

WIGAN COUNCIL

FREE CADDY LINER DELIVERY FOR ALL HOUSEHOLDS

It's now easier for Wigan Borough residents to recycle their food waste as a new free caddy liner delivery is introduced.

From January 2018 caddy liners will be delivered to all households by Wigan Council's waste crews meaning residents no longer need to purchase their own or collect liners from life centres or libraries. It is hoped this will make it easier for residents to recycle their food waste in the kitchen caddy before putting it in the green bin. Recycling food will also save space in the black bin.

To let the crews know you need a new roll of liners, residents are being asked to tie a caddy liner to the handle of their green bin on their collection day. When the crews come to empty the bins they will leave residents a new set of liners.

Residents are being encouraged to contact the council to order a free kitchen caddy if they do not already have one so they can start to recycle food.

Paul Barton, assistant director for environment, said: "Thank you to residents for recycling more, recycling right as part of The Deal. We have already seen an increase in our recycling rates but we can still do more to reach our targets. "Recycling food and garden waste in the green bin is really important as it is composted and then reused which means it doesn't go to landfill. "Crucially, recycling correctly using all three recycling bins will save space in your black bin. The black bin should be a last resort for items that cannot be recycled."

If you don't currently recycle food and would like to start you can order a kitchen caddy via My Account www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount

Find out more about recycling at www.wigan.gov.uk/recycling

"LET'S TALK RUBBISH" SAY STAFF WIGAN BOROUGH'S RECYCLING CENTRES

Councillor Kevin Anderson, Cabinet Member for The Environment, said: "Thank you to residents for recycling more, recycling right as part of The Deal. We have already seen an increase in our recycling rates but we still need to do more to reach our targets. "Recycling food and garden waste in the green bin is really important as it saves that waste from going to landfill and it has an important role to play in helping grow our future food. "Crucially, recycling correctly using all three recycling bins will save space in your black bin. The black bin should be a last resort for items that cannot be recycled."

Residents are reminded that our Household Waste Recycling Centres can be exceptionally busy, particularly in peak hours between 10am and 3pm, so are advised to visit outside of these hours to avoid queues. To further reduce queues residents can also help by pre-sorting their recycling at home before they get on site. Visit your local Household Waste and Recycling Centre:

Kirkless, Makerfield Way, Higher Ince, WN2 2PR
Slag Lane, Leigh, WA3 1BZ
Chanters Industrial Estate, Atherton, M46 9FF

Please check the wide range of items that can be recycled before attending site, log on to www.wigan.gov.uk/recycling for more information

Opening hours including Bank Holidays:

Summer - everyday, 8am to 7:45pm (from last Sunday in March)

Winter - everyday, 9am to 5:45pm (from last Sunday in October)

Cars with or without a single axle trailer are accepted. Vans, pick-ups under 3.5 tonnes and twin-axle trailers require a permit. If using a hire vehicles. Please take hire documents and waste permit with you when visiting the centre. All sites have a 2m height restriction and 5mph speed limit.

For more information about recycling visit www.wigan.gov.uk/recycling

BOOST FOR ENVIRONMENT AS RECYCLING RATES INCREASE AND FLY TIPPING DECLINES

Incidents of fly tipping in Wigan Borough have bucked the national trend and are declining, new stats reveal. Latest figures from Wigan Council show a 35 per cent reduction in fly tipping reports thanks to a proactive approach and the introduction of a new environmental enforcement and education team.

In 2017 there were 1,373 reports of fly tipping compared to 2,105 in 2016.

And it's more good news for the environment as the borough's recycling rate has significantly increased and is on target to exceed the 50 per cent target set by central government as residents are recycling right and recycling more. Since the collection changes in September the rate has increased from 43 per cent to a current estimate of 48 per cent and an extra 1000 tonnes of recycling has been collected compared to the previous year.

With Christmas being the busiest period for the crews and households producing more waste than the other months there's currently increases of up to 17 per cent in the blue bin and increases of up to 30 per cent in the brown bin.

As part of The Deal, the more people recycle and dispose of their waste correctly the more money the council saves helping it to keep council tax low.

