

Westminster PLUS

Essential information for Westminster's older residents

Issue 36 – Winter 2019/20

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PLUS

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City of Westminster

Welcome

Welcome to the latest edition of the **Westminster Plus** magazine, bringing you news, events and activities across Westminster

We both wish you all a happy and healthy New Year. At New Year we often think about making changes to our lifestyle, particularly eating healthier or getting active. One Westminster resident, 99-year-old Kathleen Scanlon is an inspiration to us all. She started exercising when she retired from her job as a chamber maid at the age of 85 and now goes to the gym twice a week. Read her story and how you can enjoy free and low-cost access to leisure activities with the ActiveWestminster card on page 4.

Councillor Flight looks at the important but not often discussed issue of preparing for your own funeral on page 18. The article includes a step-by-step guide and the costs when making your own arrangements. We hope you find this useful.

Finally, one of Westminster's most iconic buildings, Marylebone Town Hall, turns 100 this year. Read about the history of the Town Hall on page 6, which has become a favourite venue for many celebrity weddings.

If you would like help to access our services, you can find lots of information on our website at **westminster.gov.uk/adult-services**. You can also email us at **rsvp@westminster.gov.uk**. But we know that some of our residents are not able to access information online, so you can call us on our adults services line **020 7641 2500**.



Councillor Heather Acton
Cabinet Member for Family Services and Public Health

Heather Acton

hacton@westminster.gov.uk



Councillor The Lady Flight
Older People's Champion

Christabel Flight

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Cabinet support, City Hall,
64 Victoria Street,
SW1E 6QP

On the cover:
Resident, James Hewitt, volunteers at an air quality action event





Fix it faster

A new and improved 'Report It' service is being rolled out, letting Westminster residents and others report waste and highways issues easier and quicker.

The mobile-friendly tool, powered by FixMyStreet, uses location-based technology or a postcode to show an interactive map of that area with all current reported issues. Residents can then report their own issue, such as dumped rubbish or faulty street lighting, which is then sent to the relevant council team which will investigate and respond.



Check it out at report.westminster.gov.uk



Safe as houses

Everyone has the right to a safe home and Westminster works hard to tackle the concerns residents have around housing and planning issues.

Through its anti-fraud team, the council recently took social housing tenant Toby Harman to court after he was illegally letting his Pimlico flat on Airbnb. The court evicted the tenant and awarded a record Unlawful Profits Order of over £100,000.

Westminster's planning team also recently prosecuted a rogue landlord who divided his three-bedroom Maida Vale home into eight flats, without permission. Farook Owadally was fined £90,000 and ordered to pay a confiscation order of £400,000 – the council's biggest ever penalty for a planning offence.

Get active with free swimming and leisure discounts

Westminster aims to encourage residents to lead active lives whatever their age or ability and its ActiveWestminster card is free for all residents

For those over 60, the card means they can enjoy free swimming, 40% off other leisure activities and fitness membership at a maximum price of £29.95 per month.

As well as the health benefits of being active, physical activity can offer valuable opportunities

to socialise and make new friends.

From 1st January 2020, you will no longer be able to use your Westminster City Save card to claim discounts in our leisure centres. You can continue to claim these discounts with an ActiveWestminster card.

No other Westminster City Save offers are affected.

 Applying for a card is easy and to find out more about how you can become more active visit **active.westminster.gov.uk** or pop into your local Westminster leisure centre.

Activate Your Life

To apply for an ActiveWestminster card visit one of the leisure centres listed on the facing page, take along proof of residency and one of the following: Freedom Pass, birth certificate, passport or pension book.





Great-grandmother Kathleen Scanlon exercises twice a week and recently celebrated her 99th birthday with a trip to the gym at Porchester Centre (pictured with her birthday cake at the centre).

"I exercise twice a week and do one session in the gym using the machines and the other session doing chair-based exercises in the Open Age classes." Kathleen says.

