

Keniston lockdown stories

It has been a tough year for many, but even in tough times there are positive stories. Some Keniston residents' lives have changed and been enriched by the lockdown. Here are their stories.

A new business for Tania

Tania Wood from Darrick Wood, who works at her local hospital, has been filling her spare time with a new business venture. She says: "I am now a Body Shop @home consultant. I have always loved Body Shop products and when I saw an advert asking for team members, I asked for some more details."

Tania signed up in October 2020 and got the

starter kit which, to her delight, had lots of products for her own use. She originally planned just to buy products for herself to save some money.

But having contacted friends and family to see if they were interested, she was amazed by the response. "Little did I know how enjoyable being in this business would be for me," she says.

Several months later, Tania has earned lots of free products; was able to purchase presents for Christmas and has paid the deposit for a family holiday in the summer of 2021 ("as long as we are out of lockdown!," she says).

"I know that, mentally, keeping busy has kept me going through these tough times. The energy and commitment I put into my work at the hospital and my Body Shop business, keeps me and my mind occupied and is a true godsend in these worrying times."



Kim and Jim get creative

"We have been so busy crafting we haven't had a chance to get bored," says Kim O'Donnell from Darrick Wood (pictured above). "We have viewed our lockdown as a taster to retirement."

Since the start of the pandemic, Kim's husband Jim has been furloughed, while she has been shielding. Kim says: "To keep us both sane, I encouraged my husband to expand his love of drawing animals."

Kim set her husband a challenge to use a different medium and bought him a set of pastels. He is now hooked and has had five commissions from people who have seen his work on social media, drawing anything from

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ferrets, to rats, to cats and dogs. He has even dabbled in a few landscapes.

Kim took up sewing for the NHS and homeless through the sewing group at the local Rotary Club. To date, she has sewn an impressive 250 wash bags, 200 mask extender bands and 750 face masks, and knitted 100 pairs of hearts.

"As a thank you to all the sewers, we were awarded certificates and were personally thanked by Hannah Grey, the Mayor of Bromley, via a Zoom call."

Both Kim and her Mum made face masks for family and friends. They soon found themselves inundated with requests. They have made a further 500 face masks, which they sold to raise funds. So far, they have donated over £2,000 to the NHS charities.

Lockdown hobbies: staff

We asked staff to tell us about their new obsessions and hobbies during lockdown – and if there was anything they would miss when restrictions end. Here's what they told us.

"I have had a daily walk just for a change of scenery. We now have a dog, so the walks are much more pleasant. It's amazing how many people talk to you when you have a dog. I will not miss anything about lockdown when it ends, apart from less congestion on the roads!"

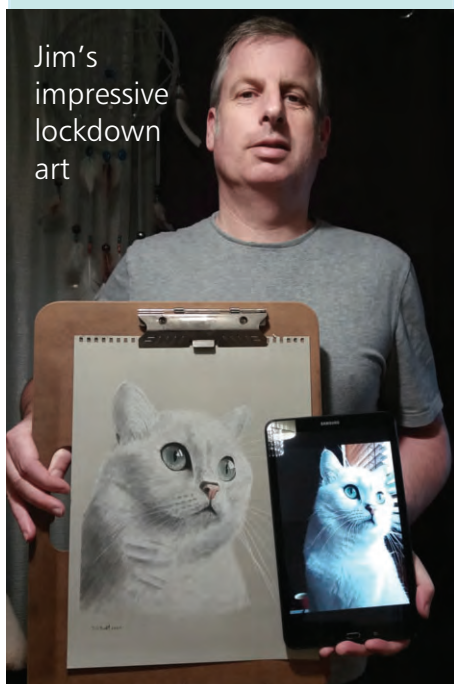
"My new obsession has been following the Joe Wicks workouts and buying gym wear. I'll miss being at home lunchtime, either pottering in the garden when the weather's nice or walking the dog."

"I have used lockdown to have a massive clear out of clothes, bags, shoes etc. and have recently signed up to Vinted. I am now obsessed with selling everything! I will miss my dog the most when we return to the office and she will miss me terribly."

