



## Free cycling lessons

Cycling is a fantastic way to exercise, whatever your age. Anyone living, working or learning in Lewisham is entitled to a free two-hour cycling lesson, thanks to funding from Transport for London. In addition, Lewisham Council organises group cycling training specifically for people over 50. This includes basics such as getting on and off a bike safely and navigating roads. As the group gains in confidence, it goes on longer rides – along the Thames Path, for example.

**i** For more information, contact Liz Brooker on 020 8314 2254 or email [roadsafetyeducation@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:roadsafetyeducation@lewisham.gov.uk)

## FACILITIES FOR DEAF PEOPLE

**Catford Library now has a new section of books, DVDs and magazines for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The area also has a large TV screen showing DVDs and BBC news in British Sign Language (BSL) and a noticeboard for people to share local information on voluntary groups or events.**

**Downham Library runs computer courses for deaf people. And for existing web users, the Council has created a website ([www.lewisham.gov.uk/BSL](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/BSL)) with better access to Council information. It contains video clips using BSL and provides information about local deaf groups.**

## BELLINGHAM GOLDEN OLDIES

If you're over 50 and live in the Bellingham area, you might be interested in joining the Bellingham Golden Oldies (BeGO) club. It organises social events, trips, dances, bingo and card games. It also acts as a campaigning body for local people. Membership costs £2 a year and members meet every Wednesday at 1.30pm at the Bellingham Leisure Centre, 5 Randlesdown Road SE6 (020 8697 0043).



## Freedom at all hours

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has announced that, from 2 January 2009, the Freedom Pass will operate for 24 hours – in other words, not just at off-peak times. The Freedom Pass allows people over 60 to travel

for free on London buses, tubes and trains, and buses anywhere in England. If you don't have a Freedom Pass, you can get an application form from a Post Office, or you can visit [www.freedompass.org](http://www.freedompass.org).

## Have you got some time to give?

Rushey Green Time Bank is an award-winning organisation that brings people together to help one another. Participants 'deposit' their time in the bank by giving practical help and support to others, earning them time credits. They then 'withdraw' time credits when they need something doing themselves. Help offered comes in many forms, such as giving lifts, doing some DIY, teaching skills such as knitting or cooking, or it may be just sharing meals, talking on the phone or going to the park. People are encouraged to join

various groups, such as health and fitness or poetry groups (see right). There is even a 'phone-a-friend' scheme, which provides friendship and support to people who have been recently bereaved, discharged from hospital or who are housebound.

**i** For more information, contact the Rushey Green Time Bank at **Hawstead Road SE6. Tel: 020 7138 1772/1785. Email: [rusheygreen@gmail.com](mailto:rusheygreen@gmail.com)**

### My Kitchen

I've got a teeny weeny kitchen,  
Only measures ten by four,  
There's a draining board, and stainless sink,  
A new 'Everest' back door.

The washing machine and cooker,  
Fit nicely in the space,  
And when I want to drain the veg,  
I turn without a pace.

It's ever so convenient,  
And suits me to a 'T',  
T'was built like that, in thoughtful days,  
In eighteen ninety three!

**Mrs Treen (a little older than my teeth)**  
The Rushey Green Time Bank poetry group

## WALKING GUIDES WANTED

**If you are fit, have time on your hands and good local knowledge, you might want to become a walking guide. For more information and an application form, email [jo.middleton@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:jo.middleton@lewisham.gov.uk) or call Jo Middleton on 020 8314 3674.**

## Feel more secure in your home

A scheme called the Home Security Programme has been set up to help Lewisham residents who have been a victim of burglary or who are worried about becoming a victim of burglary. All you do is call Victim Support, who will instruct a Crime Prevention

Officer to assess your property. If necessary, and if you're eligible, you can have basic door and window locks fitted for free.

**i** For more information and for details of the scheme, please contact Victim Support on 020 8695 0364.

## Calling all pensioners

If you're a pensioner, make a date with *Calling all pensioners*, a radio show broadcast on Resonance104.4FM every Sunday. Hosted by Harry Haward and Tim Hamilton from local charity Deptford Action Group for the Elderly (DAGE), the show features chat, music, guests and advice. The show is broadcast on Sundays at 2pm and repeated on Fridays at 1pm. DAGE specialises in providing advice and information to pensioners across south east London. It also runs a drop-in centre at 71 Deptford High Street between 10am and 3pm weekdays as well as a free collection service for re-usable furniture.

**i** For more information visit [www.resonancefm.com](http://www.resonancefm.com) and [www.dage.org.uk](http://www.dage.org.uk) or call DAGE on 020 8691 2849.



