contact details to adultlearningiag@lewisham.gov.uk
Call 020 8314 3300, Monday-Friday 9am-4pm
Complete our online form lewisham.gov.uk/jumpstart

Bulky waste collection from £5

Our bulky waste collection charges are being reduced to just £5 – one of the lowest rates in London. The reduction is due to be introduced in December. Down from a flat rate of £41 for up to four items to just £5 per item including mattresses and £25 per fridge or freezer. To book a collection: lewisham.gov.uk/bulkywaste

In case you missed it

Here are some highlights from the past few months.

SEEN steals the show for a second year

SEEN Lewisham returned for 10 days of theatre, dance, music, comedy and art at Broadway Theatre and other venues in the borough. Co-produced by Broadway Theatre, which is owned by the Council, and Nouveau Riche, highlights included Gospel Explosion and a finale with Eddie Nestor MBE, Robbie Gee and Shola Ama. Seven rising stars debuted bold new works, as 7,500 attendees enjoyed 56 events.



Celebrating our kin

We marked Kinship Care Week in October with a tea party celebrating kinship carers – grandparents, relatives and friends – who give children loving homes when they cannot live with birth parents. Guests enjoyed chair yoga, meditation and art, with gifts donated by local businesses. Thank you to all who supported. lewisham.gov.uk/kinship-care



More awards for our green spaces

Lewisham now has 24 award-winning parks, with Lewisham Park earning its first Green Flag this summer. The borough's nature reserves were also recognised. This latest accolade is a fantastic achievement for the Council teams and community groups who protect biodiversity and create green spaces for wellbeing, learning and connection.

Memorials for World War One heroes

We are joining the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in honouring 25 forgotten WWI soldiers from Deptford, buried in paupers' graves at Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries. After painstaking research, their resting places have been found and they will receive headstones honouring their names, ranks and regiments. An appeal is underway to find their relatives who might have more information for the memorials, visit cwgc.org

Blackheath Fireworks dazzle 30,000 visitors

The skies above SE3 lit up on Saturday 1 November as Blackheath Fireworks made a triumphant return. Around 30,000 people enjoyed an unforgettable evening of food, live entertainment and a spectacular 20-minute fireworks display set to music. Stay tuned for next year's event details.



A look back at Black History Month

Lewisham marked Black History Month this October under the theme Standing Firm in Power and Pride. The Council awarded grants of up to £1,000 for local projects and funded a packed programme of events, including Goldsmiths' Black Book Festival, Black is Beautiful at Grove Park Youth Club, and A Windrush Queer Celebration held at Lewisham Youth Theatre. To find out more visit lewisham.gov.uk/bhl365



Silver Sunday at Rivoli Ballroom

In October, Lewisham's Positive Ageing Council (POSAC) – a community-led group championing issues affecting older people – celebrated Silver Sunday, the national day honouring older people, with a lively event at the Rivoli Ballroom. 400 guests, including Mayor Brenda Dacres OBE enjoyed cabaret, comedy, jazz and a performance by an 84-year-old trapeze artist. Thanks to Rivoli Ballroom, Young Mayor's Team, volunteers and partners. For upcoming events, head to lewisham.gov.uk/POSAC

Lest we forget



Lewisham paid tribute to fallen heroes on Remembrance Sunday with services at Lewisham and Deptford War Memorials. Led by faith leaders and featuring an Armed Forces parade, the events drew councillors, dignitaries and residents. A two-minute silence at 11am honoured all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

Support Lewisham Donation Hub this winter

The Mayor's chosen charity is launching a winter appeal, see what you can do to help.

Lewisham Donation Hub is the Mayor of Lewisham's chosen charity for 2025/26.

Founded during the Covid-19 pandemic by local resident Laurence Smith, the Hub is run almost entirely by volunteers. It provides essential items to those facing hardship, from food and clothing to household goods. There are no referrals and no barriers, just community-powered compassion.

As winter approaches, the Hub is calling on the community for support, with several ways to get involved.

The charity is aiming to raise £100,000 to sustain its work into 2026. Financial donations help keep shelves stocked, doors open, and volunteers ready to welcome anyone in need.

- £10/month can provide around £90 worth of toiletries through bulk purchasing
- £20/month buys winter gloves for people
- £40/month can fund a microwave, helping someone with no other way to heat food

Every contribution makes a difference, whether large or small.

What does it mean to be the Mayor's chosen charity?

Through the Mayor's Charity programme, Lewisham Donation Hub receives Council support and extra visibility. The Speaker of Lewisham, who promotes awareness and fundraising by hosting charity dinners, attending local events getting the community involved.