Your lockdown hobbies: tell us more

If you would like to share your new obsession and what you will miss, get in touch to let us know.

Jim's impressive lockdown art



Lockdown competition: calling young residents

We are asking under-18s to submit a hand-drawn or hand-painted picture of what lockdown has meant for them. We will provide a voucher prize for the best one.

Please send your pictures to our office, or you can scan and email them to lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk

You can also send your pictures to 07713 388010, using Whatsapp.





Office update

In line with current Government guidelines, our office-based staff are still working from home.

We hope to start a limited return to office working over the coming months. We will update the information on our website when anything changes.

In the meantime, you can contact us by phone, email or text, or via social media or our website (see back page for contact details).

Free seeds for spring

Now that spring is upon us, we thought now would be a great time to offer you free seed packets to get your planting started.

It's good to get the family involved. You can germinate your seeds in a small yoghurt pot until they are ready to be planted into something bigger.

Flowers and vegetables grow very well in pots and tubs, so you can fill your windowsill or balcony.

Why not take photos of your growing seeds and send them to us? We can feature their progress in a future edition of Talkback.

Our supply of flower and vegetable seeds is limited, so we will send them out while stocks last. Request yours by emailing



lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk or by leaving a message with your details on 01689 889700.

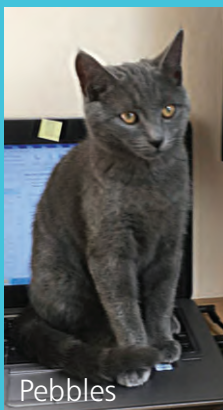
Our home-working pets

We know that spending time with animals is good for people. The mental and physical advantages of having a pet have proved to be especially important during this stressful time.

Research by the PDSA (People's Dispensary for Sick Animals) shows that 84% of pet owners believe their

pet has a positive impact on their mental health. Pets can be very calming when we're going through anxious times and they help lift loneliness.

As you can see from the photos, here at Keniston, we have plenty of pets keeping us company while we work from home.



Pebbles



Murphy



Sasha



Pushok



Monti



Darwin

A big thank you from the Property Services Team

"This has been a challenging year for everyone, and we take the opportunity to thank all residents for their patience and understanding during an ever-changing period for the repairs service."

Property Services Director,
Tony Coward

In January, we had to suspend our routine repairs service again due to the restrictions brought in by the Government. Until further notice, you can only report emergency and urgent works.

We will keep you updated on our website and social media sites. We may also text or email you about any changes.

Kitchens on hold

In December, we had to suspend the kitchen and heating replacements we had planned for 2020-21. This was disappointing, but seen as necessary to help reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19. These works have definitely not been cancelled. We will restart our planned works programme as soon as we believe it is safe to do so.

Darrick Wood consultation

We carried out a second public consultation event online with local residents to discuss the development plans for our Darrick Wood estate in Orpington. Thank

you to everyone who took part. We will soon make a full planning application to Bromley Council.

Robert Whyte House, Bickley

We have found new homes for all residents who were living at Robert Whyte House in Bickley. This means we can move on to the next stage of works.

However, for the time being, we have to prioritise security and will bring in an outside provider.

Gas boilers for Southwood Close

We can now report that all 37 flats at Southwood Close in Bickley have been fitted with individual gas boilers, giving residents greater control over their heating and hot water. Our contractors worked very hard on this project and we are pleased to see some of the comments made by residents.



The gas installation went very well. I found the workmen to be very helpful, informative & very courteous.

The work was done really well and the workers were polite and respectful. Thank you.

Keniston liaison was very good – keep up the good work.

Definite improvement to how warm the property is now. Better water pressure too.

Jane co-ordinated it all very well and the kindness and good communication really helped.

Jane smoothed matters when needed and as a Liaison Officer... Keniston chose the right person.

Gary was lovely. So nice. So gentle. Very good. As a single woman, he put me at ease. He checked in to see if everything was OK. Really felt looked after.

