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## PAINT THE TOWN

THE FAMILY EDITION

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# *Family* JEWELS

Family homes in lockdown have become offices, schools, gyms and much more, says **Alexandra Goss**





**L**ockdown brought a new clarity for Susie Brown and her partner. “Balancing work commitments, looking after a toddler and the odd home workout confirmed that our existing space could be put to better use,” says Susie, who lives in north London. “Lockdown gave us the impetus to transform our flat, switch around the layout and create a large living area connecting directly to the garden, where we spend a lot more time.”

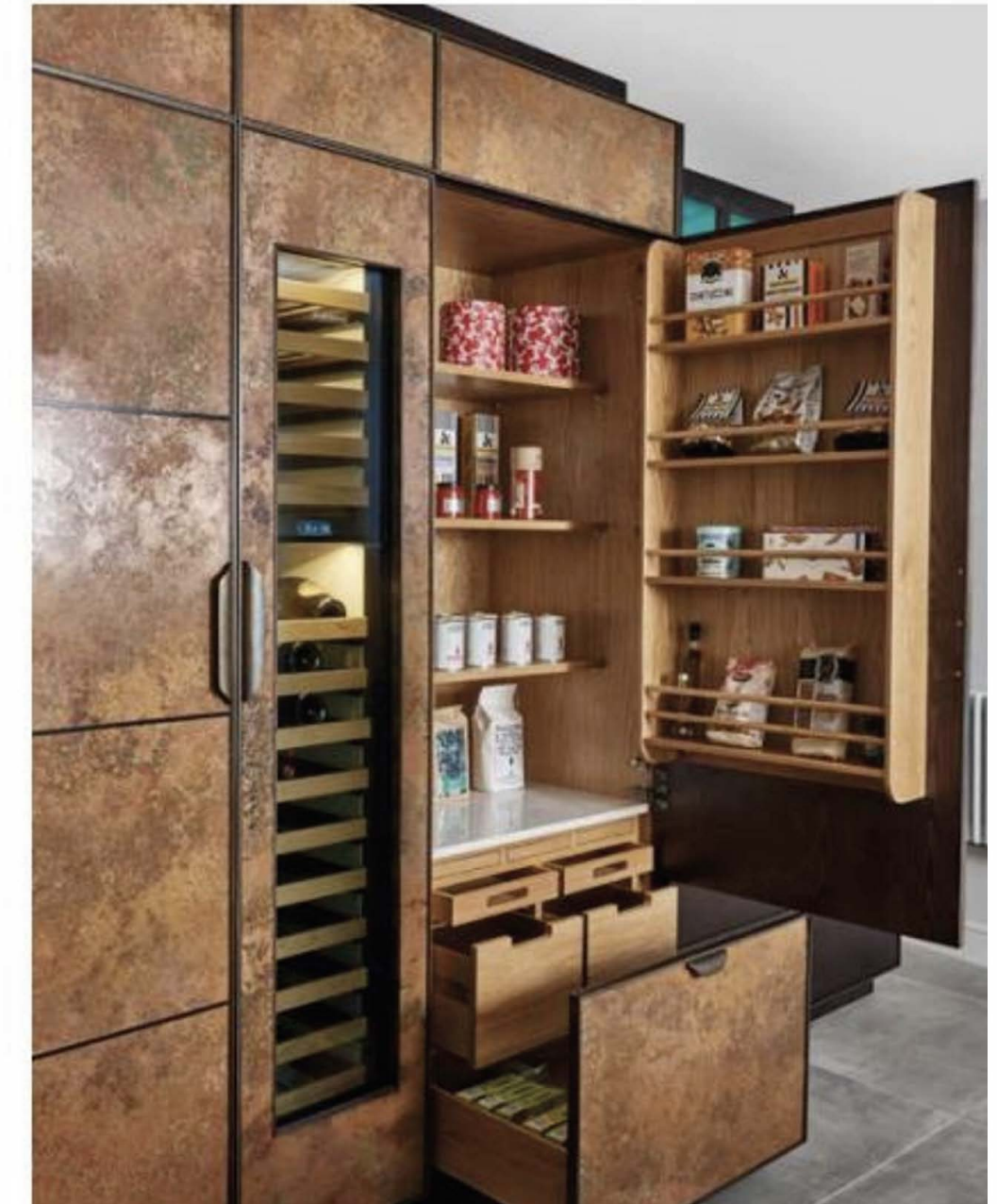
Now that we are all spending more time living, playing and working together under the same roof, countless London families are realising their homes need a post-pandemic re-think. Savills has seen record levels of new buyer inquiries since the housing market re-opened in May – a survey the firm conducted in June, just before the stamp duty holiday was announced, found a net balance of 41 per cent of London respondents wanted to move house within the year. “Even before the stamp duty cut, we had already seen an increased commitment to moving home, and to moving as soon as possible,” says Lucian Cook, head of residential research at Savills. “This increased urgency reflects the desire for additional space.”