Volunteers at the Hub

In addition to financial support, donations of warm clothing, non-perishable food, toiletries, blankets and small household items are also urgently needed:

- Warm clothing (jackets, scarves, hats, gloves, men's winter wear)
- Comfortable shoes (trainers, boots, school shoes)
- Sleeping bags, tents, roll mats, hiking backpacks, suitcases
- Smartphones, tablets, laptops (unlocked and/or wiped, with 'Find My Device' off)
- Household items (microwaves, kitchenware, essential electricals)
- Toiletries, nappies, incontinence pads, pet food
- Non-perishable food, umbrellas, supermarket bags, label-free jam jars
- Newborn/double pram systems

Items can be dropped off Tuesday to Thursday, 12 noon–5pm but please check the website before visiting. For full details on making physical or financial donations to Lewisham Donation Hub this winter and beyond, visit lewishamdonationhub.org

Get your skates on The Winter Gardens is here!

Step into a wintry wonderland at Beckenham Place Park, where sparkly lights, seasonal treats and festive fun awaits visitors of all ages.

This year, Beckenham Place Park hosts The Winter Gardens – Lewisham’s newest seasonal destination. Running from Saturday 15 November 2025 to Sunday 4 January 2026, it’s a space where residents and visitors can get together to celebrate the festive season in style.

At the heart of the festival is Lewisham’s first-ever covered ice rink, ensuring skating continues whatever the weather. No matter if you’re gliding gracefully or taking your first tentative steps, themed sessions and family-friendly slots will make every visit memorable.

Beyond the rink, the festival will feature a vibrant Christmas market packed with gifts, seasonal treats and local crafts.

Visitors can marvel at thrilling performances from the award-winning Revel Puck Circus, enjoy over 15 traditional and festive fairground rides, and challenge friends and family to a round of Christmas-themed crazy golf, courtesy of Plonk Golf.

Food lovers will be spoiled for choice with stalls serving everything from Yorkshire pudding wraps and gourmet burgers to churros, crepes and traditional sweets. The event is

dog-friendly too and pups can enjoy complimentary pup-a-chinos before visiting Eddie’s Dog Shop in Homestead Courtyard.

And there’s more

The Winter Lodge is a dedicated area divided into three distinct spaces which offers something for everyone this season. From an adults-only retreat serving mulled wine and festive cocktails with live acoustic and festive DJ sets, to a cosy family zone filled with board games, Christmas films and mocktails for kids. Between them sits The Hideaway, a lively games bar perfect for teens and grown-

ups alike, featuring table tennis, pool and UV gaming sessions at weekends.

There will be lots happening in the Homestead Courtyard too. Visit the wonderful Nor Store to choose some of your favourite Christmas gifts, enjoy the carols and music in the Courtyard and try the Homestead Café for delicious, mulled wine, hot chocolate and pizza.

In the spirit of giving, visitors are encouraged to make donations to local charity, Lewisham Donation Hub, which will have its own dedicated space at the festival.



The Winter Gardens is free to enter but you will need to buy tickets for some of the activities. Head to visitwintergardens.co.uk for full details.

The Winter Gardens is organised by We Are Arena Ltd.

The Revel Puck Circus



The highlights

Indoor ice skating

A beautiful, all-weather ice rink, which means people can skate come rain or shine. With themed sessions planned throughout the season.

The Revel Puck Circus

Award-winning circus company founded in East London, performing thrilling shows that combine storytelling, skill and showmanship.

Festive fun fair

A fairground with over 15 traditional and festive-themed rides, including family-friendly attractions like Santa’s Runaway Train, Race-O-Rama and flying reindeer planes.

The Christmas Market

Over 15 stalls offering handmade gifts, local crafts, ornaments and seasonal food and drink.

Plonk Golf

A 9-hole, Christmas-themed mini golf course, packed with glowing lights, loop-da-loops, rolling hills and a final mind-blowing hole.

Christmas Trees by O’ Christmas Tree

A selection of trees and decorations from London’s premier Christmas tree retailer.

Santa’s Grotto

Book ahead to meet Father Christmas and his helpers – perfect for our youngest residents and their families.



SNOW

place like home this winter

From festive food markets to vintage finds, from disco dancing to wreath making – here are 10 suggestions for making the most of winter in Lewisham.



3 **Festival decorations with Wildcat Wilderness – Catford**
Create wild wreaths or table decorations using natural materials.
5, 7, 12 December, 10.30am–12.30pm. Donations welcome.

