

CU Newsletter

Summer 2018

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LifeSavers

Expanding school Saving Clubs

Lewisham Plus Credit Union is proud to be supporting **fifteen (15)** primary schools in Lewisham and Bromley, in partnership with LifeSavers, the programme inspired by the Archbishop of Canterbury and developed by the Church Urban Fund and the Church of England.

As part of this initiative, children from one of the participating schools recently visited our Bromley Plus+ branch in St Paul’s Cray.



One of the children reported:

Last week I had the opportunity to visit the Bromley Plus Credit Union. At our school, we run a savings club every week with the support of the credit union and the LifeSavers program started by the Archbishop of Canterbury, which encourages us all to save. The cashiers were invited to the branch to learn what happens to our money once collected by the credit union.

Michelle, the Branch Manager and her colleagues were there to welcome us and made it interesting and fun. Michelle went through the process of what happens with the money we all deposit at school and we each opened a till, processed all the deposits and were taught how to cash up and audit our tills.

At the end we all enjoyed a pizza lunch and had the chance to ask questions about the Credit Union.

We all learnt a lot and really enjoyed the experience. We also received a fab goody bag as well.

Thanks Bromley Plus+ Credit Union for a great visit.

LifeSavers is a unique values-based approach to financial education, which explores what it means to be **wise, generous, just** and **thankful** with our money, recognising that attitudes are as important as knowledge and skills.

See: <https://www.lifesavers.co.uk/>

In September we will launch an online programme which will further help children in schools learn key skills such as IT, maths and communication.

It will provide a fun, engaging bank-style interface for schools, providing a unique and exciting experience for children running a Savings Club. This will encourage positive financial behaviour, such as regular saving, goal-oriented spending and good money management skills.



Community Events

We have been out and about with our colourful gazebo again this year.



We were at the Brockley Festival in June and at People’s Day in July.

On 14th July we signed up new members at the Nottingham festival at Kimmeridge Cross, and we were again at the Phoenix Festival in Downham on 22nd July.



We love it when members come up to us to say hello. We have helped our community to save and borrow sensibly for over 25 years.

As a community-based and run organisation, Lewisham Plus Credit Union will always work to improve and help the local community.



We are here to serve you, and the more people we serve, the stronger we become. *If you feel we are a good organisation and you have benefitted by being a member, please recommend friends and family in either of our boroughs to join up and be part of a fantastic community for our mutual benefit.*

Where next for Financial Inclusion?

To conclude our 25th Anniversary, earlier this year we hosted an important event with over 40 local partners, to explore **where next for financial inclusion?**

It was Chaired by Jim Minton, Chief Executive of Toynbee Hall and



attended by the Worshipful the Mayor of Bromley, Kathy Bance MBE, who has a keen interest in



financial inclusion and the relief of poverty.

We heard speakers present their experience, concerns and hopes for an inclusive community, including Lewisham Plus's CEO, Ravi Ravindran, who gave an outline of how our own credit union had developed over 25 years, growing to three branches serving 11,600 adults, 17 organisations and 1,600 juniors. This included collaboration with both councils to prevent homelessness and LifeSavers savings clubs in schools supported by the Church of England.

Sebastian Taylor, Head of Customer Service for Phoenix Community Housing Association, spoke about challenges to Financial Inclusion and gave examples of innovative



services helping residents to increase income, improve awareness and receive help in kind though local collaboration

Challenges to Financial Inclusion



- High levels of poverty
- Increased living costs
- Welfare Reforms
- Changes to Council Tax benefits
- Access to bank/building society accounts
- Hike in non-priority debts where lender uses bailiffs
- 'Bright House' effect
- Rent payments not seen as priority
- Lots of residents not equipped for online claims

Mick Lear, Head of Benefits for Lewisham Council, outlined the



large number of people receiving benefits and assistance across the borough and the challenges of reduced funding. He hoped to

develop a generic support model to address multiple needs through a single contact.

Scott McKinven, Financial Inclusion Manager at Clarion Housing Group, spoke about Clarion Futures for communities, jobs, training, money and digital work across the



country, and the 20% of residents who had gone without heat or food to make ends meet.