She has lived in Westminster since she was 16 and has three daughters, three granddaughters and two great granddaughters.

Kathleen was happily married for 40 years before losing her husband 28 years ago. She started exercising when she retired from her job as a chamber maid 14 years ago at the age of 85.

"I've had two hip replacements which feel fine, but I've had a bad back for years," she says. "I've been everywhere and tried everything but find that exercise is what helps it most: my back still aches a bit but nothing like before.

"Everyone should go to the gym and exercise," says Kathleen. "I have to push myself some days to go but it's always worth it. My advice is don't sit back when you retire: get up, get going and get out! I tell everyone I meet how important it is – even the nice people on the bus the other day who gave up their seat to me on my way home from the gym. They said they thought I looked a bit tired. 'Well I am,' I told them. 'I've just been to the gym!' You should have seen their faces!"

City of Westminster Leisure Centres:

Moberly Sports Centre

25 Chamberlayne Road,
NW10 3NB

■ **020 3879 6669**

Paddington Recreation Ground

Randolph Avenue, W9 1PD

■ **03330 05 0413**

Little Venice Sports Centre

10 Crompton Street, W2 1ND

■ **03330 05 0414**

Porchester Centre

Queensway, W2 5HS

■ **03330 05 0415**

Seymour Leisure Centre

Seymour Place, W1H 5TJ

■ **03330 05 0416**

Queen Mother Sports Centre

223 Vauxhall Bridge Road,
SW1V 1EL

■ **03330 05 0418**

Marshall Street Leisure Centre

15 Marshall Street, W1F 7EL

■ **03330 05 0417**

Iconic wedding venue celebrates its centenary

Over the years it's been a favourite wedding venue for many celebrity couples, but now the Old Marylebone Town Hall is set to be the focus of celebrations as it turns 100 this year

The town hall was opened on 27 March 1920 by Prince Albert (the future King George VI) and was home to Marylebone town council before it merged with Paddington and Westminster City Council in 1965.

Since then it has become one of the most iconic places in the country to get married and has become a popular venue for famous couples to tie the knot.

Sir Paul McCartney married Linda Eastman at the town hall in 1969 and third wife Nancy Shevell in 2011 while fellow Beatle Ringo Starr married Barbara Bach in 1981. Other stars that have married there include Cilla Black and Bobby Willis and Tony Hancock and Freddie Ross.

The Grade II listed building closed for four years in 2013 as it underwent a £60m refurbishment. It now hosts two thousand weddings every year, seven days a week and was the first place in the country to hold an evening wedding. The town hall has also made it into the record books, holding the most civil partnership ceremonies, 20 of them, on the day they became legal on 21 December 2005.