6 **Outdoor festive food market – Catford**
Wrap up warm and visit the Catford Food Market's Christmas special.
Sunday 14 December, 10am–3pm next to Catford Bridge train station.



9 **Free carols by the piano – Sydenham**
Ignition Brewery and Taproom for an evening of carols and Christmas sing-alongs.
Free event Saturday 20 December from 7pm.

1 **Christmas Lights and Market – Catford**
Enjoy festive lights, performances and markets in Catford town centre.
Free event Sunday 30 November from 2–6pm at Catford Broadway.



4 **Art Hub Christmas Market – Deptford**
Enjoy over 30 market stalls from local creatives and screen print and make your own decorations at this year's Art Hub Christmas market.
Art Hub Studios, Deptford. Saturday and Sunday 6–7 December, 11am–5pm. Free entry.



7 **So Last Century – Beckenham Place Mansion**
Score vintage finds at So Last Century's Winter Market.
Beckenham Place Mansion. Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 December.

2 **Cockpit Winter Open Studios – Deptford**
Meet 175+ artist-makers at Cockpit Studios, Deptford.
Friday 5 December (5–9pm), Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 (12 noon–6pm).
Lewisham residents get half-price tickets via the Cockpit Studios website.

5 **Rivoli Ballroom Disco – Crofton Park**
Dance to 70s and 80s disco and funk at Rivoli Ballroom.
Saturday 13 December from 8pm. 18+ event. Tickets from £18.

8 **The Albany Comedy Night – Deptford**
Laugh your socks off at The Albany's next comedy night hosted by Chanel Nash.
Thursday 18 December from 7pm. Tickets from £11–13 (there are group discounts) and event is for over 14s.

10 **The Horniman's Creative Creatures Play – Forest Hill**
Enjoy animal-inspired playtime fun at the Horniman's pop-up Creative Creatures Play.
Open from 26 November until 14 January 2026. Perfect for under-7s. Tickets are £6. Children must be accompanied by an adult. horniman.ac.uk



Find the full list of events and what's on by visiting lewisham.gov.uk/discover

Feel your best this winter Get the flu vaccine now



Get vaccinated at your GP, certain local pharmacies and pop-up clinics across the borough.

You can get the vaccine for free if you are:

- 65 or over
- pregnant
- have certain health conditions
- are a primary carer
- live in a care home
- children aged 2-3
- school-age children



Learn more
nhs.uk/vaccinations/flu-vaccine



Entertainment

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to our weekly newsletter
lewisham.gov.uk/signup

A round of ap-paws for Dick Whittington and his Catford Cat

Dick Whittington gets a Windrush twist in this joyful new panto, honouring the communities who helped shape Lewisham's story.

Pantomime returns to Broadway Theatre this Christmas with brand-new production Dick Whittington and His Catford Cat, running from Tuesday 9 to Wednesday 31 December.

This joyful take on the classic tale – from the same team that brought you last year's award-winning Sleeping Beauty – follows 'Dickens' Whittington as he travels aboard the Empire Windrush to seek his fortune in London.

Written by 'queen of panto' Susie McKenna – the production is a tribute to her Jamaican in-laws, Viola and Vincent Clarke. Audiences can expect incredible music, dancing, mischief, magic and plenty of laughs in a show that celebrates community and heritage.

Three cast members share what the show means for them and their Caribbean heritage.

Lisa Davina Phillip, who plays Fairy Bowbells, grew up in Lewisham with parents from Carriacou, an island in Grenada: "My dad helped set up the Grenada Benevolent Society at St Mary's Church. They built a real sense of community because, when they first came over, the locals weren't always welcoming. I wish my parents were alive to see this – it's about experiences they knew. Maybe I'll use a Grenadian 'sing song' lilt to represent where they came from."



Natasha Lewis,
playing Queen Rat

Durone Stokes, who plays Dick Whittington, shared: "Both sets of my grandparents came from the Caribbean and settled here in Lewisham. They raised their children sharing houses with other Caribbean families, while working multiple jobs. It's an often overlooked part of British history, so to be performing in this panto feels very special."

Natasha Lewis, who plays Queen Rat, added: "My parents were Guyanese and came to work in the public sector. This year's panto really resonates with me. I'm so pleased the story is going to be told in Catford and that we are recognising what the Windrush Generation did for this country. It's important that people celebrate them."

Join the celebration now. Tickets for Dick Whittington and his Catford Cat start at £8.50 broadwaytheatre.org.uk



Raising the bar

We're following the Housing Ombudsman's advice to make significant improvements for our residents.