Work has taken place to prevent fly tipping at a number of key hotspot areas in the borough including barriers and the installation of CCTV. The environmental enforcement team tackle all types of environmental crime, including fly tipping, littering and dog fouling, and now work seven days a week so are able to deal with issues over the weekend. They are also trialling CCTV cameras which will further help them to gather evidence to catch offenders.

Councillor Kevin Anderson, Cabinet Member For Environment, said: "This is great news to start the New Year and we'd like to say a big thank you to residents for recycling more and for doing their bit to look after the environment. "These are early reports and the figures have not been verified but we're making good progress and are confident with the new collections we can further drive up our recycling rates.

"We remain committed to having a clean and tidy borough and are pleased our work to reduce fly tipping is having a positive impact. We would encourage residents to keep reporting incidents to us so we can continue this work. "In the first instance we will always work with residents to educate them around environmental crime and to ensure they understand how to properly dispose of their waste.

"It costs us money to clean up our communities and remove fly tipping. As part of The Deal, by residents not fly tipping, recycling correctly and disposing of their waste correctly we can keep council tax low and continue to fund essential front line services."

For more information about recycling visit www.wigan.gov.uk/recycling

To report an incident of fly tipping visit www.wigan.gov.uk/reportit or download the council's Report It app via your smartphone.

RESIDENTS ARE MORE DIGITAL THAN EVER BEFORE

Almost one third of Wigan Borough residents are signed up to MyAccount.

Wigan Council launched MyAccount in 2015 as a way for residents to access council services conveniently online and more than 100,000 people have now signed up, with almost 50 per cent of them making a transaction in the last six months.

The award-winning local authority has worked hard to reduce digital exclusion to make sure anyone who can has basic digital skills by 2020, which not only provides opportunities for residents but also saves the council significant amounts of money.

Features like MyAccount and ReportIT app and exclusive programmes like the Duke of York's iDEA award has even led to Wigan Borough's digital exclusion rate being downgraded from 'medium' to 'low' on the UK Consumer Digital Index 2017, produced by Lloyds Bank

Lesley O'Halloran, assistant director for customer services at Wigan Council said: "Residents have been fantastic at taking up digital opportunities, which is clear to see with more than 700 people signing up to the iDEA course since we rolled it out at the end of 2017. "Digital services are cost effective and help us keep council tax low. In times of austerity, our council tax remains one of the lowest in GM thanks to residents doing their part of The Deal.

"In the next 20 years, more than 90 per cent of jobs will have a digital element and we want to ensure people are ready for this change. In addition, we want to bring convenience to residents as coming to life centres or calling isn't always their preferred way of interacting. "Our digital offer improves accessibility and makes services available 24/7 instead of just nine through five.

Residents have also been taking advantage of the council's ReportIT app, which allows people to report a number of community concerns such as anti-social behaviour, environmental issues, highways problems and more recently, social housing issues, seeing more than 24,000 reports to date.

Wigan Council was also the first local authority in the UK to provide online wedding ceremony bookings and has now furthered this offer by giving residents the ability to digitally arrange payments for birth and death certificates, notice of marriage appointments and payments for weddings.

Lesley continued: "We will strive to build on these amazing successes, which isn't just good news for the public purse, but will save residents' time and trips to their local life centre. "We encourage people to remain enthusiastic and keen to learn about our digital future."

For more information about council services, visit the council's website, which has also been placed in the top nine per cent of all local authorities nationally: www.wigan.gov.uk

HAVE YOUR SAY ON SOCIAL HOUSING

Tenants across England are being given the opportunity to have their voices heard about social housing through an online questionnaire.

The government is asking tenants in Wigan Borough to share their views on social housing before the deadline closes on 31st January 2018 to understand what is important to residents and any concerns they

may have. The questionnaire aims to give tenants a more effective voice following the Grenfell Tower tragedy last year.

Wigan Council's tests on the cladding on their seven high-rise flats have shown they are not the same as those used at Grenfell and do not pose a safety risk, however, the local authority's cabinet have agreed to install sprinklers in all blocks anyway, costing around £2m.

Councillor Terry Halliwell, Cabinet Member for Housing And Welfare at The Council said: "Our main priority is the safety and welfare of our tenants. We conduct fire risk assessments weekly in each of our blocks to ensure any necessary changes are flagged in the earliest stages.