Left: We want to thank the Clairglow team for all their hard work. Special thanks go to (pictured left to right): Gary Frost, Business Development Manager; Freddie the dog, labourer; Dan Wilden, Surveyor; and Steve Thorne, Installations Manager.

Going abroad for more than four weeks?

Although we can't travel just yet, it will soon be summer, and many of you will be planning trips away.

If you get benefits and will be away for four or more weeks, you will need to notify:

- your Housing Benefit and Council Tax support office, and/or
- the DWP – through your online Universal Credit account.



Kickstart your career with Keniston



We are pleased to be taking part in the Kickstart Scheme – a Government project aimed at helping young people who are unemployed.

We expect to take on one young person, who will work at Keniston while finding out more about a career in social housing.

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to employers to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year-olds on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment.

The six-month placements provide 25 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage, or (age 23 or 24) the National Living Wage.

The Kickstart Scheme is part of the Government's Plan for Jobs, which aims to help a large number of people to retrain to get back to work.

JobCentre Plus Work Coaches will refer applicants to Keniston. We will then work with Charityworks, an organisation that helps young people start to work in the not-for-profit sector. Charityworks will support the young person we employ.

To find out more about the scheme, go to www.charityworks.co.uk/kickstart and www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme

Universal Credit update

The temporary £20 per week increase to Universal Credit has been extended until September 2021.

If you are self-employed, the Government has also extended the minimum income floor until the end of July.

This means that, for this period, the DWP will not assume that

you have earned a certain amount as a minimum, when calculating your top-up benefits.

In addition, the Government will make a one-off payment of £500 to eligible people who receive Working Tax Credits.

For support or advice, please call your Rent Income Officer on 01689 889700.

Coping with stress

It has been a stressful time for many over the past year.

Some 74% of UK adults have felt overwhelmed or unable to cope at some point during the pandemic, according to research by the Mental Health Foundation.

April marks the start of **Stress Awareness Month**, which aims to understand and tackle our modern stress epidemic.

The Stress Management Society website at www.stress.org.uk has lots of great advice. It can help you to:

- understand and recognise stress
- breathe your way to calm
- get a better night's sleep
- learn to worry less
- eat for wellbeing
- be the master of your technology, and
- manage stress at work.

May is **National Walking Month**, which encourages you to take up the challenge of walking 20 minutes every day of the year, as part of your daily exercise.

It's important to keep active and a brisk walk every day is an easy way to improve your health.

Whether you're walking as a family, trying to fit in some exercise whilst working from home, or if you're restricted to indoor exercise, you will find helpful tips on the Living Streets website at livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/national-walking-month



Starters and leavers



We recently said farewell to Diane Thompson, who had been with us for a year. We wish her well for the future.

We have welcomed back Jo Latham, who will be helping our Property Services Team as a Repairs Administrator. Cathy Webb leaves her customer service role, but continues her role in Property Services.

Paul Alderson leaves his role as both Rent Income Officer and Project Manager in Bickley. He is taking over as part-time Housing Officer on Monday and Tuesday, working with Sharon Hobbs, who will still cover Wednesday to Friday.

Jan Lewis will be the new Rent Income Officer for our Bickley schemes, whilst continuing her role with Darrick Wood.

Your housing officers

Your housing officers are:

- Andrea Spittle and Susan Rimmer, if you live at Darrick Wood, Southwood Close, Whites Meadow or Meadow Cottage, and
- Sharon Hobbs and Paul Alderson, if you live at one of our other schemes.

Worried about your finances?

Your financial wellbeing is just as important as your physical and mental state.

If you are struggling financially, you will find plenty of advice on the Citizens Advice website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money

You can also download our in-house information leaflets at: www.kenistonha.co.uk/about-us/our-policies/information-leaflets

– for a paper copy, phone us on 01689 889700 or email enquiries@kenistonha.co.uk

You should also check our social media accounts for helpful updates. We are on facebook at [/Kenistonhousing](https://www.facebook.com/Kenistonhousing), and on Twitter at [@kenistonha](https://twitter.com/kenistonha)



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