In October, the Housing Ombudsman published a report following an investigation into our housing service, which manages social housing for around 13,500 tenants since taking over from Lewisham Homes in 2023.

The investigation began in July 2024 because of a high number of complaints about how we handled issues that were reported to us. In many cases, the Ombudsman found that we had failed to act properly, either by making mistakes, causing delays, giving poor advice or not following our own policies and procedures.

We fully acknowledge the impact these failures have had on our residents and we're determined to do better. In fact, since the dates covered by the report, we have made significant changes and improvements.

How we are addressing the problems

We ran a stock condition survey – a detailed check of the physical state of our homes – checking 83% of the insides of our homes and 100% of the outsides, giving us the clearest picture yet of where improvements are needed. We're investing £70 million a year in major works for our properties and are on track to bring 90% of the homes we

Find out more about the Housing Ombudsman's report and how we're improving our service at lewisham.gov.uk/ombudsman-report

manage up to the Decent Homes Standard by April 2026 – we're currently at 83%, up from 76% in April 2024.

Tackling damp and mould is a priority for us, with both immediate fixes and longer-term improvements underway, so homes are safer and healthier for residents.

We're also investing in better systems and staff training. Our new housing management system helps us keep track of repairs and resident needs, while our repairs call centre now answers most calls in just over six minutes – down from 46 minutes last year. We now complete 93% of emergency repairs on time and our repairs backlog has been cut almost in half.

We've redesigned our complaints process to make it fairer and faster and we're proactively visiting every home over the next five years to check whether any extra support is needed and ensure repairs are up to date.

We're not there yet, but we're committed to learning, improving and delivering the high standards our residents deserve.

From a house to a home

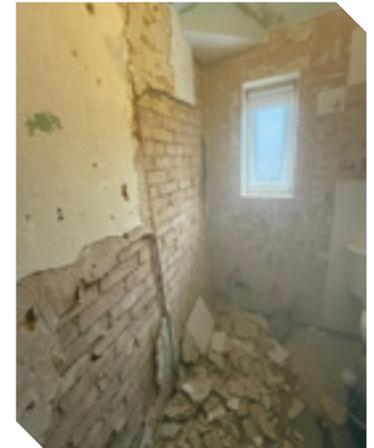
Find out how our Empty Homes scheme is reducing homelessness in the borough.

We are helping to transform the borough's long-term empty homes into much-needed housing for residents through our Empty Homes Programme. Working directly with property owners, we offer grants of up to £20,000 and low-interest loans to help renovate vacant properties. In return, owners agree to let us nominate tenants for at least five years, through schemes such as Private Sector Leasing. This approach has already helped turn 22 empty properties into safe, secure homes for families who need them most – and we're on the lookout for more.

Bringing empty homes back into use has other benefits too. It reduces our spending on expensive temporary accommodation, helps us meet housing demand and creates safer, more vibrant neighbourhoods. Empty properties can attract anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping and pests, so restoring them improves the quality of life for the whole community.

While we always prefer to work with owners, we do have enforcement powers if they don't engage with us. These include taking over the management of a property or issuing Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) which means we may be able to buy a property even if the owner doesn't want to sell. These measures ensure that homes don't remain derelict indefinitely and that we make the best use of housing in Lewisham.

If you're a landlord with a property that's been empty for six months or more, we'd love to hear from you. We can support you to renovate and



Case study

These before and after photos show a four-bedroom house which had fallen into disrepair and sat empty for seven months. It needed a lot of love to bring it back into use but, thanks to our Empty Homes Grant, is now a warm, welcoming home for a family that was previously on our homelessness list.

In return for the grant, the landlord has agreed to us nominating the tenants for the next five years, helping us offer safe and stable housing to those facing homelessness.

rent your property, turning an unused asset into a home for someone in need – and make a real difference in someone's future.

For more information, visit lewisham.gov.uk/emptyhomes or get in touch at emptyhomes@lewisham.gov.uk

Need help with the cost of living?

Whether you need a hand with food, bills or finding work, this guide will point you in the right direction.



Read on for the latest support, services and advice available to you right here in Lewisham – all designed to help you make your money go further. Remember, you don't have to face financial hardship alone.

BetterOff Lewisham

BetterOff Lewisham is your one-stop shop for accessing benefits, finding jobs and managing your money online. It shows what support you're entitled to and guides you through applications, as well as offering advice on employment and budgeting, making it a valuable tool for anyone navigating the cost-of-living crisis.

Visit lewisham.betteroff.org.uk

Food support

In Lewisham, we want all our residents to have access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food. If you're struggling, then there is plenty of support available across the borough – from food banks to social supermarkets to community meals.