"We have already chosen to press ahead with installing sprinklers in all our tower blocks in light of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. "We would encourage tenants to have their say and share their views as part of this national questionnaire."

The questionnaire responses will inform the Green Paper on social housing in England, which the government aim to publish in spring.

To fill out the questionnaire, head to: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/tenants2017

MANAGE YOUR MONEY, DON'T STRUGGLE WITH DEBT

'Don't struggle with debt' is the message of a new campaign launching in Wigan Borough. Wigan Council has teamed up with Unify and the Citizen's Advice Bureau to help residents manage their money at one of the most expensive times of the year.

In the last twelve months, (October 2016 – November 2017) 1,718 people visited Wigan Council's crisis desk due to having no food, no money or no gas or electric so the local campaign will encourage residents to get support if they are worried about falling into debt or are already struggling.

There is lots of local support and advice out there for people but sometimes it can be difficult find help before it is too late. Credit Unions can provide loans for individuals without a good credit history and interest rates start at just 12.7 per cent, compared to payday lenders which charge APR of up to 1,509 per cent. The council is warning residents against using a payday lenders or loan sharks and is instead urging people to apply for a cheaper loan through a Credit Union or seek advice for how to manage their finances.

Lesley O'Halloran, Assistant Director for Customer Services at Wigan Council said: "If you find that you are struggling with debt and are unable to manage repayments, it is important to think about which debts you need to deal with first. There can be serious consequences to not paying your bills and we don't want people falling into debt. "At this time of year it can be easy to spend money on things that aren't needed and there is support out there for residents who need help managing their money. There are cheaper and safer alternatives to payday lenders and loan sharks. Although they may seem like the easy option, people don't realise how much interest they charge and it can be so damaging."

Angela Fishwick, Chief Executive of Unify Credit Union, said: "Residents should take extra care when borrowing money to pay for the cost of Christmas. Always ask how much the repayments will be, and what is the total cost of credit and only borrow from licensed lenders. Don't be tempted to borrow from doorstep lenders charging on average 400 per cent APR or from payday lenders charging in excess of 1000 per cent APR. If you are struggling to repay your high cost loan, talk to Unify, we are here to help."

For help and advice on how to manage your money, visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/moneyadvice
Alternatively, email welfarerightsadvice@wigan.gov.uk for information about the council's welfare outreach sessions.

ADVICE AT HAND EASIER THAN EVER

Starting Point Plus will now have longer opening hours and a new online service when Wigan Council begins offering the highly regarded support which has previously been provided by Age UK Wigan Borough.

To find out more go to www.wigan.gov.uk/startingpointplus.

The new phone lines will be available Monday to Friday 8.45 am to 5 pm and 8.45 am to 1 pm on Saturdays. To contact the service call 01942 489011

THINK YOU CAN FOSTER?

To find out more about fostering and how to become a foster carer in Wigan Borough go to www.wigan.gov.uk/fostering and for more details on 'You Can Foster' go to www.youcanfoster.org

INCREDIBLE EDIBLE WIGAN

What is Incredible Edible?

What Can I Grow?

How to get involved

Is there Funding Available?

Keep up to Date with Events & Workshops

Go to <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/The-Deal/Deal-Communities/Incredible-Edible/index.aspx>

For lots more information

WIGAN COUNCIL'S GOOD TRADER SCHEME

Wigan Council's "Good Trader Scheme" is a directory of over 200 local, reputable businesses. All the listings have star ratings of up to five gold stars that previous customers have awarded them.

Ratings are given based on workmanship and customer service; the more satisfied the customer the higher the rating.

The scheme has been set up to ensure that the residents of the Wigan Borough are getting a fair deal when it comes to work round the home.

Trading Standards check out the traders' trading history before allowing them to be part of the scheme.

Whether it's painting and decorating, joinery, or just tidying up your garden make sure you visit www.wigan.gov.uk/goodtrader. Or ring the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 03454 040506.