Scott congratulated Lewisham Plus on the anniversary, having been a supporter for 18 years.



Gareth Evans, working with the Financial Inclusion Centre, explained how supply side



initiatives could make a real difference.

He gave evidence from London Mutual's CUOK Loans, diverting

borrowing and saving millions for users.

A re-branded national product for credit unions would be launching soon, including with Lewisham Plus. He also spoke about innovative pilot Rent to Own and Prize Linked Savings schemes.

Before the final session, Professor Bill Lee, University of Sheffield, gave a comparison of credit unions in the UK and in New Zealand. Credit Union membership in the UK has doubled to 3.1% over ten years, compared to 6-7% in New Zealand.

Overall, it was a very worthwhile event, and a great opportunity to bring together partners and supporters to focus together on the benefits for the whole community when organisations work together. Thank you to all our partners and supporters.



In Memory ...

It is with great sadness that we have to announce that Peter Dulley, who had been a director of the credit union since 2014, passed away in May. Peter was a retired Chartered Surveyor, who generously gave his



time to the credit union.

He used his expertise to develop and supervise works to our buildings, and was a loyal, enthusiastic supporter.

Peter was someone who dedicated himself to helping others, and undertook a range of voluntary activities including with the Rotary Club and his local church, inspired by his deeply held Christian faith.

He will be sadly missed.

BBC "A Matter of Life and Debt" - Re-run and 2nd series

Last year Lewisham Plus staff and members were featured in the BBC documentary series "A Matter of Life and Debt". It explored the important and life changing work carried out by credit unions up and down the country.

We were so impressed that at our AGM in February we awarded loans officer Ingrid an Oscar for her starring role.

The series was so popular that an edited

version was re-run on **BBC1 at 7.30pm on Wednesday 1st and 8th August** (catch it on iPlayer).



one A Matter of Life and Debt

Home Episodes Clips Information and Support

Filming for a second series, also including some of our staff and members, has recently finished.

Watch out for this to be screened later in the year or in 2019.

Household Goods Loan up to £500

Working with ethical partners (the British Heart Foundation and Co-op Electrical), we can help with your purchase of household electrical items and furniture. This is usually possible in addition to an existing



credit union loan, as long as you can afford it. *So now you can replace items that break down unexpectedly whenever you need to.*

As a representative example, you could borrow £300 to buy a cooker and pay it back at £6 per week over 16 months. The cost of credit would be £70, making the total cost £370.

Our **APR is 42.6%** for these loans.

Compare that with other providers on the high street or online and you will be pleasantly surprised by how much you can save. The prices at BHF and Co-op are good value too. See www.pluscu.co.uk for details.

Protecting your personal data

Your personal data is valuable and we have always been careful to protect your information. There is now a new law – called the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – which gives you more control over how your personal information is managed and used.

New privacy notices explaining how we collect and use your personal information and the rights that you have are now available. You can find these notices on our website



www.pluscu.co.uk/terms-and-conditions, or you can obtain printed copies from any of our branches.

You do not need to do anything and this does not alter the services that we offer. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us.

App coming soon!

Working with Incuto, a credit union financial technology innovator, we

incuto

Next Generation Financial Technology

will soon be launching a brand-new smartphone app and member's area website.

These will be available for members who want to access their account from a smartphone, and to provide an enhanced experience for members using a tablet or computer.



You will be able to check balances in real time, see your statements, request withdrawals and access key documents and information – protected by modern bank-level security with 2-factor authentication.

This is part of our work to deliver a really great, secure and easy to use service to all our members.

Credit Union Services

Payments Online

Our website can already accept new member entrance fees and online loan applications. You can add to your credit union savings or make loan repayments using a debit card, by signing into our existing Members' Area online.

Our Loans

We revised our lending criteria last year, improving loans for members.

For example, our popular **Save As You Borrow** loans, subject to loan conditions*, will now allow members to borrow up to £2,000 at a reduced rate of **26.8% APR**. That is double the previous loan limit, and a third less interest for loans over £1,000.