Visit lewisham.gov.uk/food-services

Water bills

Thousands of Lewisham residents recently received a discount on their water bill through a partnership between the Council, Thames Water and Policy in Practice. Eligible households have been automatically enrolled onto the Water Help or Water Sure schemes, saving an average of £396 annually. Nearly 1,700 households have received the discounts so far, totalling more than £668,000 in savings.

If you require help with your water bill, visit the Thames Water website and look for the help and support pages.

Debt support

If you're struggling to get on top of debt or simply need support to manage your finances, Advice Lewisham can help. They provide guidance on debt, housing, benefits, employment and much more.

Visit advicelewisham.org.uk

Energy bills

Lewisham Council has teamed up with South East London Community Energy (SELCE) to help residents manage rising energy costs this winter. Support includes tailored energy advice, help dealing with suppliers, and assistance with energy debt. Eligible households may also receive energy vouchers and essential white goods.

Visit lewisham.gov.uk/energy-help

Pension credit

Pension Credit is worth an average £3,900 per year and opens the door to all sort of other financial support you may not know you're entitled to.

Check your eligibility on gov.uk/pension-credit

Warm Welcomes

As part of our Warm Welcomes programme, community spaces all over the borough will offer drop-in spaces free of charge, providing hot drinks, hot food, social activities and additional support. Warm spaces will operate from 8 December until the end of March 2026.

Healthy Start

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk. If you're eligible, you'll be sent a Healthy Start card with money on it that you can use in some UK shops.

You can use your card to buy plain liquid cow's milk, fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables, fresh, dried, and tinned pulses, and infant formula based on cow's milk. Visit healthystart.nhs.uk

Lewisham Works

Looking for a job? Lewisham Works can help you gain new skills and get into employment whether you are unemployed or want a better job. Contact lewishamworks@lewisham.gov.uk or search online.

Affordable cremations and funerals

The average cost of a full cremation service via a funeral director in the UK is almost £4,000. To support families through the cost-of-living crisis, we now offering a direct simple cremations package for a fixed fee of £1,507. This includes the collection and care of your loved one, completion of statutory medical paperwork, the cremation itself and provision of an environmentally friendly coffin suitable for cremation. This cost does not include a memorial service in the cremation chapel, but this can be added for a fee starting at £147.

To book or find out more about this package email: bereavement@lewisham.gov.uk, call Hither Green Crematorium on 020 8314 9635 between 8am and 4pm Monday to Friday. Outside of these times please call 020 8691 7943 or visit: lewisham.gov.uk/simple-cremation

Helping FAMILIES flourish



Our Family Hubs offer easier access to services and support for parents and carers.

To make life easier for families with children aged 0–19 or up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), we have brought together our Children and Family Centres to create eight vibrant Family Hubs in the borough.

Whether you're expecting a baby or navigating the teenage years, our Family Hubs offer the right help at the right time, with extra support available during pregnancy and your baby's early years. It's now even easier to stay connected – our brand-new website is live! You can explore services, download timetables, book workshops and chat with our Virtual Navigator chatbot 24/7.

Our Family Navigator service provides tailored support to help families access the right services. Whether it's parenting, health, or local resources, navigators are here to listen and connect you with what you need. Contact your local navigator via our new website.

Stay & Play sessions offer a welcoming space for children to explore and learn while parents and carers build confidence and connections. Sessions run weekly across the borough – download the timetable from our website.

Sign up to our course

Are you looking to boost your family's wellbeing? Join our eight-week Healthy Families: Right from the Start course. It covers eating well, staying active, screen time, emotional wellbeing, and confident parenting. Families receive a free toolkit too.

While visiting your local Hub, you can sign up to Lewisham's free vitamin D scheme. Families can collect vitamin D for children up to age 4, and if you're pregnant or have a child under 1, you can pick up vitamin D for yourself too.

We've also been filming promotional videos to showcase the brilliant services available at our Hubs, including Stay & Play, Family Navigators and support from partner organisations. They are launching soon so keep an eye on our social media and website as you might see some familiar faces.

For families with children under five, try the EasyPeasy app – free activities, parenting tips, and expert advice to support your child's development. Download at easypeasyapp.com/lewisham

Visit lewishamfamilyhubs.org.uk to find your local Hub and see what's on offer.