If you are aged over 50 or have a disability Wigan Council Starting Point Plus can access the Scheme on your behalf, contact Starting Point on 01942 489011

HEART HEALTH HELPS WITH FIGHT AGAINST DEMENTIA

To find out more about dementia support visit www.wigan.gov.uk/dementia

TOGETHER FOR ADOPTION

To find out more about Together for adoption visit www.togetherforadoption.co.uk

COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION DECLARED FOR ALL CARE LEAVERS IN WIGAN BOROUGH

Young adults who have left care are to be exempt from paying council tax in Wigan Borough. Wigan Council's cabinet this week approved plans to exempt anyone aged between 18 and 21 who has previously been cared for by Wigan Council from paying council tax.

There are 142 care leavers aged between 18 and 21 living in Wigan Borough and the exemption will currently directly affect 31 care leavers in the borough who are paying council tax challenges in a bid to improve outcomes for children and families by supporting them to live well and healthy lives. This place-based model puts the emphasis on communities, ensuring services are accessible and visible. The aim is to wrap services around local communities to improve links between organisations.”

COULD YOU BE ELIGIBLE FOR HELP WITH YOUR FUEL BILL?

Thousands of residents could be entitled to help reducing their fuel bill thanks to our AWARM Plus scheme.

With temperatures continuing to drop living in a cold home can have a detrimental effect on a person’s physical and mental wellbeing. Wigan Council works closely with Wigan Care and Repair to visit homes across the borough and complete a Healthy Home Check, which assesses what help and support is available.

The AWARM Plus service is open to anyone who is currently living on a low income, has high energy costs and living with a long term health condition. The service offers a number of energy saving measures to help keep people warm and safe, including draught proofing, loft and wall insulation, benefit checks, energy switching and much more.

If you’re struggling to keep warm at home or for more information on AWARM Plus and other schemes available visit www.wigan.gov.uk/warmhome or call 01942 239360

FIGHTING THE STIGMA THROUGH FASHION

Matthew Peet found strength in fashion and design after his mental health began affecting his daily life.

In 2015, Matthew, 28, from Wigan, was diagnosed with depression after being plagued with feelings of uselessness, negativity and suicidal thoughts leading to social isolation and not wanting to go on. After seeking help, Matthew now wants to help others on their journey. In 2017, he kick-started new clothing brand ‘Behind a Smile’, which explores the stigma attached to mental illness and the people who are affected by it.

Matthew is also backing the local #TogetherWeCan campaign, which has been developed by Wigan Council in partnership with local health providers, addressing a range of life events and triggers that can be difficult times for people. He said: “I want people to know that there doesn’t always have to be a big event in your life that can change your mental health. For me, there wasn’t any one thing in particular; it was just a build-up of things that I didn’t know how to manage and eventually it took its toll. “Before Behind a Smile I was writing about my experience for Mental Movement, a London-based magazine who focus on how to maintain positive mental health. I found writing to be a great release but I wanted to help other people too, which is why I set up the clothing brand.”

Behind a Smile works with people who have lived experience of mental illness, people bereaved by suicide, individuals living with a mental illness, charities or anybody else who wants to raise awareness through creating collaborative designs either in memory of someone or to promote a cause.

Matthew also donates 100 per cent of Behind a Smile’s profits to local support services and charities such as ‘The Sanctuary’ and ‘Chasing the Stigma. He continued: “We’ve had so many people come to us to remember loved ones or to raise awareness about a specific message and it really has proven to help people through some difficult times, which for me is the main reason I wanted to start BaS.”

“The #TogetherWeCan campaign is a great example of how we should raise awareness about mental health and mental illness. I’m glad the council have been able to give me another platform to tell my story. My advice to others is, it’s not weak to find help, whatever form that may be!”

#TogetherWeCan aims to raise awareness about mental health and to remove the stigma attached by focusing on different ages and life events. The campaign hopes to encourage people living with a mental illness or those who notice a dip in their mental health to seek help.

Professor Kate Ardern, Director For Public Health at Wigan Council said: “Supporting our residents to maintain positive mental wellbeing and educating people on the difference between mental health and mental illness is a key priority for us. “Although the stigma attached to mental illness is slowly being broken down, we can’t become complacent. We want to work together with health providers, volunteers and residents to make sure everybody knows that help is available on both a national and a local scale.

“You don’t need to have a diagnosis to access this help, if you need advice on how to manage stress or are going through a tough time, people are here to listen. You are not alone in your recovery journey. #TogetherWeCan get you through!”

