

Spring has certainly sprung as the days are starting to get a little longer- but there is still a bit of a nip in the air.

Thank you for all of the contributions for the Bulletin. If you have anything you would like to share, please do send it over.

Online Loan Shark Awareness Session

Wendy Loades from the Illegal Money Lending Team has offered her 1 Hour online Loan Shark Awareness Session for us. I hope you have received the online invitation that I forwarded from Wendy.

If you have not; the meeting will be taking place on **Friday 22nd March at 10.30am**

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 315 304 716 843

Passcode: sn364W

Get growing this spring – it's time to Plant and Share!

There's just one month to go until Plant and Share 2024, the campaign to get everyone sowing, growing and sharing throughout April.

**Join us to
Plant and
Share this
spring!**



The easy-to-use resources mean anyone can join in, and community groups and families in the town, and indeed across the UK, can come together to enjoy nature and experience the joy of growing their own fruit and vegetables.

We have registered with Food for Life to participate. You could [register](#) too, but you can also join in with the activities going on across the town.

Whether you would like to do something big or small, it will certainly something to celebrate. Food for Life are keen to highlight and share the activities going on in Swindon.

Let me know if you would like to get involved or have anything planned.

The Toolkit can be found [here](#)

Citizens Advice Swindon AFFA Project Training Sessions



The Citizens Advice Swindon Advice and Financial First Aid team are offering there superb and highly recommended training sessions. Please see the attachment for details, but the following is covered in their training.

Energy and Fuel Poverty: Friday 8th March: 09.30-10:45 am

Find out how to spot the causes and signs of people in fuel poverty. Learn about the Priority Service Register, energy saving tips and other help available

Introduction to Attendance Allowance Friday 15th March 09:30-10:45 am

This course will provide you with an overview of Attendance Allowance , eligibility and how to claim. You will also learn how to identify when a referral for benefits advice is appropriate.

Introduction to Pension Credit: Friday 22nd March 09.30-10:45 am

This course will provide you an overview of Pension Credit, eligibility criteria and other help that Pension Credit can help with.

Budgeting: Friday 5th April 9.30-11.00 am

Learn how to use a budgeting tool to work out income, outgoings and identify areas where service users may be able to reduce expenditure.

To book a space on these online sessions email affa@caswindon.org.uk

Citizens Advice Swindon AFFA Project Outreach in March

Please find information about where the team are out in the community in March and on hand to offer support, advice and information for residents.

Within the next week they will be at

- **Friday 8th March- Highworth Library- 12pm-2pm**
- **Monday 11th March- Central Library- 10am-12pm**
- **Tuesday 12th March- Freshbrook Church- 1.30pm-4pm**
- **Wednesday 13th March- Rodbourne Road Methodist Church- 9.30am-11am**
- **Friday 15th March- Wroughton Library- 9.30am-11.30am**

British Gas Energy Trust- White Goods Fund

Citizens Advice Swindon in partnership with **British Gas Energy Trust (BGET)** are able to help service users in **receipt of certain benefits, and be in or facing fuel poverty** with the following items: fridges, freezers, fridge/freezers, cookers (electric only) and washing machines.

Items are new and installation of the item is part of the service provided.

This fund is open to both British Gas customers and non-British Gas customers and each household is eligible to claim one white good per scheme year.

Referral criteria:

- The client will need to evidence they are in receipt of benefits (see below) and the appliance is for their main residence and in their name.
- Applicants must ideally have a broken appliance or one that is not fit for purpose (e.g , there is only one ring working on the cooker, or the oven part does not work, washing machine does not spin etc).
- As part of the criteria upon applying, the old appliance will be removed.
- The applicant must own the appliance or have appropriate permission in place for the appliance to be removed.
- Clients must engage with Citizens Advice in the provision of Benefits, Debt or Energy advice to qualify

If you have a client you are working with who requires support make a referral to Citizens Advice Swindon at <https://www.citizensadvicewindon.org.uk/referral/>

Scheme is open until 31st Mar 2024, unless funds are expended earlier.

What benefits does the client need to be in receipt of?

- Child Benefit
- Pension Guarantee Credit
- Income related employment and support allowance
- Income based job seekers allowance.
- Income Support
- Tax Credits – Child tax credits & working Tax Credits
- Universal Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Pension credit, saving credit. **OR** Received Emergency Fuel Vouchers from BGET

Stratton Community Pantry

Please see this notice from Stratton St Margaret Parish Council

Stratton St Margaret Parish Council is proud to announce the grand opening of its newest initiative - the Stratton Community Pantry at Beechcroft Library. This vital resource aims to provide essential support to local residents in need by offering free access to food and household essentials.

The Community Pantry will operate on **Tuesday 10am – 12pm and Friday 1pm – 3pm**. This will be open to **any resident within the parish**. In addition to providing food assistance, the pantry will support the Community Hub in Beechcroft Library, connecting residents with additional support services and programs.

Upcoming Adult Community Learning Courses

Goals and Sleep Well courses, in April and May 2024 and thought it would be useful to pass them now, in case you wish to discuss them with anyone you support and who may benefit.

GOALS – Increase your confidence and unlock your potential

23rd April to 21st May 2024 - Every Tuesday (5 weeks)

10:00am-2:30pm

Voluntary Action Swindon (VAS), 1 John Street, Swindon, SN1 1RT.

SLEEP WELL – Learn techniques to improve sleep and wellbeing

15th April to 29th April 2024. Every Monday (3 weeks).