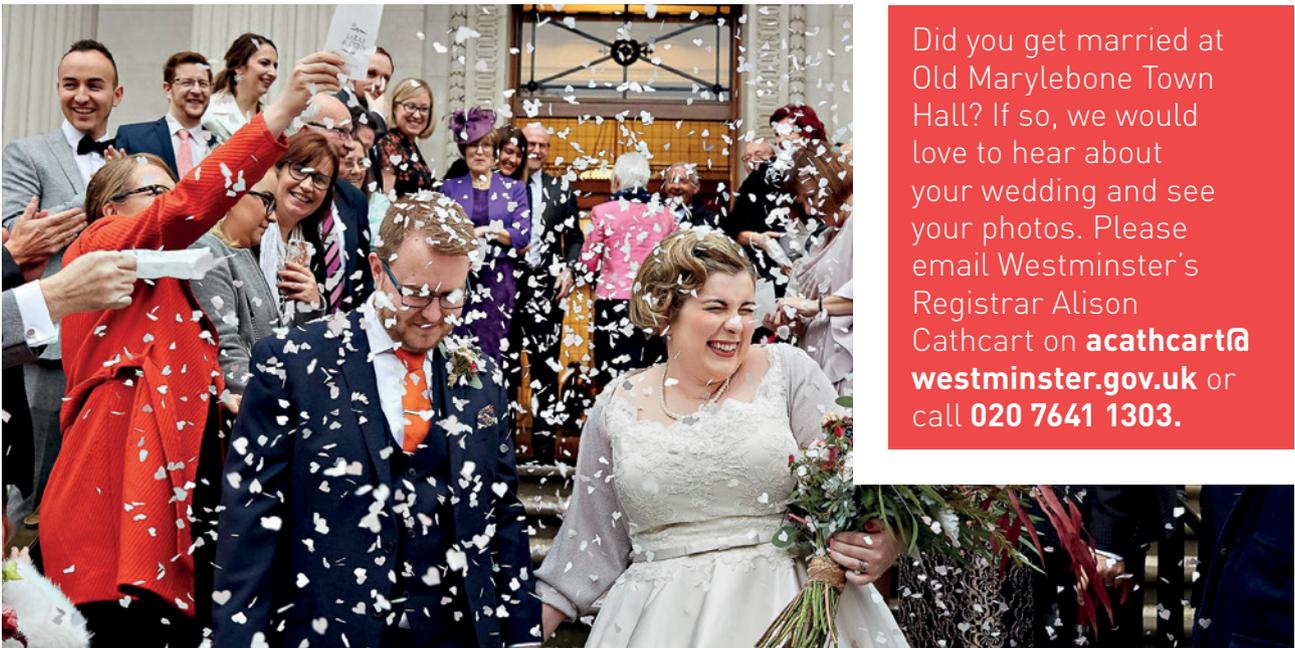
Find out more at adaytoremember.london/old-marylebone-town-hall



Paul McCartney marries Linda Eastman – 1969



Arrival of King George V and Queen Mary at Town Hall during the Silver Jubilee celebrations May 1935



Did you get married at Old Marylebone Town Hall? If so, we would love to hear about your wedding and see your photos. Please email Westminster's Registrar Alison Cathcart on acathcart@westminster.gov.uk or call **020 7641 1303**.

Volunteers making a difference to Westminster's air quality



St John's Wood resident James Hewitt's interest in air quality began three or four years ago

The environment has been the focus of his working life, with an emphasis on legality during the last decade.

More recently James has volunteered with the council's air quality team, accompanying them on two air quality action days in Westminster.

"The council has invited me to volunteer in its anti-idling campaign, #DontBeldle. Air pollution particularly affects the elderly and the young. I've lived in the area for 30 years and I feel it's the least I can do," said James.

James has been a member of his local amenity society, the St John's Wood Society,



for many years and was delighted when the society invited him to serve on its executive committee in the capacity of addressing air quality. Since then, the society has monitored the concentration of the air pollutant nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), whose primary source in London is exhaust from diesel engines.

The first year's work was funded by the society. Since then, through ward budgets, Westminster City Council has covered the cost of the measuring tubes that sense the amount of NO_2 in the air. They provide a base line to help evaluate and shape policy concerning traffic, schools and rat-running. As a local resource, this can also help schools, medical services, businesses and estate agents advise potential clients about air quality in St John's Wood and how it is being monitored in the community. "Air quality is a major issue in St John's Wood," he said.

James also monitors air pollutants (nitrogen dioxide, ozone and

particulate matter) independently, carrying an EarthSense Zephyr in a backpack as he walks. This helps identify hotspots and how localised these are – and how rapidly concentrations can change. It also shows that pollution levels inside vehicles tend to be much greater than those to which pedestrians and other residents are exposed.



For further information about the #DontBeldle campaign and becoming a volunteer in the air quality team visit westminster.gov.uk/dont-be-idle

'Miss Marple' joins the Sir Simon Milton Foundation Tea Dance

On Sunday 1 December former Miss Marple and Gangsta Granny actress, Julia McKenzie CBE, joined 1,000 Westminster residents aged 65 and over for a glorious afternoon of live music and entertainment at the annual Sir Simon Milton Foundation Tea Dance

Now in its 14th year, the charity event has become a calendar highlight for many older people in Westminster and their carers who look forward to the special festive event held in the magnificent Great Room at the Grosvenor House Hotel on Park Lane.