We have also halved our interest rate on **Loyalty Saver loans**, where the loan is secured against savings, bringing this down to just **6.2% APR**.

Our fast-track top-ups, available on SAYB and Personal Loans after six months' regular repayment, and three monthly thereafter, provide lots of flexibility to borrow when needed.

For details of the full range of loan products please visit our website.

*All loans are subject to affordability and other conditions, including our assessment of your credit history. We will only lend if you have enough income, can afford to borrow, and have arrangements in place to repay.

Rent Arrears

With the introduction of Universal Credit, tenants in social housing become responsible for paying their rent direct. *If you cannot pay, talk to your landlord as soon as possible.*

Please do not ignore the problem. The credit union will not generally provide loans for rent arrears, unless you are referred to us by one of the Homeless Prevention Units.

We have produced a leaflet, available in branches and on our website, which provides some suggestions of where you can get help with Universal Credit problems.

Branch Contacts & Hours

262 Kirkdale, Sydenham,
London, SE26 4RS
Tel: 0208 778 4738

Email: admin@pluscu.co.uk

The Green Man at 355 Bromley
Road, Catford, SE6 2RP
Tel: 0208 461 4721

Email: greenman@pluscu.co.uk

Bromley Plus at 54 Cotmandene
Cres. St.Paul's Cray, BR5 2RG
Tel: 0208 302 1541

Email: bromley@pluscu.co.uk

All open 9.30-1pm Mon-Fri.
Sydenham only 6.30-8pm Friday
and 10am-noon Saturday.

New Cross Learning, 283-5
New Cross Road, SE14 6AS
(Tue & Wed 10am to 3pm)

Closed Bank holidays and as per
notices on our website.

Financial Update

The popularity of our loans has enabled Lewisham Plus to increase our loan balance by £1m over the last two years, beating our business plan for 2017/18 by £250k.

This has been managed with the same number of staff. A focused effort by the credit control team has also managed to reduce bad debts.

Overall, we have reached our target numbers for a long-term sustainable credit union – thanks to all involved.

Vital Statistics

Lewisham Plus at 30th June 2018

- 11,131 adults, savings £5.19m
- 3,830 loans, total £3.74m
- 919 Engage accounts
- 25 corporate members
- 1,750 junior members

Lewisham Plus Credit Union Ltd is a not-for-profit savings and low cost loans service for people living or working in the London Boroughs of Lewisham and Bromley and all of SE19

Grow your savings

Save up to £30,000, £3 joining fee for adults, no fee for young savers.

To protect your funds, we require proof of ID for all withdrawals.

Dormant accounts under £10 balance - annual £2.50 fee (now includes adult and junior accounts).

Corporate Accounts

Deposit account available for local associations, clubs and charities.

Life Insurance

Members up to age 70 receive life insurance on savings at no charge. Loans are also covered up to a £5,000 limit, for members up to age 79.**

**All insurances subject to policy limits

Loans for members

Personal Loans up to £10,000 from 0.75% to 2%pm (9.4% to 26.8% APR).

Loyalty Saver Loan 0.5%pm/6.2% APR, for members who can secure the whole loan against their savings.

SAYB Loan 2% to 3%pm (26.8% to 42.6% APR), save as you borrow, with reduced APR if you qualify for an SAYB level 2 loan over £800.

Household Goods Loan up to £500 extra for existing borrowers, at the same APR rate as SAYB loans.

Engage Ethical Card Services

Low cost prepaid Visa debit card, £2 per month, no load fees.*

Smartcash electronic pocket money for 8-16s. £10 one off (waived through our introductory offer), no monthly fee.*

Engage Current Account Card service £5.95 per month*

*See full Terms and Conditions for details.

Balance Enquiries

Text **Balance** to **07537 410334**

The text will cost your standard network rate for an SMS. If you don't get a response, email admin@pluscu.co.uk with your name, member number and mobile phone number.

Our individual and friendly service is volunteer led but professionally managed. We work for a fair and inclusive local community.