Clear your lungs

Fill your wallet

Quit smoking to protect your breathing and your bank account

smokefreelewisham.co.uk

0800 0820 388

quit@smokefreelewisham.co.uk



SCAN ME

Get in touch if you live, work or study in Lewisham



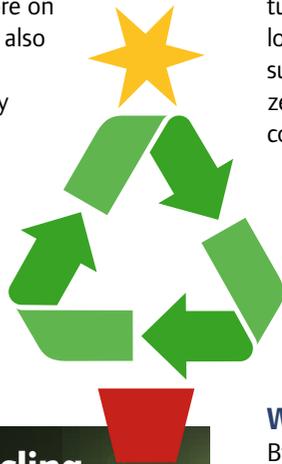
Make the most of your Christmas leftovers



Turn your festive food scraps into energy and savings by using your grey food waste bin.

Did you know the average household in Lewisham throws away hundreds of pounds' worth of food every year? At Christmas, many of us spend more on food than any other time. Sadly we also send more rubbish for incineration. With a little planning, you can enjoy a festive feast while saving money and reducing waste. By recycling leftovers, you can turn your scraps into renewable energy.

Recycling food waste is easy and makes a big difference. Whether it's turkey bones, vegetable peelings, tea bags or that last slice of Christmas cake,



it is crucial you put your food waste in the right bin.

Leftovers collected in food waste bins are turned into energy for homes and compost for local farms, cutting harmful gas emissions and supporting our ambition to be a carbon net zero borough by 2030. It also helps us reduce costs, so we can spend more on vital services.

If you live in a kerbside property, you can order a food waste bin at lewisham.gov.uk/foodwaste. We're rolling out bins for residents living in flats above shops and blocks of flats by March 2026 – meaning that soon everyone can play their part.

Want to waste less?

By planning meals, freezing leftovers and getting creative with recipes, we can cut our shopping bills too. For tips and inspiration, visit lovefoodhatewaste.com. If you have a garden, try home composting your fruit and vegetable peelings with garden waste – it's great for your plants.

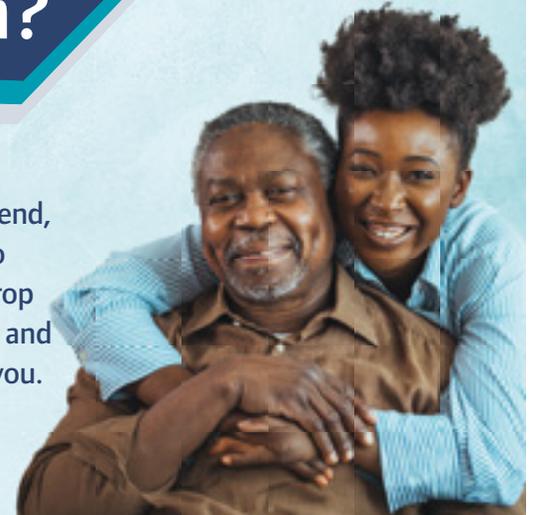
Please remember to remove any packaging before recycling. Let's work together for a cleaner, greener Lewisham this Christmas.

Christmas tree recycling

Don't forget your real Christmas tree can be recycled for free at one of our drop-off points from Wednesday 26 December to the end of January. Last year, thousands of trees were turned into wood chippings for our local parks.

Find your nearest site at lewisham.gov.uk/christmas-recycling

Are you an unpaid carer in Lewisham?



You're not alone

Whether you're caring for a family member, friend, or neighbour, Lewisham's Carers Hub is here to help make your journey easier and brighter. Drop in to connect with others, find friendly advice, and discover practical support groups tailored for you.

Where to find us:

Atrium of the Glass Mill Leisure Centre,
 Loampit Vale SE13 7FT
 Open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9am to 4.30pm
 (Closed between 12.30 and 1.30pm)

Get in touch Monday to Friday
 Tel: 0300 373 5769 or
 Email: ucwellbeing@imago.community



You can get free vitamin D supplements

If you're pregnant, recently had a baby, or have a child under 4 and live in Lewisham, you can get free vitamin D tablets. You'll receive vitamins for up to a year after birth, and your child gets free vitamin drops until age 4.



If you're pregnant or have children under four years old, you could get help to buy food, milk and vitamins.



Apply online:
www.healthystart.nhs.uk



More information
lewisham.gov.uk/freed



It's hammer time

Highlighting the progress being made to transform Lewisham's town centres.



Cllr Edison Huynh; Cllr Aliya Sheikh; Brenda Dacres OBE, Mayor of Lewisham; Cllr Sakina Sheikh and Cllr Ese Erheriene get to work on Lewisham Library

Work begins on Lewisham Library

Construction is officially underway to transform Lewisham Library into a vibrant, multi-use community hub – with contractors Roof Construction Ltd now on site. The refurbishment builds on the award-winning library and heritage services, adding exciting new features like a business hub, performance spaces, meeting rooms and a café.