Guests enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea and music from Tea Dance regulars, the Red Stripe Band, who filled the dance floor. There was a performance from singer and guitarist Arrun Harker, and students from the Sylvia Young Theatre School delighted the audience with a spectacular Carnaby Street medley.

The Travellin' Sheddars, a 25-piece male ukulele band, played a rousing set of nostalgic tunes with everyone joining in. The final performance of the afternoon was from Rashmi Becker, from Step Change Studios, an inclusive Latin and Ballroom dance company.



“One of the best events for senior residents in Westminster.”



The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Ruth Bush, attended as a special guest and welcomed people on arrival.

The Sir Simon Milton Foundation Tea Dance is generously sponsored by Shaftesbury Plc, and supported by JW Marriott Grosvenor House London and Westminster City Council.

Lady Christabel Flight, Founding Trustee of the Sir Simon Milton Foundation and Older People's Champion at Westminster City Council, said: “We are beyond grateful to our generous sponsors, volunteers and performers for helping to make the Tea Dance possible and bringing so much joy to older Westminster residents. Loneliness is an appalling experience for anyone and we hope that the Tea Dance helps bring some much needed relief with an afternoon of fun and friendships.”



A new approach to managing buskers

Street entertainment is a valuable part of the city, attracting people from all over the world, providing free access to music and art and contributing to a vibrant Westminster community

However, Westminster City Council receives about 2,000 complaints a year from residents and businesses who live and work near some of the busiest busking hotspots. Westminster City Council is working to find a solution to this problem that allows street entertainment to flourish while protecting residents and businesses.

A new licensing scheme is being proposed in two of the busiest busking areas of the city – Leicester Square/Piccadilly and Oxford Street. Buskers will still be able to busk anywhere else in Westminster without a licence.

The idea for the scheme follows a year of talking to residents, businesses and performers. Westminster City Council is now keen to get resident views on this proposal.



If you would like to take part in the consultation visit [westminster.gov.uk/busking-westminster](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/busking-westminster)





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bluebirdcare.co.uk/westminster-city-of-london

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Save money on your energy bills



Green Doctors offer a free service to help residents save money on their energy bills

Westminster residents over 65, or who have a long-term health condition or disability, or on a low income, can get free advice on how to make their homes more energy efficient, information on installing energy saving devices and how to switch energy providers to get a better deal. It could mean saving money on energy bills each year.



To book a free visit or for more information call **0300 365 5003** or email **GreenDoctorsLDN@groundwork.org.uk**



My life in Westminster

Anna Cevirgen put her seven languages to good use when she was a tour guide and now uses them to help tourists in Westminster