A race for space – both inside and out – means family homes in the capital that tick all the boxes are being snapped up fast. Guy Bradshaw, director and head of London Residential at UK Sotheby’s International, has just sold a large house



with a good-sized garden, two home offices and staff accommodation in prime central London that had a guide price of £20m. A low-built detached home in St John’s Wood with planning consent for a substantial new-build residence recently went to competitive bids and sold for the full asking price of £5.95m through Aston Chase. “The need for separation of work and play areas within the home has become a growing trend,” says Mark Pollack, director and co-founder at Aston Chase. “While, historically, an open-plan living and dining room was desirable, dining rooms have become increasingly popular as families have become more accustomed to eating together over the lockdown period.”

Londoners who are staying put are engaging architects to help them overhaul their living spaces – top requests include carving out a home office and maximising the potential of the kitchen and main family area. “Homeowners have a newfound desire to make their homes more



adaptable,” says Sade Akinsanya, senior designer at resi.co.uk. “They’re no longer just a place to kick up your feet – your home is your office, gym, daycare, school, space to socialise and much more.”

Nowhere is this more relevant than in the kitchen. If you have the luxury of a complete redesign, the impetus is on making the space as big as possible, according to Jiin Kim-Inoue, design director at Finchatton, who is receiving many requests to add a central island or an oversized dining table for cooking, working and doing homework. Poggenpohl’s +MODO island is an impressive centrepiece for a family kitchen, “giving the opportunity for free design, staggering the worktops over the base cabinets, creating space for plates, pans and those personal items,” says Natasha Wegrzyn, studio manager at Poggenpohl Chelsea. Ensure there is plenty of natural light flooding the kitchen, too, advises Alexandra Nord, creative director at Millier, and make sure there is enough room for armchairs or an additional sofa.

Think carefully before plumping for a fully open-plan design. “Preserving a sense of privacy in an open-plan kitchen/living space used by all the family can be a challenge,” says Daniel Bowler, director of Eggersmann UK. “This is

**DESIGNED FOR LIVING** Clockwise from top left: Working from home set-ups as designed by Millier; Roundhouse’s kitchen chalkboard adds playfulness to the interiors; a gorgeous copper panty from Ledbury Studio; deftly designed storage solutions from Vesta Interior Design  
**Overleaf:** A statement blue kitchen leads to the garden in Brixton, designed by Angel O’Donnell





why we are seeing the rise of the ‘broken-plan’ kitchen, with zones to add definition to each area.” Glass partitions and shelving can be used to break up different areas yet still allow light through, while simply rearranging existing furniture and using sofas, tables, free-standing bookshelves or large plants can help to carve up the space, adds Tim Chapman-Cavanagh, director of Assael Architecture. He applied broken-plan principles in his latest project, 101 on Cleveland in Fitzrovia, where homes cost from £1.2m through Savills and JLL.

Storage is key in the family kitchen so Charlie Smallbone, founder of Ledbury Studio, advises considering drawers instead of cabinets: “This means no more scrabbling at the back of a cupboard to find what you need.” Also, if lockdown-induced panic buying has taught us anything, it is that we could always do with more space for 17 tins of chickpeas – which makes a larger cupboard highly practical in a busy family home where space is at a premium, advises Tamsin Bryant of Adams + Collingwood Architects. Also high on householders’ wishlists are breakfast cupboards, such as the Housekeeper’s Cupboard from Ledbury Studio, which



is a chic place to hide the toaster, kettle and coffee machine. Extending tables are a good space-saving option, as is bespoke joinery, advises Emma Sims Hilditch, creative director of the eponymous interior design firm. “It can be recessed into the wall to maximise the space available.”

The past few months – especially the time spent without a cleaner – have made many families more aware of the upkeep in their home, which is why some are now frantically filling in open shelves. “Open shelving is visually desirable and can make a gorgeous feature,

**THE HEART OF THE HOME** Top to bottom: A Roundhouse island is the perfect communal area and doubles up as an excellent storage unit; tuck a working from home set-up into a kitchen corner, as executed by Herringbone