1:30pm-4:30pm

Voluntary Action Swindon (VAS), 1 John Street, Swindon, SN1 1RT.

If you have anyone who would be interested in attending these courses or need any information on what they offer, please don't hesitate contact Jô at

JVicente@swindon.gov.uk

CSCS Green Card Courses with New College

Please find attached and see below details of **CSCS Green Card Courses** coming up in March and April.

- **Swindon CSCS**- Starts Tuesday 19th March 2024
- **Swindon CSCS** – Starts Monday 29th April 2024

These 7 day classroom based courses include everything you need to get your CSCS Green Labourers Card and are **free** to those that meet the eligibility criteria. Please contact Ed directly at Ed.Kirk-Browne@newcollege.ac.uk or on 01793 511665 or 07854450009 if you have anyone interested in attending or would like any further information.

Please see below some messages from Voluntary Action Swindon

Volunteering Swindon Survey

Thank you for the support that you have given Voluntary Action Swindon's new service - Volunteering Swindon.

Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey, this will allow us to shape the service to meet your organisations needs better.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/volunteeringswindon>

Swindon Meet the Funder Event on 12th March

Tuesday 12th March at Buckhurst Park Community Centre, Burghley Cl

10:00am to 14:30pm

Get your questions answered by local and national funders.

This Meet the Funder event is a free in-person event, open to voluntary and community groups and organisations in Swindon.

This is an opportunity for all voluntary and community groups and organisations in Swindon to meet with funders and discuss their needs directly. We'll be joined by

The National Lottery Community Fund, Wiltshire Community Foundation, The Arts Council England (Southwest), The National Benevolent Charity and Sovereign Network Group.

Need help with Governance or funding applications - **Our Funding and Governance Advice Manager Alana Fiorelli** will be there on the day to help with any queries. To book your place, see link here [Swindon Meet the Funder Event Tickets, Tue 12 Mar 2024 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Comic Relief Event at Acorn Community Bank

Acorn Community Bank are hosting a fundraising event at their office at **Cavendish Square on Thursday 14th March from 10am until 12pm**. Please find the poster/graphic attached for you to share.

No Smoking Day- March 13th

No Smoking Day is fast approaching and the national campaign resources have now been released. This is a great opportunity to

encourage Swindon residents who smoke to make a quit attempt and the overarching proposition is:

- You know you want to quit. We know you can.
- It's never too late to quit smoking.
- Search 'smokefree' to get free quitting support this No Smoking Day.
Searching 'smokefree' will take people to the NHS Better Health website which includes lots of information about the benefits of quitting and the support available.

A range of **free resources** to help you support No Smoking Day are now available to download or order from the [Campaign Resource Centre](#). A poster is attached, along with a social media campaign tool. Please feel free to share and use these immediately to help drive awareness and encourage smokers to make a quit attempt as we approach No Smoking Day. National resources include:

- Posters
- Digital screens
- Social static assets
- Email signatures
- Social animated assets providing tips on quitting, support available and the health benefits of quitting



In addition to the downloadable resources, there will be a national hard-hitting TV and radio campaign to emphasise the health risks of smoking and encourage the 5.3 million smokers in England to make a quit attempt. This will launch on 11th March and runs until the end of March. In Swindon, we will also use No Smoking Day itself as a PR moment, fronted by local smoking survivors, who will share their personal stories of quitting. Thank you to everyone who has shared these impactful stories, which will feature on our Swindon Borough Council Facebook page for you to please re-post.

Thank you for supporting No Smoking Day, and for all you do to maximise quit attempts for the residents of Swindon so they can live their best lives. Please do not hesitate to come back to us with any questions around smoking.

Elections in May, Key Dates and Voter ID



Please note this important information to share with residents.

You may be aware of the Borough Council and Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner elections taking place on 2nd May 2024.

Here are the key dates to be aware of:

- **Tuesday, 16 April (11.59pm):** deadline to [register to vote](#). You only normally only need to register once, unless you have changed your name, address or nationality
- **Wednesday, 17 April (5pm):** deadline to apply for a [postal vote](#)
- **Wednesday, 24 April (5pm):** deadline to apply for a [proxy vote](#)

Bring photo ID to vote at a polling station

You now are required by law to show an approved form of photo ID in order to vote at a polling station. That includes at the UK General Election expected in 2024. Accepted forms of photo ID include passports, photographic driving licences, biometric immigration documents and some concessionary travel passes.

[Check the full list](#).

What if my photo ID has expired?

You can still use your photo ID if it is out of date, as long as it looks like you. The name on your ID should be the same name you used to register to vote.

What should I do if I don't have an accepted form of photo ID?

You can apply for a free photo ID to vote, known as a Voter Authority Certificate, before 5pm on 24 April. You must be registered to vote and will need to provide your date of birth, National Insurance number and a recent photograph with your application.

There are several ways to apply:

- [Apply online at GOV.UK](#)
- Print out, complete and return [this form](#) to: Civic Reception, Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon, SN1 2JH
- Go in person to Reception at Civic Offices (SN1 2JH) on any working day between 9.30am and 4pm to collect a form
- Call the Council on [01793 445500](tel:01793445500) to request a paper form

Postal voters are not affected by the voter ID changes and will be issued with their postal ballot papers as usual. If you choose to vote by proxy, the person who is trusted to vote on your behalf will have to take their own identification to be issued with a ballot paper. [Find more information about the voter ID requirement](#)