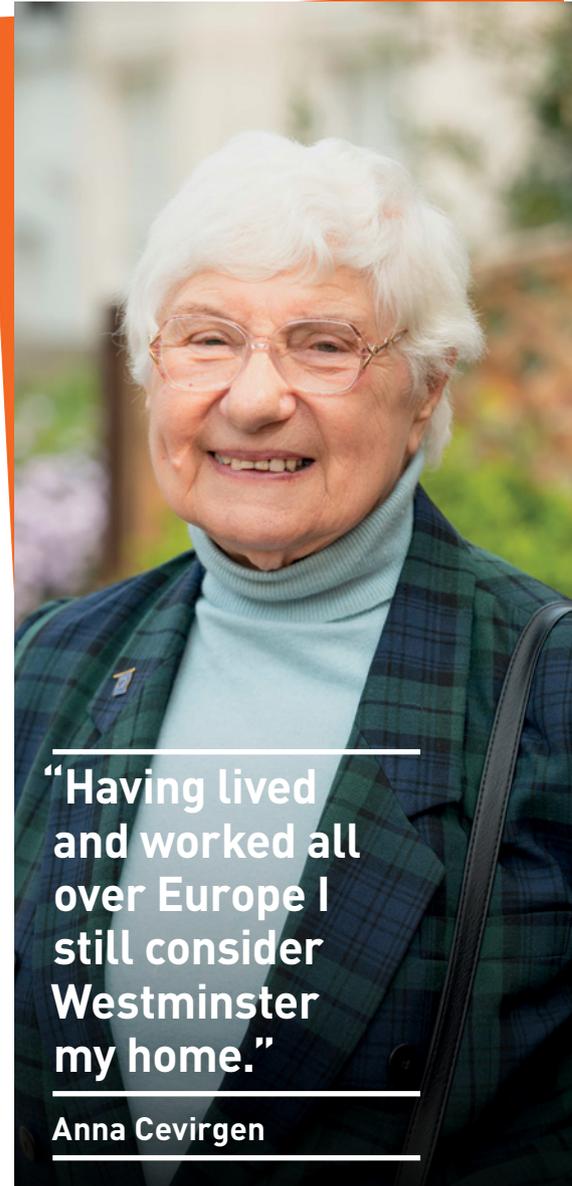
I was born in Hungary and as a child my family got caught up in the second world war. It was a very difficult time for us as we were taken to Austria and lived there in terrible conditions for two years, before we could return home.

When I was 16, I managed to escape before the iron curtain came down, leaving my family behind to start a new life in Parma in northern Italy. As I spoke several languages, I became a travel agent taking people on trips around Europe. I was getting a lot of work with a travel agent in London so moved here in the 1960s.

I speak seven languages and for years I was a tour guide taking people around the UK and all over Europe. I only retired from the job last year

as I loved it so much. Over the past few years I've been a volunteer where I can still use my languages to help people. I volunteer at museums like the Churchill War Rooms helping foreign tourists and at HMS Belfast telling people about my childhood wartime experiences. I'm also a befriender providing company to older residents in Westminster.

I've lived in my flat in Maida Vale for nearly 50 years. Having lived and worked all over Europe I still consider Westminster my home. It is a great place to live as you are so close to so many wonderful attractions like museums, churches and parks. I love the history of London and I feel like I am discovering a whole new side to the city now I'm older.



“Having lived and worked all over Europe I still consider Westminster my home.”

Anna Cevirgen

A future vision for Victoria

A vision for good growth in Victoria that supports job creation, housing delivery and a world class transformation of the station hub and its surrounding area is being formulated through an innovative public private partnership

Westminster City Council is working in partnership with key London stakeholders on the Future Victoria project, which is focused on Victoria Station and surrounding areas. Members of the partnership are: Westminster City Council, Network Rail, TfL, the GLA and the Victoria Business Improvement District.

In the last ten years the Victoria area has seen a major increase in mixed-use development and investment in the transport network, but there is still significant capacity to carry on and accelerate improvements.

Victoria is home to a vibrant residential and business community. However, the quality of the streets, public spaces and station environment is in need of fresh thinking to be equipped for the future.



Victoria station 1958

Images © Westminster City Archives



Victoria Palace Theatre circa 1911



Stag Brewery 1922



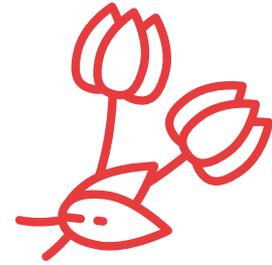
Little Ben 1900

Victoria Palace Theatre opened in 1911 on the former site of the Royal Standard Music Hall. The theatre was home to the Crazy Gang and has hosted many of the Royal Variety Shows. Little Ben, a small 20 ft version of Big Ben, stands in the traffic roundabout outside the theatre and was donated to Westminster City Council in 1892. It was removed for road widening in 1964 and replaced in 1981 to commemorate the royal wedding.