Closed temporarily in 2023, the library is being upgraded to make better use of the space, creating a brighter, more open-plan environment with improved

accessibility. Dedicated areas for children and young people – plus stepped seating for talks, performances, or simply relaxing – will make it a more welcoming space for all.

The redesign will breathe new life into the iconic building, once a telephone exchange. Beyond books and heritage, the new library will become a centre for culture and enterprise and help connect residents to other vital Council services.

Community feedback – including a six-week public consultation

and ongoing engagement with local groups – shaped the designs. While Lewisham Library will retain its current name, residents will be invited to help name six internal spaces, ensuring the venue reflects the voices of those who use it – so watch this space.

The library construction is due to complete in autumn 2026. This transformation forms part of our broader £24 million investment in the town centre, which also includes major upgrades to Lewisham Market and the High Street.

Here's how we're improving Deptford High Street

In the past two years, almost 3,000 of you – residents, traders, business owners and visitors – have shared views on our Deptford High Street proposals. We listened carefully and have used your feedback to shape our final plans.

Many of you welcomed our focus on maintenance and cleanliness, so we've improved waste collection and added more bins to manage rubbish and fly-tipping. We've also deep cleaned

pavements, removed graffiti and cleared clutter, including old phone boxes and damaged signs. You asked us to tackle illegal parking and antisocial behaviour so we've increased enforcement patrols.

You told us greenery matters, so we're planting new trees, and introducing sustainable drainage systems and rain gardens. Lighting has been upgraded – especially under the railway bridge – to make the area safer and more

welcoming. We've improved signage and wayfinding to help people discover local businesses. We are installing cycle hangars to support active travel.

We know there are concerns about pedestrianisation – particularly parking, deliveries and emergency access – so we'll consult you again before any changes are made. We're proud of the progress and committed to making Deptford even more special.

The latest from Catford town centre

The historic Catford House (formerly the Catford Constitutional Club) is now open as a pub and community venue under new operators, GCDA following an extensive renovation. It will host events and workshops. In the new year a community kitchen and food menu will be introduced. This is a space for the whole of Catford to enjoy.

We've secured £50,000 from the Mayor of London's High Streets Place Labs to improve Catford town centre's public spaces. Design work is already underway to create a cleaner, more welcoming environment.

Holbeach Road is also set to become a creative hotspot. A new workspace is being fitted out and will open in the New Year, providing 1,000 square feet for 40–50 creatives



Inside the restored Catford House

– reflecting Catford's growing reputation as a hub for innovation.

Meanwhile, we have been working on reopening what was formerly Catford Mews. A new operator has been selected and the venue will reopen with a cinema and co-working space. Opening dates will be announced soon, promising a fresh chapter for this much-loved venue.

Looking ahead, Catford's streets

will be transformed by a public art project, in partnership with SHAPESLewisham. Successful artists will have their works featured on business shutters along the Broadway. Works will celebrate the identity and creativity of Catford.

Together, these projects are reshaping Catford into a thriving hub for culture, creativity and community life.



For full details of all these projects visit lewisham.gov.uk/regeneration

EXPLORE MORE at your local library

From wellness sessions to business support, from family fun to heritage talks, Lewisham's libraries are bursting with free events and resources to help you learn, connect and create.

In the new year, the award-winning Lewisham Libraries turn a new page with Explore More – a campaign celebrating the incredible range of free events, resources and services available across our 12 local branches, run by passionate staff and perfect for those colder days.

Explore more wellness

Find calm in your local library with yoga, Pilates and mindfulness sessions. Free or low-cost classes are available across branches, led by expert teachers and practitioners.

Upcoming highlight:

Winter Wellbeing and Fun Day

Join Lewisham Libraries at Downham Health and Leisure Centre for free activities and classes, wellbeing advice, rhyme sessions, storytimes, crafts, drawing and festive surprises.

**Saturday 13 December,
10am–4pm**

Explore more from home

Library services can come to you. Enjoy books and resources without leaving your home.

Home Library Service

A free monthly delivery service for residents who are disabled, ill, older or carers. Borrow books in standard or large print, iPads with audiobooks, CDs and more. Available long-term or temporarily, for all ages. Contact: 020 8314 6254 or libraries@lewisham.gov.uk

Explore more for your family

Borrow Voxblock screen-free audio players

Voxblock players are fun, screen-free audiobook devices for children aged 3 to 12. They're easy to use and perfect for independent or family listening. Borrow for free from Catford and Deptford Libraries for up to two weeks.