For more information about the campaign, visit www.wigan.gov.uk/togetherwecan or to get involved, please email publichealth@wigan.gov.uk

ON YOUR MARKS...GET SET...IT’S LEIGH’S SECOND 10K

It’s back and this time it’s going to be even bigger!

MP Jo Platt officially launched the countdown to the 2018 Leigh Community 10k on Friday by urging Leigh residents to take up the challenge and help make it an annual event. Last year’s inaugural race saw 600 people of all ages and abilities taking part with more than £10,000 raised for chosen charity, Wigan and Leigh Hospice.

This year, organisers are aiming for 1,000 runners. Inspiring healthy lifestyles, FCR Events Ltd, Leigh Harriers, Nectar Creative, Rotary Club of Leigh, Time2Run Events, Wigan and Leigh Hospice and Wigan Council are all working together once again to put on the event with the support of Leigh MP, Jo Platt.

Jo said: “Last year was tremendous, there was a real buzz in the town centre. It would be great to get even more people taking part and cementing Leigh Community 10k as an annual event. “Wigan and Leigh Hospice is a charity close to many of our hearts and a worthy cause to raise money for whether you’re running for fun or to beat your personal best.”

The Leigh Community 10k, which takes place on Sunday 12 August in Leigh town centre, bolsters an already impressive calendar of running events in Leigh including the popular Flash in the Park 10k, Festive Flash Five and parkrun at Pennington Flash. All runners, joggers and walkers of any ability can join in the second Leigh Community 10k as long as you are over 15 years of age on the day of the event.

Standard entry fee is £17 or £15 if you run for a UK Athletics/ARC Running Club.

You can register for a place in the race at www.leigh10k.co.uk

You can also make a direct donation to the Wigan & Leigh when you register or raise money for a charity of your choice. Wigan and Leigh Hospice has been providing palliative care for adult patients across the borough for more than 30 years. It currently cares for more than 1,000 people with life-limiting illnesses, as well as those people important to patients, every year.

Hospice Chief Executive, Dr Alan Baron said: “We’re delighted this event is back for a second year and once again supporting the hospice. “We are fortunate to enjoy fantastic support from local people in Leigh who donate, volunteer their time and participate in fundraising events to help us raise the £8,700 a day we need in order to deliver all of our services. The funds raised through the Leigh Community 10k will help us to continue to provide care for local people who have been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness and support for their loved ones.”

Inspiring healthy lifestyles are also planning Couch to 10k training sessions to help people get in tip-top shape for the day.

And if you can’t wait until then Run Wigan Festival is **Sunday 18 March**.

More info at www.runwiganfestivals.co.uk

APPRENTICES CELEBRATE COUNCIL LEADER’S LIVING WAGE PLEDGE

More than 50 apprentices are celebrating a significant boost in their earning power thanks to a living wage pledge by the leader of Wigan Council.

Lord Peter Smith has increased the rate of pay for more than 50 apprentices at Wigan Council to the national living wage rate of £7.50 an hour. This has meant an increase in pay of more than £1,500 a year for some apprentices and the wage has been back-paid to April.

Lord Smith is a long-term supporter of apprentices in Wigan Borough having previously pledged £1.5m to support businesses to recruit apprentices in the private sector. This has led to hundreds of young people gaining their first vital step on the career ladder. The council itself employs apprentices in all areas of its work including administrative, environmental services and social care.

Lord Smith said: “At Wigan Council we are fully committed to apprenticeships as a proven way for young people to gain the experience and skills of work while earning a wage. “We believe all apprentices working for the council deserve the national living wage so I’m delighted we are now implementing this fully. “I hope this will help them financially as they establish themselves in their careers and as young adults working and living in the borough.”

The boost was welcomed by three apprentices who work in the council’s Greenspaces horticultural department. Cory Hope, 19, Joe Lally, 25, and Jake Deakin, 20, are all in their first year as apprentices working to help make the borough’s parks and greenspaces beautiful places to be.

Joe said: “We received a letter through the door to say we were getting an increase in our wage. It was a nice surprise! “I’ve been able to do more with the family so it’s definitely been a good thing.”

Cory added: “It means we are all being paid the same which is good. We are all being treated as equals.”

The national living wage was introduced to ensure that work pays, helps keep people out of debt and reduces demand on the benefits system.