Host Harry Haward (right) and guest

# Don't lose out on benefits

▶ If you pay rent or Council Tax, you may be entitled to help with the costs of paying them through Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit. To find out whether you are eligible, book an appointment with an assessor by calling one of the numbers at the end of this story. You will need to bring with you evidence of your rent, income and any pensions or savings.

If you are already claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax

Benefit and your circumstances change, you must inform the Benefit Office of these changes, which include:

- ▶ rent increases or decreases
- ▶ changes to the number of people living with you
- ▶ changes to a job, working hours or salary of anyone in your home
- ▶ changes of address
- ▶ increases or decreases in your or your partner's state retirement, private or occupational pension

▶ if anyone you live with gets a tax credit award.

If you are not sure whether you are entitled to, call the numbers listed below. Help the Aged also offers a free benefit check.

**i** **Housing Benefit queries:**  
020 8690 8444

**Council Tax Benefit queries:**  
020 8690 9666

**Help the Aged: 0845 605 2535**

## FREE ELECTRIC BLANKET TESTING

You can get your electric blanket tested and receive advice for free from the Council's Trading Standards department. Call 020 8314 7759 to make an appointment.

## GIVING FEEDBACK TO THE COUNCIL

Lewisham Council welcomes feedback whether it is a compliment, comment or a complaint. You can do this by phone, in writing or by email. If you want a response, you'll need to give your contact details.

To give your feedback, call the Complaints and Quality Team on 020 8314 6340, email [yourfeedback@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:yourfeedback@lewisham.gov.uk) or write to the head of the service that you'd like to make a comment on.

## A handy service

Tradespeople often aren't willing to carry out small domestic jobs because they say it's not worth their time. So what do you do if you need a light bulb changed or a leaking tap fixed? Fortunately, help is at hand with the Lewisham Handyperson Service. This is a free service that provides small repairs and adaptations to the homes of older (over 60), disabled and vulnerable residents living in Lewisham. It makes no difference whether you're a private tenant or an owner occupier – all are eligible to apply.

Lewisham handypersons can carry out jobs such as small plumbing repairs, adjustments to doors and windows, repairing loose floorboards, fastening down carpets, putting up safety handrails and changing light bulbs. You do have to pay for the costs of any materials. Each job is limited to two hours but



### Get help with small jobs

you can call on the service more than once. Unfortunately the handyperson is unable to carry out decorating, gardening, any kind of gas work, electrical wiring or general domestic tasks.

All handypersons are Council employees and are security checked. If you like, you can be given a password to identify the handyperson when they call.

**i** For more information, call 020 8314 6309 or email [handyperson@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:handyperson@lewisham.gov.uk)

## FIRE SAFETY

If you are 60 or over and on benefits, you may be eligible for a free fire risk assessment from the HandyVan service – a scheme run by Help the Aged. It will fit carbon monoxide and smoke detectors for free and give you advice.

**i** For more information call 01255 473 999 or email [info@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:info@helptheaged.org.uk).



## Free swimming

All Lewisham residents aged 60 or over can now swim for free in any of Lewisham's pools. Swimming is a great form of exercise. It is good for developing stronger muscles and better balance and for improving your mobility if you suffer from arthritis. It also

decreases your risk of getting osteoporosis and improves your mood and feelings of wellbeing. And, from now until March 2009, all Freedom Pass holders are entitled to a free term of swimming lessons. For more information, visit your local leisure centre (see p19).

## Avoiding doorstep sellers

▶ If someone knocks at your door offering to fix your roof or install new windows, just say no. You won't know anything about this person, and he or she might well be a rogue trader. Turn the person away and let the Council know about it by calling 020 8314 7759. If possible, get a description of the person, their vehicle and the registration number.

If you do need work doing around the house, contact the Council's Handyperson Service (see opposite), which can organise an accredited tradesperson to carry out minor jobs for free. If it's a bigger job, find a trader through the Lewisham Trading Standards Builders' Register, which has details of local firms that have agreed to abide by fair trading



### Use a chain on your front door

principles and practices. For a copy, call 020 8314 7759 or visit [www.lewisham.gov.uk](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk). Obtain three written quotes (not estimates) and check out membership of any trade associations or professional bodies.

As well as rogue traders, beware

of people posing as officials (from Thames Water, for example) to gain entry into your home. Take these measures to protect yourself:

- ▶ keep your door locked when you're at home, and don't unlock it until you're sure who is there.
- ▶ put the door chain or bar on before opening the door and keep it on while you talk.
- ▶ ask for the person's identity card. Shut the door and ring the company that they claim to be from. Don't use the number on their card – find the company's number in the phone book.
- ▶ call your energy and water companies and ask to go on their password scheme. This means that any representative of the company that visits you has to quote the password you've registered.