For further information on the Future Victoria project visit westminster.gov.uk/victoria-area

Preparing your own funeral



**Councillor
Christabel Flight**
Older People's
Champion

When having a baby huge preparations are made, but unfortunately people hate thinking about death. But while you are still in good health, it is wise to decide what sort of funeral arrangements you would like. I hope you will find the following information helpful.

I have actually enjoyed preparing my service sheet. You can choose your favourite bits of music, poems and reading and a relatively good photograph or two.

You should give thought as to whether you would like a church service first, which costs from about £250, on top of the cremation service. This from my research seems to cost between £3,000 – £5,000. Currently 75 per cent of people now opt for a cremation, as burial can cost a lot more, about £11,000 due to lack of plots.

The Government is looking at how funerals are conducted

and by whom and is due to introduce regulations in 2021. Currently there are 25 registered providers with the Funeral Planning Authority (FPA). If funeral parlours are not on this list, you should be wary. Membership of the FPA is renewed every year with audited accounts, rules and regulations.

You could take out an insurance policy that provides a fixed sum on death to help pay for funeral costs. Alternatively, prepaid funerals can be purchased in advance but advice prior to purchasing is always recommended. Muslims and Jews have their own special services.



What happens

If you die in hospital, and you have no dependents, the hospital registers the death with the local council. If you have family, they have to register your death with the local council.

Should you die at home, again your family has to register your death. Your body will be taken to the funeral directors awaiting instruction from the family and council.

It is a good idea for the family, even if they do not attend church, to contact a Priest or Minister, as they will be happy to help with arrangements.

Most people like to arrange the funeral two to three weeks after death which gives time for relatives to attend.



Different types of funerals

When you are going to be cremated two doctors have to certify you are actually dead. Your ashes are collected two days after cremation and are now put in a bio-degradable cardboard box, as lots of people like to throw the ashes into the sea. You can even now buy jewellery to keep the ashes.

Unless you have a family or historical plot it is impossible to purchase a burial plot due to the shortage of land and prices going up all the time. I understand digging the hole currently costs £1,300, but if you want a double grave it will cost you this again when the next of kin dies.

Finally, do make sure that friends, family and your bank know what is planned. Some will want to register your death in the newspapers.



Contact Funeral Planning Authority at
funeralplanningauthority.co.uk

What's on

*classes run from 6 January – 3 April with no classes the week beginning 17 February due to half term

North Westminster

*Play Reading

Mondays, 1 – 2pm

Open Age, New Avenues,
3 – 7 Third Avenue, W10 4RS

Join this lively group for some exciting play reading. Read through a variety of well-known plays, no experience necessary.

Cost: £1

■ **07717 201791**

Chair Yoga for people living with Dementia

Mondays, from 20 January for 10 weeks, 11am – 11.45am

Penfold Community Hub,
60 Penfold Street, NW8 8PJ

New opportunity that will benefit your sense of well-being, stimulate and energise the mind, reduce anxiety and improve physical strength and stability.

Cost: Free but advance booking required

■ **020 3815 0033** or
penfoldhub@nhhg.org.uk

*Boxing Fitness

Mondays, 11.30am – 12.30pm

Open Age, New Avenues,
3 – 7 Third Avenue, W10 4RS

Non-contact class exploring exercises on the boxing pads combined with bodyweight exercises. Great for improving fitness and reducing stress.

Cost: £1

■ **07717 201791**



Walking Football

Tuesdays, 11.15am – 12.15pm

The Hub, Regents Park,
Inner Circle, NW1 4RU

In association with Chelsea FC Foundation, you can expect an hour of fun and high-quality coaching.

Cost: Free

■ **07799 369713**

A World in a Suitcase

Tuesdays, from 18 February – 24 March, 10am – 12 noon

Penfold Community Hub,
60 Penfold Street, NW8 8PJ

A visual storytelling project using and learning creative and fun art skills to share life experiences.