GREEN LIGHT FOR STANDISH CYCLING PROJECT

A project to restore an old mineral line in Wigan Borough has been given the go ahead after an objection to the scheme has been withdrawn.

‘The Line’ is a former railway track and heritage feature for Standish, providing a key route into the village and to Standish High School, which isn’t currently used to its full potential.

The planned works, by Wigan Council as part of The Deal, will see the Line undergo a full upgrade from a muddy track to a surfaced and lit walking, cycling and bridle path. It will be accessible all year round by local pupils, dog-walkers, shoppers, cyclists and pedestrians, providing an accessible way to travel into Standish village and encouraging more people to leave the car at home. It will also help to reduce congestion and improve air quality and noise levels by helping to reduce the number of private cars being used for local journeys.

With a history of coal transportation, The Line is a key heritage point for Standish and was raised by the local community at a have your say session as part of The Deal in 2016. The project stalled last year due to an objection received from a landowner, however confirmation that the objection has now been withdrawn means that the council can now re-tender the scheme ready for work to start later this year.

The works will be planned to maintain the rural characteristics of the route and to be sensitive to wildlife in the area. The funding to improve the former railway track will come from section 106 contributions from developers who are building new homes in Standish. The new surfaced and lit route will run from School Lane through to Brookfield Road for a more direct and safer off-road connection to Shevington Moor.

Cllr David Molyneux, Deputy Leader at the Council, said: "This is the long-awaited good news we have been hoping for. We know how much residents in Standish want The Line project to happen and we're glad we can finally get it moving as part of The Deal. "It will provide a quick, walking and cycling route into Standish village centre which should take traffic off the local roads by encouraging more people to leave the car at home. "Along with supporting people to lead healthier lifestyles, by giving them the option to walk or cycle, it will also reduce the levels of noise and pollution through a reduction in cars."

A spokesman for Standish Voice said: "It is very good news that the legal situation regarding The Line has now been resolved and the council can quickly proceed with bringing this upgrade to reality. "We have been urging the council to complete the upgrade of the route as soon as possible as it will be a great facility for residents and pupils at Standish High School.

"With new homes being constructed near The Line, we hope it will go some way to giving new residents other options in accessing the centre of Standish without using their cars as there are increasing problems of congestion and a lack of parking."

For updates on work to the project and more information about cycling in Wigan Borough visit www.wigan.gov.uk/cycling

FROM HOWE BRIDGE TO "WOW" BRIDGE

Howe Bridge swimming pool has been given a modern makeover creating a lighter, brighter, look and feel. Wigan Council and Inspiring healthy lifestyles have invested a cool £200,000 to bring the popular public swimming pool bang up to date. There's new energy efficient lighting, smart modern paintwork, new flooring, showers and improvements to the changing rooms.

In 2015, Howe Bridge Leisure Centre enjoyed a major refurbishment. Nearly £3m was invested in a new gym, fitness studio, skate park, climbing centre and much more. The only area of the centre that was not touched at the time was the swimming pool.

Inspiring healthy lifestyles Managing Director Peter Burt, said: "Everyone was delighted with the initial transformation of Howe Bridge Leisure Centre, the only issue was that the improvements on the gym side left the pool area looking a little tired and in need of some work. "Our customers have told us that they wanted to see this area brought up to the same standard and we, along with our partners at the council, are delighted to say that we have now been able to make that happen."

Key improvements include brighter, energy efficient lighting which has the potential to save thousands of pounds each year. The pool area has been made more accessible for everyone, including dedicated children's showers specially designed for smaller hands. Wigan Council has invested £160,000 in Howe Bridge, whilst Inspiring healthy lifestyles has contributed the remaining £40,000 to transform the changing areas. The improvements are part of a larger £6m investment in health, wellbeing and fitness in the borough under Wigan Council's Deal for Health and Wellness.

Howe Bridge Leisure Centre Manager Andrew Hewitt added: "Our customers have already told us how much they like the new look. The number of visitors to the leisure centre has increased, so it's clear that it is working. We have plenty of new initiatives planned for the pool and we are further developing our swimming programme. Exciting new plans are now being finalised and it's fair to say we're hoping to make a big splash at Howe Bridge this year."