Explore more events

From author talks and writing workshops to homework clubs and film screenings, there's something for everyone.

Past guests include Amy Key (Arrangements in Blue), Jamel C Campbell (Olu's Teacher), and Mel Pennant (A Murder for Miss Hortense).

Explore more for business

Lewisham's libraries are part of the Business & IP Centre (BIPC) network, offering free advice, resources and workshops for entrepreneurs. You can also access thousands of free eBooks and audiobooks via the Libby app.

Book now for Introduction to GrantFinder

Discover funding opportunities in this free online GrantFinder session with Idox's Timothy Crampton.

**Tuesday 13 January 2026,
12 noon–1pm**



Access to primary care services in Lewisham

We are working to support Lewisham residents to access the right care at the right time. Whether you pop in, call or make a request online, our team will ask you a series of questions so they can understand how to best direct you. They may suggest an appointment with a doctor, another member of the practice team or direct you towards your local Pharmacy team.

You may be offered a face-to-face, phone, or video appointment, depending on the type of query and the availability of the clinicians. Appointments are offered based on clinical need, rather than on a first-come-first-served basis.

Appointments that fit around you

We are making it easier for you to get an appointment. In addition to normal practice opening hours (Mon-Fri, 8am-6.30pm), Lewisham GP practices also offer early morning, evening and Saturday appointments in partnership with their neighbouring practices.

NHS app

The NHS app gives you quick access to a range of services straight from your computer, phone or tablet. Use it to order repeat prescriptions, book and manage appointments, view your GP health record and book and manage vaccinations.

Your practice team

Your GP practice team has a range of health professionals, based at the practice or in the community. If you need to see a GP, you will always be offered an appointment, but there may be others who can provide the most appropriate support.

Your pharmacy team

Pharmacists can help you with concerns about your medicines and give advice on symptoms for coughs, colds, stomach upsets, and bites. Seeing a pharmacist means you don't have to wait to see a GP or visit A&E, it's the NHS on the High Street.



Scan the QR code or visit www.selondonics.org/lewisham-access to learn more about healthcare services available in Lewisham.

Young and proud

From celebrating new spaces to helping young voices shine, Young Mayor, Shane Grant shares his pride at the creativity, resilience and leadership of the borough's youth.

One of my highlights has been the opening of the Riverside Youth Hub – an incredible new space offering opportunities, support and fun under one roof. Launch day was unforgettable. The hub is more than a building – it's a community home for young people to learn, connect and grow. With workshops, digital suites, creative rooms and sports sessions, it provides a safe, exciting environment to develop passions and find their voice.

We also launched Radio Lewisham's new youth schedule, a project close to my heart. It's a platform for young people to speak on issues that matter most – education, mental health, opportunities and identity. This launch reminded me that Lewisham's young people aren't just the future, we're also leaders of today. Through radio, we're building confidence, communication skills and community connections that last a lifetime.

I've also been focussed on my role in the Apprenticeship and Social Enterprise Task and Finish Group, strengthening pathways for young entrepreneurs, as part of my manifesto. Plus the redesign of the youth service. Whether fashion, tech, media or food, there's so much talent in our borough. We're exploring how to make business support more accessible with mentoring, funding and creative spaces for young people to start, grow and lead ventures. Seeing ideas turn into action has been inspiring.

During the summer, I visited and supported youth programmes across Lewisham. From football camps to arts workshops and volunteering projects, these spaces give young people the chance to make friends, learn new



Shane Grant, Young Mayor of Lewisham at the opening of Riverside Youth Hub

Stay updated with Shane's work by following the Young Mayor on

@lewisham_young_mayor
 @lewishamyoungmayor1

skills and stay active. I'm proud of the youth workers and volunteers who make it possible.

As many young people start to plan for their mocks, here are three quick exam tips:

- Plan early: Break revision into small daily chunks.
- Stay balanced: Take breaks, eat well and rest.
- Ask for help: Teachers, friends and family are there to support you.

Every young person in Lewisham has potential to unlock. Whether through creativity, enterprise or education, we all have something to contribute. Together, we're building a borough where young people feel supported, valued and ready to shine.



Lewisham's directly elected Mayor, Brenda Dacres OBE, represents the whole borough. Contact her at brenda.dacres@lewisham.gov.uk

Please check beforehand whether your Councillor is holding in-person surgeries. Visit lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil or call 020 8314 6000.

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