Cost: Free but advance booking required

■ **020 3815 0033** or
penfoldhub@nhhg.org.uk

Music for the Moment Concerts

Fridays 17 January, 7 February and 6 March, 2.30pm

St Marylebone Parish Church,
Marylebone, NW1 5LT

Join us for tea, cake and chat at concerts for people living with dementia and their friends, family and carers. In partnership with Resonate Arts, Wigmore Hall and Royal Academy of Music.

Cost: Free

■ **020 7321 2702**



South Westminster

Talking Table

Mondays, 3 – 4.30pm

The Abbey Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3BU

A chance to meet new people, share your experiences or have a friendly chat.

There's free tea and coffee and board games.

Cost: Free

■ caroline.gandy@theabbeycentre.org.uk or **020 7227 0652**

Abbey Monday Club

Mondays, 2 – 3pm

The Abbey Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3BU

The club has guest speakers, day trips and social gatherings, activities and learning sessions.

Cost: £1

■ caroline.gandy@theabbeycentre.org.uk or **020 7227 0652**

Westminster Senior Citizen Forum

Wednesday 12 February, 2pm

Lord Mayor's Parlour, Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, SW1E 6QP

A chance to hear about issues affecting Westminster's older residents including Q&A with speakers.

Cost: Free

■ westminsterscf@aol.com

*Table Tennis

Fridays, 11.45am – 12.45pm

St Margaret's Activity Centre, 1 Carey Place, SW1V 2RT

A coach will be on hand to help you to learn the rules of the game and improve your skills. Held by Open Age in partnership with London Sports Trust.

Cost: Free

■ **07530 734489**



Yoga

Thursdays (till 19 March), 3 – 4pm

Queen Mother Sports Centre, 223 Vauxhall Bridge Road, SW1V 1EL

A mat based class where the instructor will guide you through a variety of exercises to help you relax whilst improving balance and mobility. Open Age class.

Cost: £1

■ **07530 734489**



Discovery. With Three.



Three Mobile has put together free sessions for Westminster residents, designed to help you be more confident and do more with modern technology.

Spaces are limited so please confirm your place by calling **0800 1300 333** or contacting Gareth at discovery.oxfordstreet@three.co.uk

Get Started with Mobile Technology

**Monday 20 January,
10am – 12pm**

There's no need to feel overwhelmed by the world of smartphones. We'll take you through the basics and show you how to make calls, send texts, add contacts and get to grips with your settings, leaving you to enjoy your device.

Keep Connected with Mobile Technology

**Wednesday 22 January,
10am – 12pm**

Nowadays, connecting with friends and family around the world is more accessible than ever before. We'll get you set up and show you the myriad of ways to stay connected.



Get Started with Social Media

Friday 24 January,
10am – 12pm

With so many social networks to choose from, it can be difficult to know where to start. Discover various platforms in this introduction and decide which social media you'd like to explore further including finding out more about Facebook.

Navigation with Mobile Technology

Tuesday 28 January,
2.30 – 4.30pm

You'll never feel lost again with Google Maps. Discover how Google can help you get from A to B, with easy to follow directions, different modes of transport, and useful places nearby.



Discover Mobile Photography

Thursday 30 January,
2.30 – 4.30pm

Want to get the most out of your built-in camera? Create amazing photos with just your phone. We cover all the need to know settings and compositions for that perfect scenic shot or selfie.



ENROL NOW

- Free courses available for learners older than 19, residing in London and earning less than £20,572*.
- Make your change by enrolling for a qualification or expanding your creativity with leisure learning.
- Our experts are on hand to offer advice and assist with questions about financing your studies.
- See our higher level programme offer, which can be funded by advanced learner loans.

Drop in to our centres, call us or visit our website – we are here to help.

● **Lisson Grove**

219 Lisson Grove, London, NW8 8LW

● **Amberley**

Amberley Road, London, W9 2JJ

● **Pimlico**

Lupus Street, London, SW1V 3AT

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